

Qualitative study on
Community Values and Perceptions on
Teenage Pregnancy

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1. Background

Rajasthan is the largest state of India and is divided into 32 districts. It is a diverse state in terms of its topography, which is dominated by the Aravali hills, the oldest mountain range of the world, and Thar Desert, which covers around 61% of its land area. Tourists are attracted to Rajasthan because of its rich cultural and traditional heritage, which is still preserved in several forts and palaces as well as its colorful and rustic inhabitants. The southern part of Rajasthan is mainly divided into five districts: Udaipur, Banswara, Dungarpur, Chittorgarh and Rajsamand. Rajsamand was part of Udaipur district until it acquired an independent status after the population census of 1991. The tribal population dominates the Southern Rajasthan districts, although other castes like Rajputs, Brahmins, Jains etc. also inhabit these regions.

ARTH's field program area covers a population of 50000 in 3 different blocks of the Udaipur and Rajsamand districts. Both these districts have noticed a marked increase in population over the past decade and parallel to it, a progressively developing industry. Both Udaipur and Rajsamand are rich in marble deposits, and marble mining is a profitable and lucrative industry that acts as among one of the important sources of income for the people of this area. The main vocations in the rural areas are agriculture, manual labor or mining. In recent years however, job opportunities in the mining industry for local rural people have gradually reduced because laborers from Bihar, who work for much lower wages, are replacing them. Because of hilly terrain, unpredictable rains, and rapidly depleting water sources, agriculture is no longer a reliable source of income. This fact, coupled with the lack of mining work, has resulted in high rates of migration to towns and cities.

People belonging to the tribal community mostly reside in numerous hamlets that are scattered and far off from the main villages. This has hampered their development because they do not have the road and electricity access that has reached most of the main villages inhabited by economically better off castes.

The literacy levels of these districts is low, especially the female literacy rate. The literacy rate in rural areas is 52.2% in Udaipur district and 51.9% for Rajsamand district. Female literacy rates for both these districts are 35.5% and 33.2% respectively. In the tribal belt this statistic is even starker, because the majority of the population is totally illiterate.

Child marriage is a near universal phenomenon in rural Rajasthan (median age of marriage for girls, 14.6 years¹), and is followed by a formal "gauna" ceremony a few months to years after puberty, whereupon the couple begins to cohabitate. This tradition has been carried forward from many decades not only among the tribal castes but also among other castes. Most girls become sexually active around mid-adolescence and go through pregnancy and childbirth while they are still teenagers. International human rights² and consensus³ documents affirm that child

¹ National Family Health Survey, 1992-3

² The Political Covenant (Article 23) and the Women's Convention (Article 16)

³ ICPD Programme of Action (Cairo, 1994), FWCW Platform for Action (Beijing, 1995)

marriage and sexual initiation violate human rights, since they occur without the free and full consent of the child or adolescent. A lack of political will and practical difficulties (like proving that marriage and not merely engagement has occurred) have prevented the effective enforcement of India's Child Marriage Restraint Act, especially in the state of Rajasthan. In its Concluding Observations on the report of India submitted under the Political Covenant in 1997, the Human Rights Committee has noted:

“While acknowledging measures taken to outlaw child marriages,... the Committee remains gravely concerned that legislative measures are not sufficient and that measures designed to change the attitudes that allow such practices should be taken....The Committee therefore recommends that the Government take further measures to overcome these problems...⁴”

Findings of the National Family Health Survey, 1992-93 reveals that the median age of marriage for women (age group of 20-49 years) was 14.9 years, while the average age for 'Gauna' was 16.2 years. NFHS-2 reveals that the median age of marriage for women was 15.5 years, whereas the age for gauna was 16.7 years. In a survey of currently married and recently delivered women in Kumbhalgarh block of Rajsamand district, the median age of marriage was 12 years, while median age of cohabitation was 14 years. Thus adolescent sexual activity within marriage is the norm for most girls. Most girls (and their husbands) are either unaware of the consequences of teenage pregnancy, or lack access to information or services for contraception. A survey carried out by ARTH in its field area revealed that 58% of married teenagers aged 15-19 years had either borne a child or were currently pregnant.

