

# **SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSTRAINTS ON LOVE MARRIAGE IN BAMYAN**

BY

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**Abstract:** According to psychologists our early relationships with parents help us to make a “love map” that effects on our whole lives. Whenever we fall in love our beloved become a part of ourselves and their ideas, characteristics and attitudes strongly effect on ours. Objective of this study is to examine socio-cultural constraints on love marriage, considering the following groups: family, tribe, ethnic and society. This paper will apply some sociological theories and on the light of them will analyze a first-hand research on love marriage in the Bamyan province of Afghanistan. Purposive sampling technique has been used for the selection of sample and its methodology is quantitative approach. The resources are acquired through the questionnaire method of data collection from both male and female who had love experiences, interviews with local administrators who deal with love marriage and family problems and secondary literatures.

**Key words:** Family, Ethnic group, Love relationship, Love marriage, Social- Cultural, Tradition, Constraints.

## **Introduction**

Any theory on “love” builds on a theory of human existence. Sociology of family and marriage tends to define it from a psychological perspective as a strong emotion and feeling between two persons upon their needs to give and to receive (Restivo, 1977). On the other hand, the experience of loneliness is a source of all anxieties and depression for the human being. Being separate from, who you want to be with, means being without human power and capacity. Hence, being separate shows your helpless, aloneness and inability to grasp the society and the world, indeed you cannot promote self-actualization (Fromm, 1956). However, all men in every society and from different cultures confront to this challenge that how overcome his separateness and find one who is the better half of him. Feelings of love and passion have strong effect in every aspect of our lives, forming and coloring our attitudes and behaviors, and it breaks the walls of prison of aloneness.

According to social exchange theory every individual is trying to maximize his pleasure or benefit and minimize his pain or cost. When individual enters into a society react to other behaviors rationally and arrange his life on the base of cost-benefit relationship. In a relationship cost has negative value and benefit has positive value. Cost can be money, time, effort and etc. and benefit can be money, pleasure, support and etc (Fowler, 2007). Throughout this theory, if one feeling no longer being benefit in a relationship can break up it and vice versa. In a relationship both side trying to have a positive negotiation and reach a beneficial agreement. Love has the highest benefit and lowest cost to both sides because throughout the social exchange model benefit and cost derive from two decisions. In a love relationship both sides need to take responsibility for one another.

In the pre-modern age most marriages took place because of favorable positions for one’s self or one’s family as a political or economic arrangement. Historically, marriages have not been opted on the base of love but were selected by parents or families for those who wanted to marry (Giddens, 1992). However, any intimate relationship can influence on one’s life style. Love, liking, romance, sexuality, and different other relationships can take place intimately. Intimate relationship commonly is an interpersonal relationship between female and male comprising psychological, emotional and physical relation and all human intimate relationships are quite different from one era to other and it can be divided in three stages: pre-modern, modern and

post-modern. Love is a product of modern age or at least associated with modernization (Giddens, 1992). There is no any specific definition about the beginning and end of these eras and also it will not clarify that all human societies moved ahead at the same time. In modern or post-modern societies love is considered primarily as a socially acceptable reason for a successful sexual relationship. However, in Afghanistan sexual intercourse mostly happen after arranged marriage in the purpose of reproduction rather than enjoyment. In a traditional society like Afghanistan, the concept of love faces to many questions: Is love a sensual proximity? Is love associated with lust? Does love equate to sexuality or is it a meeting of two souls? In this article “love” is considered as an interpersonal relationship along with self-identity and self-actualizing in collective life. From this viewpoint, it attempts to examine socio-cultural constraints on love marriage in the Bamyan province of Afghanistan.

### **Objective of study**

- To examine socio-cultural constraints on love marriage in the Bamyan province of Afghanistan.
- To explore the specific constraints on love marriage faced in the family environment and society.

### **Methodology**

A quantitative methodological approach was used for this article. A questionnaire was distributed and interviewed from lovers both male and female. Furthermore, local administrations that deal with love marriage and family problems in Bamyan were interviewed. This method provided an overview of socio-cultural constraints on love marriage and their experiences across the Bamyan province.

The SPSS program as a tool was used in order to create a database for descriptive analysis and qualitative methods of analysis were employed to generate more qualitative information. Questionnaire results were entered and analyzed using this instrument and basic descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, correlations etc., were used for the scaled responses and closed-ended questions.

The collected data classified by objective of the study that address to features of socio-cultural constraints in the context of Bamyan. Rechecking and recoding have been conducted in order to ensure about more accuracy and validity of the classifications data and analyzing of factors.

## **Data analysis and discussion**

### **1. Profile of lovers**

The questionnaires were conducted with 15 male and 10 female who had experience of love marriage during around two months in Bamyan province. Purposive sampling technique has been used for the selection of sample. All of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 31 years old and no one is under illegal age of marriage. Therefore, love marriage can decrease child marriage that is not unknown in the villages of Afghanistan. Students, shopkeepers, teachers, government administrators and self-employed are the respondents of this field work that have love marriage experience. Before marriage, love dating seems to happen secretly and seldom, while most of the respondents demonstrated their love to each other through social media and technology. According to the each occupational group, the main place to meet their beloved was their occupational area; students in the university, shopkeepers at the bazaar and so on.

