

Early Marriage among Muslims in Sri Lanka

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Early marriage means a marriage which takes place before the age of maturity. It can be found in each and every society. The occurrence of early marriages can also be seen among the Muslims in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study attempted to analyze the current situation regarding early marriages in Muslim community and how it differs from Sharia law as well as how Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act influences such situations. Also this study focused on the reasons, impacts and socio-economic background of the families. This study was conducted with eighty people such as women who got married at the young age, husbands, parents, officers, federation people, Quazi judges, psychiatrists and students, using both probability and non-probability sampling. The research is mainly based on primary data collected through interviews, questionnaires and case studies and secondary data collected from documents such as books, journals and web sites. Some of the key findings of this research were the reasons for early marriages and their impact. The reasons for early marriage were poverty, educational status, traditions and customs, immoral relationships, affairs, separation between parents etc. Their impacts such as divorce, disease, no right to refund the properties, frustration on life, psychological issues and blaming of society were significant findings of this research. Apart from these, reasons were found for the problems occurring after marriage as a consequence of early marriages. This study has also explored the ideas of Sharia law which emphasizes the maturity as a condition for marriage, how Muslim Marriage Divorce Act fixed the age of marriage to twelve in 1951 and how it differs from the contemporary period's maturity. Moreover this study proposes that the age limit for marriage should be changed according to the present period and maturity. Finally, some recommendations are also mentioned in this study as solutions for early marriages and to promote healthier and happier family life among the Muslim community in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: divorce, early marriages, Muslim community, Muslim marriage and divorce act, sharia law