Apart from being a health hazard and personal burden, teenage pregnancy is an extreme manifestation of the lack of reproductive choice among adolescent girls. Given that more than legislative enforcement is required to prevent child marriage and its consequences, we felt that ARTH needs to develop a targeted approach to address the problem of teenage motherhood in its field program area. In order to develop a strategy for preventing and dealing with teenage pregnancy, we felt that there was a need to understand in-depth as to how the various members of the community perceived teenage pregnancy. A qualitative study was therefore carried out to understand community values, beliefs and perceptions related to teenage sexuality and sexual initiation, and teenage motherhood, and to inform the development of a communication strategy for preventing teenage motherhood. The study included discussions with parents, parents-in-law, teenage girls and boys.

2. Objectives, research questions and study framework

The objectives of the study were:

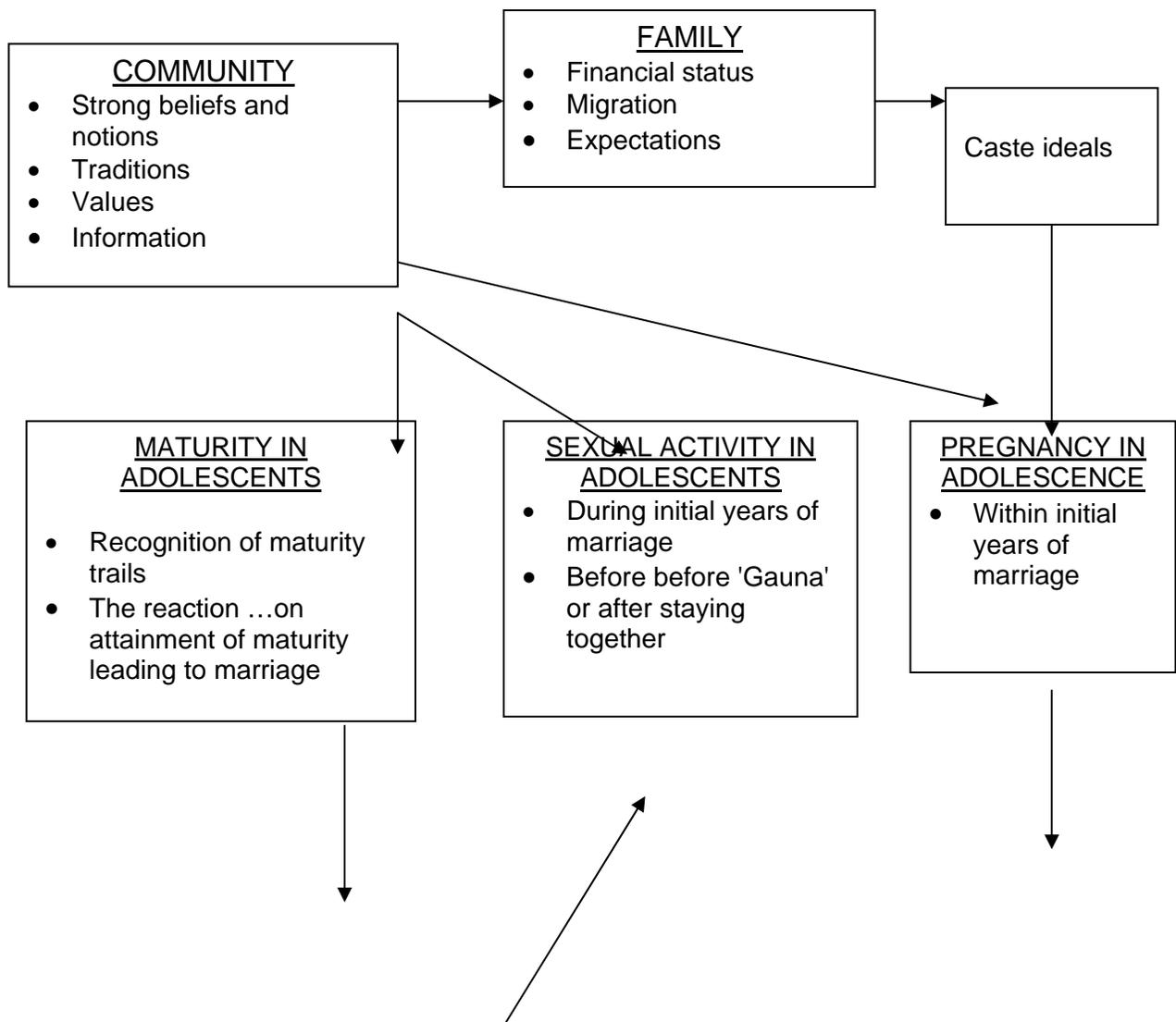
⁴ United Nations, Human Rights Committee. *Concluding Observations on India: 04/08/97*. UN Doc. CCPR/C/79/Add. 81 at para 16