**Table 1: Profile of lovers**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	Male	15	60
	Female	10	40
	Total	25	100.0
Age	18-24	12	48
	25-31	13	52
	Total	25	100.0
Occupation	Student	12	48
	Shopkeeper	3	12
	Teacher	1	4
	Self-employed	6	24
	Government administrator	3	12
	Total	25	100.0
Lover communication before marriage	Calling and Chatting through social media	22	88

Dating	2	8
Letter	1	4
Total	25	100

**Source, field survey 2018**

## **2. The practice of love and its constraints**

The study shows that nearly 90% of the respondents prefer love marriage and 8% of respondents remarked arrange marriage. Violence against women is common in Afghanistan which mostly happens in family between spouses, but our data shows that 17 love couple commits violence seldom and 5 of them never get angry on each other. Despite the preference of youth to love marriage, costumes and traditions make a situation to face them to many problems.

According to 21 lovers' responses, as much as lovers come close together their families and tribes go far from each other and mostly do not have communication. 22 lovers remarked that love relationship and love marriage brought them in an unsecure situation. 72% of respondents declared that love marriage isolated them from society, tribe and family and decreased their social dignities. 23 persons of lovers responded that their families were not agreeing with their love marriage. Tribes are another group who intervene to love relationship and love marriage. Nevertheless, why love is not acceptable for the families and society as a premise of marriage? The answer will comes out from studying of traditions, costumes and structure of society. Arranged marriage is common in most parts of Afghanistan, and love relationship consider nearly as promiscuity. The culture of society is worry about sexual relationship of lovers before their legal marriage. Love cannot decriminalize the sexual relations solely. Having sexual relationship out of matrimony is called "Zena". According to the Islamic rules those who commit Zena will punish drastically like stoning and flogging in public place. However, in Afghanistan the punishments of lovers, especially of girls, mostly happen by the close relatives like father or brothers, not by the law and court. Many honor-killings have occurred, and girls have been the main victims of them. In our study, most of the respondents had been forced to house arrest, put in shelter or even in jail. We conducted interviews with Bamyān directorate of women affairs and the regional human rights directorate in Bamyān. Including other human affairs, these two governmental organizations deal with honor-killings and lovers' problems as well. According to these

organizations, they strongly support the lovers in cases of accessing justice of the court prosecutor, protecting them in shelters when they flee from home in the purpose of marry, or when they do not feel secure. Nevertheless, our data shows that two lovers had been threaten with death, three lovers had temporary migrated, two lovers had refuged to shelters, 5 lovers had been imprisoned, 5 lovers had been in house arrest, 6 lovers had been forced to pass all of these punishments and only two lovers out of 25 had not faced to any problems. Despite all of these challenges, some female lovers had been forced to undergo medical tests whether they had sexual relationship or not. In this case, we interviewed the regional hospital of Bamyan and they pointed out that mostly court and family force the female lovers to have such tests. According to our data 4 girls had the experience of medical tests to indicate their chastity or lewdness.

**Table 2: The practice of love and its constraints**

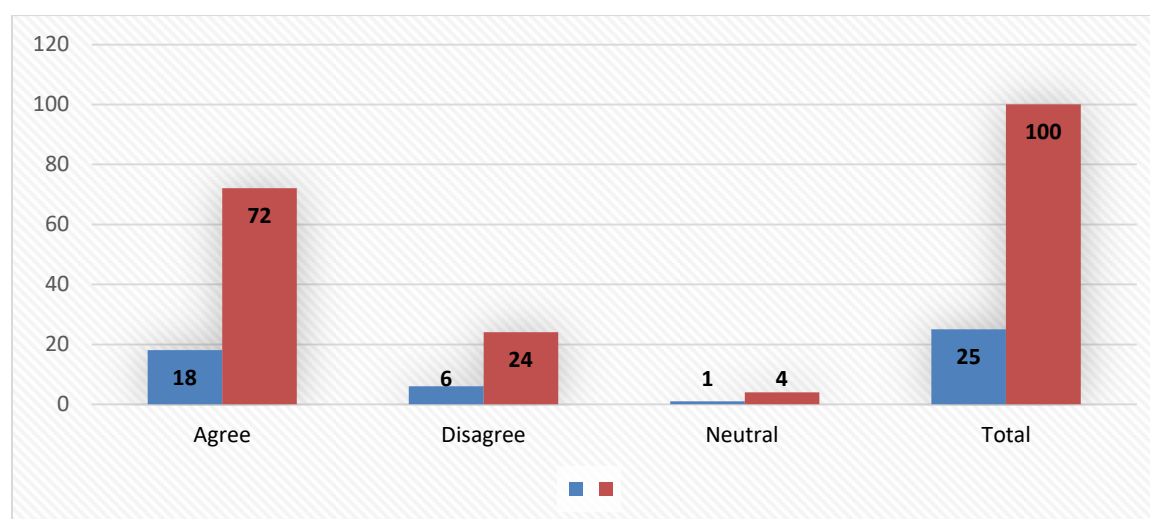
<b>Factors</b>	<b>Scale</b>	<b>respondents</b>	<b>percentage</b>
Priority of marriage	Love marriage	23	92
	Arranged marriage	2	8
	Total	25	100.0
Violence of spouse	Usually	3	12
	Seldom	17	68
	Never	5	20
	Total	25	100.0
Communication of lover's families after marriage	Yes	4	16
	No	21	84
	Total	25	100
Safety of lovers	Safe	3	12
	Unsafe	22	88
	Total	25	100
Social dignity after love marriage	Decrease	18	72
	Increase	1	4
	No effect	6	24
lover's families agreement to their love marriage	Total	25	100
	Agree	23	92
	Disagree	2	8
Punishments	Total	25	100.0
	Imprisonment	5	20
	House arrest	5	20
	Threat with death	2	8