1. What are the perceptions towards sexual activity and pregnancy among adolescents in the rural community? In other words, how acceptable is sexual activity and pregnancy of adolescents:
 - To adolescent boys and girls themselves?
 - To their families?
 - To their in-laws families?
2. What are the expectations of the community from adolescent girls regarding pregnancy during the initial years of marriage?
3. What are the health and educational needs of adolescent boys and girls?

Study framework

Keeping in mind the objectives of our study and after assimilating facts based on prior studies conducted on adolescence/adolescent boys and girls in these regions an outline has been chalked on which we have based our own studies and proceedings.

The acceptance of adolescent pregnancy by the community



ADOLESCENT
MALES/FEMALES

- Sex Education
- Information on contraceptives

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS
OF ADOLESCENT
FEMALES

- Decision making regarding pregnancy
- Pre and post natal care

Assumptions: While developing this study framework, we held following assumptions:

- The behavior of any specific community and its members is dictated by the prevalent social norms (beliefs, customs, values and traditions) in their community.
- Identification or recognition of maturity traits for both boys and girls is based on specifically changing physical characteristics during adolescence.
- As soon as the signs of maturity are present in an adolescent, the community members' attitudes towards him/her change to one focused on marriage.
- Sexual activity starts among adolescents after physical and mental maturity. Sexual activity by adolescents is perceived by the community to have two stages: i. sexual activity during initial years of marriage before the couple does not formally start staying together (generally unacceptable to the community) and ii. Sexual activity after they start living together (Gauna).
- Adolescent pregnancy is influenced by factors such as migration, finances, familial pressures, and caste ideals.
- Erroneous, inaccurate and partial awareness on issues of sex and contraception are also responsible for the high incidence of adolescent pregnancy.
- An adolescent's inability to make autonomous decisions on matters related to pregnancy and childbirth, such as contraception, also leads to a high incidence of adolescent pregnancy.
- Teenage pregnancy is an especially fragile state since an adolescent is yet not mature enough physically or mentally to handle the pressures related to pregnancy.

3. Methodology

Multiple qualitative methods were used to collect information on the above issues. The methods used were as follows:

1. Free Listing
2. Focused Group Discussions (FGD)
3. Intensive/In-depth Interviews
4. Hypothetical Situations

Fifteen villages belonging to four panchayats (out of 14 panchayats) were selected for the study. Three panchayat samitis and four interiorly located panchayats were selected through a process of random sampling. The profiles of these 4 panchayats are given in table 1.

| District | Panchayat Samiti | Gram Panchayat | Population in (2001) | SC/ST Percentage |
|-----------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Udaipur | Badgaon | K1 | 3806 | 31.6 |
| | Gogunda | G | 2825 | 57.1 |
| Rajsamand | Kumbhalgarh | P | 2931 | 69.4 |
| | | K2 | 2942 | 52.1 |
| Total | | | 12504 | 52.5 |

52.5% of the population was SC/ST: 49% belonged to schedule tribes, and 3.5% belonged to the scheduled caste population. The percentage of women in these panchayats was 49.8% of the total population. The majority of the scheduled tribes consist of the Gametis, while the

Meghwals, Khatiks and Mogyas constituted the scheduled castes. The other castes are dominated by Rajputs followed by Brahmins and Jains.

In each of the panchayats, at least one of the four aforementioned methods was used. Participants were categorized under the two major caste groups -- the scheduled castes/tribes group, and other castes group. All information was collected after obtaining proper consent. The qualitative information was collected and assembled by a 4-member research team including two males and two females, two of whom were trained and experienced researchers and two of whom were field investigators. The analysis of this information in the office took around 3 months.

The study methods are detailed below:

1. Free Listing --In this method parents and parents-in-law of unmarried boys and girls were asked two different questions regarding their expectations of their prospective daughter-in-law/sons-in-law.

This procedure took an average of 15-20 minutes. The participants were asked to answer only open-ended questions and their responses were then free listed. The respondents included 55 mothers of unmarried adolescent boys or girls and 50 fathers of unmarried adolescent boys or girls.

2. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) -- Out of the total twelve FGDs conducted, six of them were conducted amongst the schedule castes/tribes and six amongst the other castes. The classification of the FGDs is as follows:
 - 4 FGDs with mothers-in-law & mothers of adolescent girls or boys
 - 4 FGDs with fathers-in-law & fathers of adolescent girls or boys
 - 2 FGDs with young married males between the age group of 18-25 years but with at least one child.
 - 2 FGDs with married young females between the age group of 16-22 years with an experience of adolescent pregnancy.

For each FGD, the research team went to the village and prepared a list of eligible persons for that particular FGD and obtained consent. Those who agreed to participate were invited to the place of interview at a given time. Most of these discussions were either conducted in the Anganwadi Centres or the school campus of the village. The whole procedure took around 45-60 minutes.

For FGDs, we found it difficult to assemble young men because a large number of them had migrated to cities. It was also difficult to assemble young adolescent mothers because they were overburdened with household work and sometimes they did not get permission from senior household members to attend these discussions. A total of 43 women and 55 boys or men participated in the study.

3. In-depth Interviews—Sixteen in-depth interviews were conducted with young mothers (between the age of 16-22 years) with an experience of adolescent pregnancy and

married males (between 18-25 years) who had at least one child. The eligible participants were identified on the basis of contact with key informants. If the potential participants gave consent, an in-depth-interview was scheduled at a time convenient to them. Each interview took a minimum 35 minutes and a maximum of 55 minutes. Eight out of the 16 interviews were conducted with scheduled tribe people.

4. Hypothetical Situations (3) - Illustrations related to 3 hypothetical situations were posed in front of the participants and they were asked to respond to questions related to these situations. These situation related to:
 - An adolescent girl who is married for last 1 year and has high grade fever
 - A 17-year-old married girl (married for last 8 months) is 4 months pregnant
 - A 17-18 year old girl has a 5-month old son. She wants to delay her second her pregnancy.

The participants included 40 women and 40 men belonging to the two major caste groups. The whole procedure took around 25 minutes. The third hypothetical situation involved the participation of 20 more women participants.

4. Research Findings and Discussions

4.1 Socio-Demographic Background:

In this region an inclination towards migration for better job opportunities has also been observed. A survey conducted by 'Arth' organization in the year 2002 in 27 villages with a population of 35,000 situated in the Panchayat Samitis of Kumbhalgarh and Gogunda areas reveal that out of the total number of married females in these areas the husbands of 14.7% SC/ST women and 38.9% women of other castes were staying in some other city or town because of work. This migration rate was even higher (49.6%) amongst married women between the age group of (13-19) years. This inclination of migration is supposed to be the outcome of lack of job opportunities in their own villages.

In tribal belts the lands are arid and less fertile than other places because tribals live in hilly areas where land is undulated and rocky and not suitable for agriculture. Failure of rains also causes havoc at times. Generally rains are unpredictable in most parts of Rajasthan and therefore whatever harvest is produced by the people in these regions is only enough to mete out their basic needs, on the whole agriculture is not a very profitable occupation.

Statistics reveal that almost 22% families of the rural areas in Southern Rajasthan live in poverty and also that the migration rate of men has considerably increased over the last few years. Though this migration rate has directly been responsible for an increase in the family income.

Since the main population in the regions chosen for study is dominated by Gametis in the scheduled tribes and Rajputs in other castes all inferences and conclusions have been drawn on the basis of information provided by these two castes.

4.2 Community's perception towards 'Engagement, Marriage and Gauna

4.2.1 Engagement

It has emerged from various group discussions and in-depth interviews that in these regions there is no fixed age for engagement between boys and girls. The engagement depends solely on the suitability of the proposal. Men and women revealed in many interviews and FGDs that sometimes an engagement takes place in a 'Palna' or cradle (when the baby is merely some months or years old).