	Migration	3	
	Refuge to shelter	2	8
	All factors	6	24
	No constraints	2	8
	Total	25	100
Medical test	Yes	4	16
	No	21	84
	Total	25	100.0

Source, filed survey 2018

### 3. Love marriage out of ethnic group and sect

If love relationship occurs between two different ethnic groups or sects, the social sensitivity will be almost uncontrollable. There are many lovers who have lost their lives or have been enforced to leave their society. In Afghanistan marriages usually take place within the same sect, ethnic and cultural ground. Despite all challenges, 18 respondents support love marriage with different ethnic groups and sects.



**Figure 1: Love marriage out of ethnic group and sect**

Sources: filed survey, 2018

In order to show how the customs of ethnic groups are strict against love marriage we bring here shortly the love story of Zakia and Mohammad Ali: In the contemporary times, Zakia and Mohammad Ali are the most famous real life lovers in Afghanistan. Rod Nordland, an American

journalist, named them Afghanistan's Romeo and Juliet in his book titled *The Lovers: Afghanistan's Romeo and Juliet*. Their story began in Bamyan province in 2013. Zakia and Mohammad Ali were neighbors and they had been confessing their love to each other secretly for years. They had never been together indoors but usually they met each other secretly in the fields of their families (Nordland, 2016). Zakia was Tajik and her sect was Sunni and Mohammad Ali was Shia and ethnically Hazara. Hazara and Tajik are two large ethnic groups in Afghanistan with mostly different sects and customs. Therefore, the both families, and especially Zakia's, did not agree to marry of them (Krever, 2016). According to Afghan customs and in conservative families, women's marriages happen by father or elder brother's decisions. Hence, Zakia ran away from her home in the wish of marrying her beloved, Mohammad Ali. Both Zakia and Mohammad Ali were then 18 years old and legally adults, but according to traditions and customs, a young girl running away from home in the hope of marrying her beloved is a taboo. If Zakia had not been protected by Bamyan's women shelter, and if she had not escaped from Bamyan province then Afghanistan, the other honor-killing would record horribly in Bamyan. After running away from her home, her father, her elder brother and her cousins had been exploring to find the lovers and to kill both of them for the crime of being in love. (Nordland, 2016). They faced to many problems such as being in captivity, hiding for long times, staying on the top of mountains and spending their honey moon in caves, and travelling by foot. Finally they had eloped and escaped the honor-killing and now they are living in America with their small daughter Roqia. (Krever, 2016).



## **Conclusions**

This study was trying to know traditional culture, customs and diversity of ethnic and tribes in the case of barriers for love marriage. The questionnaires were conducted with 15 male and 10 female who had experience of love relationship during around two months in the Bamyan province of Afghanistan. The study found out three important points: First, most of the respondents indicated that they satisfied with their love marriage and support love relationship out of their ethnic groups and sects but the socio-cultural norms are against such relationships. Second, according to the data and observation, one of the main advantages of love marriage can be decreasing violence against women by husbands then marriage which arranged by parents. The data shows that violence is committed seldom and even never by lover spouse while violence is not unknown in most of Afghan families. Third, Bride lovers usually cannot meet their family after love marriage. Therefore, in some cases love relationships are recorded as a cause of conflict within families, tribes and ethnic groups. Love relationship of Zakia and Mohammad Ali is a clear example of ethnic conflict that took place out of their families' agreements in 2013 from different ethnic groups and sects.

Such instances provide rich entry points into looking at the ways kinship relations are governed and shaped up among large numbers of people belonging to an ethnic identity. Further this can be used to look at how the same practices negotiate with a growing atmosphere of globalization and the so-called mythical dissolution of cultural boundaries.

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