- *We don't mind marrying early if a suitable match and a worthy household is proposed.*
- *Sometimes the engagement ceremony is done at a very early and tender age.*
- *The child is barely 2-3 years old when engagements take place.*
- *We abide by no strict norms regarding the age of engagement and marriage, sometimes both are simultaneously done (Women's FGD)*
- *There is no particular age for engagement.*
- *Engagements are carried out in cradles also (Men's FGD)*

People in these communities believe that after a certain age it is hard to find a suitable match, and this fear acts as one of the motivations for marrying off their children at an early age. Before finalizing a match few factors are taken into consideration, the most important one being the financial status of the proposed family. Parents and elders of the boy and girl decide on all matches. Only after the match is finalized does the marriage or engagement take place. The boy or girl has absolutely no say in any matters regarding his or her marriage.

Sometimes even after a boy or girl attains maturity, marriage is not possible due to financial problems. In such cases, people practice 'Aata-Satta' which means that they marry their daughter into one family and get a daughter-in-law from that same family. In effect, daughters-in-law under the practice of 'Aata-Sata' replace daughters.

"If marriage is not possible, then through the practice of 'Aata-Sata', we give out daughters and get their daughters."

4.2.2 Marriage

In most rural communities in these districts, child marriage is very common. From FGDs, two determining factors regarding the suitable time of marriage have emerged: the age of the boy and girl and the maturity level of the boy and girl. Maturity has been divided into two aspects:

1. "Motiyar Hona" -- meaning to be physically mature
2. "Hoshiyar Hona" -- meaning to be mentally mature

Marriages of adolescent boys and girls take place on the basis of accurate estimates of age made by their parents. In addition to the tribal caste, people with low socio-economic backgrounds marry their girls at an early age (around 14-16 years) (see annexure 2 to learn more about the customs and traditions related to marriage). Boys are also married early, between the ages of 13-20 years. These facts were affirmed on the basis of in-depth interviews conducted with 16 young men and women who confirmed that their own average age of marriage was 17.1 years

(for men) and 12.4 years (women). Many men who professed to know the correct legal age for marriage said that it was 17-18 years, which was wrong. Women put this age around 12-14 years.

Maturity -- Being mature was defined by almost all people of different castes and communities as being 'Motiyar' and 'Motiyar' in turn was indicative of marked physical changes in external appearance during adolescence. Through interviews and FGDs, we learned that 'Motiyar' in connection with girls meant 'Bhar Jawan Hona' (the body fills up with youth), 'Chaati Upadna' (developing breasts), 'Chehro Batawe' (the face also reveals), etc. In connection with boys it meant the growth of facial hair, eruption of pimples and blackheads on the face, and youthfulness.

According to another view, maturity was also defined as attaining mental maturity ("hoshiyar hona"). A girl's mental maturity was shown through her efficiency in dealing with household affairs as well as managing outside jobs. It was said that if a girl "goes to the forest to collect firewood, goes to mines for labouring, gets fodder for the cattle, looks after her younger brother and sisters and is able to manage everything smoothly," then she is considered mentally mature or "hoshiyar." For boys, being "hoshiyar" meant working in fields, labouring in mines and at times, even migrating to earn a livelihood.

It is interesting to note that nobody related or connected maturity in any way to a girl's menstrual cycle. According to a strong belief within the women of the Gameti tribe, a girl's menstrual cycle starts only after her first sexual intercourse after the 'Gauna' ceremony. During personal interviews all women emphatically maintained that their own menstrual cycle commenced only after cohabiting with their partner, and that too after the 'Gauna' ceremony. They also emphasized that if a girl did not marry for 20 years her menstrual cycle would not commence till then.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Until a girl marries there is no need for her to use any cloth as her periods or menstrual cycle does not commence till then. (Women's FGD)</i>• <i>Only after sexual activity do periods commence</i>• <i>Never seen it before marriage</i>• <i>Until and unless we have sex, menstruation does not start (agreement by all present women)</i> (Adolescent girl's FGD) |
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In contradiction to the opinion of the Gameti tribal women, women of other castes accepted a relation between age and menstrual cycle. They maintained that the menstrual cycle started after a certain age although the older women of these castes pointed out that due to over consumption of tea nowadays, a lot of heat was generated within the body leading to early menstruation at the age of 10-12 years. They strongly maintained that their own menstrual cycle started only after their "Gauna" ceremony and sexual interaction with their male counterparts.

Basis of Marriage -- A few questions were raised during FGDs to understand the main motivations behind early marriage. The answers were then classified under different headings to understand their significance more clearly.

1. Apprehensions Related to a Girl's Sexuality -- The men and women of the Gameti clan showed apprehensions with regard to an adolescent girl's sexuality, mainly concerned that if a girl was not married at a right age then she would probably develop an 'illicit' love affair with someone or that a boy might force her into a marriage. A similar concern was registered within the Rajput community, which maintained that if girls are not married at the right age and time, their possibility of eloping with boys from other castes increases.

From the observed apprehensions and concerns it was apparent that the whole act of marriage for the rural communities was connected to a family's honour, esteem, and respect, and thus, a daughter's honour and marriage was more of a liability than an occasion of joy.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>In our Rajput community, we don't keep girls for longer</i>• <i>What if she elopes with some one, or some one forcefully carries her off?</i>• <i>What if we lose our honour and respect?(Men's FGD)</i> |
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As mentioned before, a widespread belief prevalent among the scheduled castes and tribes is that menstrual periods commence only after sexual intercourse. Therefore, parents try to marry their daughters early so that their periods start only in their husband's home. They fear that if a girl's menstrual period starts in her parents' home, questions might be raised about her virginity and sexual morality. This belief therefore encourages the practice of early marriage and co-habitation.

2. Against religion -- In many communities (especially in the Rajput community), the parents of teenage adolescents believe that if a girl's menstrual cycle commences before marriage then her parents do not get their due religious merit or virtue which they call 'Punya' for 'Kanyadaan' (bestowing of daughter in marriage to another family). They therefore try to ensure that their daughters are married before their menstrual cycle commences.

In a situation where a girl does begin her menstrual period before marriage, a rectification has been suggested to minimise its adverse impact: if after a proper 'Mahurat' (an auspicious time for ceremonies) is established, the girl is married under a mango tree and the Brahmin (the holy Indian priest who conducts the marriage) is fed and given 'Dakshina' or alms, the sin is washed off.

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| <p><i>"After periods if a girl is married under a mango tree, and a Brahmin is fed, then the sin is washed off".</i></p> |
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From the aforementioned rectification it emerges that now and then there are sporadic cases of girls whose menstrual periods commence at their parent's homes also.

Financial viewpoint -- Another important and decisive factor leading to early marriage of boys and girls is the financial background of their family. The expenditure incurred on marriage ceremonies dents the already limited resources of a family. During FGDs with men and women, it was found that if in a family there are two to three girls of varying ages in a close range, - for example, the eldest daughter is around 15 years old, the second around 12-13 years old and the youngest around 8-10 years old, then all three are married off at one time to save future expenses on further marriages.

- *If there is one elder daughter who is big enough for marriage and if she has two to three younger sisters then all are married together to save money. In this way one saves money on clothes and dowry since they can be bought together. (Men's FGD)*
- *Either spend three times or save money by marrying at one go. (Women's FGD)*

Under adverse financial circumstances, if they are unable to meet the expenses incurred by the marriage, a girl's family borrows money from relatives, friends and even, at times, from the groom's family. The groom's family then bears the entire expenditure for both the sides. This money is spent on entertaining the groom's family, friends and relatives during the marriage (Annexure 2).

- *If we have less money, we borrow it from the boy's family and then arrange for the dowry.*
- *Suppose the girls father is very poor then he borrows money (Women's FGD)*
- *Marriage is a mutual ceremony. If the groom's father bears the expenditure it is not wrong, but only some agree, not all. (Men's FGD)*

People from tribal community revealed that if a girl's father is unable to repay the debt taken from the boy's family for marriage, then it is expected that daughter-in-law will earn to repay it.

- *The girl is burdened to pay back her parents' debt taken during the time of her marriage by either going to the mines or factories to earn.*
- *It is a sad fate for the girl.*
- *What can the girl say, her parents took the money but she has to repay it by earning. If her father had not taken the money she would not be expected to labour and toil so hard. (Women's FGD)*
- *He (the father) is getting the money from someone else and putting burden on the girl. (Men's FGD)*

Basis for Choosing a Boy/Girl for Marriage

In all castes of the rural community, parents and elders of the family choose prospective brides/grooms for their children and their decision in these matters is final. Specific qualities in a boy or girl are used as reasons of choosing them for matrimony.

Matrimonial qualifications for boys are:

1. The earnings of a boy

2. His competency in work/business
3. The financial status of his family
4. His age (he should be more or less equal to the girl).
5. His ability to make sound financial judgements (i.e. he should not be spendthrift)
6. His reputation (he should not be infamous)

Matrimonial qualifications for girls are:

1. Efficiency in work.
2. Ability to manage household affairs with perfection.
3. Lack of glaring defect or imperfection (physical or mental)

She should be able to manage the house efficiently. She should not be blind of one eye or have some disparity or disability.

During FGDs and in-depth interviews the younger generation revealed they would never oppose the will of their parents and elders in matrimonial matters and that the choice of their parents was final and deciding. They also said that it was their duty to accept and abide by the will of their elders.

- *The girl has to go where her parents will her to go, be it to a one eyed man or a man with any disability, once given by the parents. No matter what, she has to live her entire life with that man.
(Adolescent girls' FGD)*
- *Whosoever the parents choose, their decision is final. We cannot make our own choice.
(21 years old boy during in-depth interview)*

4.2.3 'Aana' / 'Gauna'

In rural Rajasthan the girl does not start cohabiting with her husband immediately after marriage. After a certain (unfixed) period of time, a ceremony called 'Aana' or 'Gauna' is carried out. The Gauna ceremony signifies that the girl is now mature enough to stay with her husband and start a new life at her in-laws' residence. Generally after this ceremony the girl starts visiting her in-laws house more frequently, staying there for longer periods of time until she permanently shifts there (more information on customs and traditions related to cohabitation have been given in 1).

The basis and time of 'Aana': The decision of when to conduct the 'Aana' ceremony is solely decided by the parents of the girl, but is influenced by her new parents-in-law. Although the in-laws exhort the girls' parents for Aana, it is only after the approval of the girls' parents that a date is decided for the ceremony. Usually the ceremony is carried out when a girl is 13-16 years of age and mentally mature, and the decision to conduct it rests on the necessity of the in-laws' family for the daughter to partake in the work burden, and how many women they already have in the home to work. The emphatic ownership claims held over their daughter-in-law by her in-laws also affect the parents' decision of when to have "Aana." An in-depth interview conducted with 8 young women revealed that their own age at the time of 'Aana' was between

11-16 years of age. This verifies our general perception about the age of girls at the time of 'Aana' (see annexure 5). Generally, the 'Aana' ceremony takes place within 1-5 years of marriage but if the girl is very young at the time of marriage then the 'Aana' ceremony is delayed by many years.

- *If the girl is young enough the 'Aana' ceremony takes place after 2 years but if she is very small then 'Aana' takes place only after 5-6 years (Male GD)*
- *Three weddings were carried out together and the smallest girls' 'Aana' has not yet taken place*

(Women's FGD)

It is said that the girl's parents never make a first move for the 'Aana' ceremony because a girl is considered to be a major help, especially in household affairs. They believe that if the need arises, the girls' in-laws will make the first call.

- *What is the hurry of the girls' parents for 'Aana'- they are more than willing to keep her with them as she partakes most of the household burden.*

The only exception to the above said is if the girl gets pregnant before 'Aana' or if the parents are suspicious that their daughter might develop an illicit love affair elsewhere. Then they try to conduct the 'Aana' ceremony as early as possible.

- *Parents say that household affairs here will be affected if we send her so early, so we will send her only after a few years. But in the meanwhile if she develops an affair or another relationship it is a cause for concern*

Another factor which plays a role in deciding the date of 'Aana' is when a girl attains physical and mental maturity, which translates to her ability to manage all affairs at home as well as outside of home and also her ability to fulfill all matrimonial duties.

- *If she is mature enough to manage household affairs then her 'Aana' must be done.*
- *If she cannot manage household chores, she is not sent until she learns to cook etc. she is not sent to her in-laws' place. (Men's FGD)*

Sometimes due to acute financial problems the 'Aana' ceremony is not done at all. In such cases the girl keeps going and coming to her in-laws place until she finally settles there.

- *If I don't have money for this ceremony, buying clothes, feeding guests etc. then I send off my daughter without Aana.*

(Men's FGD)

Young Rajput men of high socio-economic status revealed that in their caste the "Aana" ceremony takes place only after the birth of their first child and that sexual intercourse starts from the nuptial night itself. But in this case both the boy and girl are old enough and mature enough, being around 20-25 and 17-18 years respectively.

- *What? The nuptial night? That takes place on the day of the wedding itself (Adolescent boy's FGD)*

'Mangya Aana:' - Another special circumstance is "Mangya Aana", which takes place before the formal Aana ceremony. Mangya Aana, or "on demand/daughter-in-law on demand 'Aana'" occurs under special circumstances, like when the need for the daughter-in-law to share her in-laws' family's burden is especially acute, (i.e. during marriage functions or death ceremonies). On these occasions the girl stays at her in-law's place for a maximum period of 15-20 days. The parents and parents' -in-law of the girl take decisions regarding "Mangya Aana" collectively.

During 'Mangya Aana' the girl sleeps with her in-laws and any chance of sexual activity between husband and wife are rare.

- *Cannot interact with her husband in any way, cannot even speak to him. (Women's FGD)*
 - *I came at least 5 times but he did not touch me, not even touch my clothing or do anything vulgar. (A woman sharing her own experiences).*

But some families accept the fact that if both the girl and boy are mature and old enough, they can indulge in sexual activity, which, although not readily sanctioned, is sometimes acceptable because technically, the couple is married. In hypothetical situations, 26% of the people of both major communities (schedule castes/tribes and other castes) accepted that sexual activity before 'Aana' was not wrong and is acceptable to them, whereas by contrast, people during FGDs did not sanction sexual activity before 'Aana'.

- *If a girl cannot control her passions, then it is unlikely that a boy can, and so a relation is possible but then we all know that they are married after all.*
- *Depends on the age and maturity of the couple. If they are big and mature enough, a relationship develops on the 2nd or 3rd visit. (Women's FGD)*
- *If both are intelligent and mature then they build a physical relationship on the basis of mutual understanding. (Men's FGD)*

When asked why was it necessary to conduct an 'Aana' ceremony, people explained that initially just after marriage a girl is unable to adjust comfortably at her in-laws' place and feels very lonely, but if she keeps coming and going she becomes acclimatized to the atmosphere of her in-laws' place, while also familiarizing herself to the family members. Finally the atmosphere becomes congenial enough for her to shift permanently.

4.3 Community Values and Perceptions on Adolescent Pregnancy

The study revealed that the first childbirth birth was an early phenomenon among all communities just like early engagement, marriage and Aana. In-depth interviews conducted with young girls and boys consistently showed that a girl's age at the time of her first childbirth was 17-18 years.

Among all communities, newlywed couples are expected to produce a child within two to three years after the 'Aana' Ceremony/living together. The girl in these circumstances is under pressure to prove her reproductive abilities as soon as possible. Although the elders declare that children are the gift of God and that the time of birth of a child depends entirely on the will of God, they constantly push the newlyweds to produce a child. This steady pressure takes its toll on the newlywed couple, and in addition to being unable to enjoy marital bliss during their initial years of marriage, the pressure also seems to be a factor responsible for the high incidence in adolescent pregnancy.

During the hypothetical situations method of study, men and women of the older generation were asked to comment on a situation where a 17-year-old adolescent gets pregnant. At least 45% of the participants responded by saying that this was an occasion of joy and from their point of view 17 was the right age for conceiving. Some people informed on legal laws around (7.5%) mentioned the fact that it was illegal to get pregnant before the age of 18.

During the first phase of free listing elders were questioned on their expectations with regard to their daughters-in-law, and more than 50% of them emphatically maintained that their prime expectation from their daughter-in-laws was to produce children (see annexure 6).

During FGDs and in-depth interviews women of almost all ages and castes talked about the constant pressure put on them by in-laws and elders to give birth to a child as early as possible. This pressure seemed to be at the root of many women's fears that if they did not conceive within two to three years of 'Aana' they would be stigmatized and outcast as barren women. Another cause of concern projected by women was that their husbands might remarry if they did not conceive soon after marriage. If a woman is not able to bear a child within 10-15 years after Aana then her husband starts contemplating remarriage. We learnt that under such circumstances, compulsions of either producing a child or giving her husband an approval for remarriage are imposed upon her, or she will be forced to go back to her parent's house.

- *Saying that you are a barren woman, you cannot produce a boy, they abuse you. (Women's FGD).*
- *What to think, they wait for 10 years sometimes and then if she still does not conceive they remarry the boy and get a new wife for him. In my case they had already started contemplating remarriage. (A 24 year old female sharing her own experience whose first child was born after 5 years of Aana)*

It was revealed that not only women undergo such agonizing pressures; men at times have also had to face such traumatic situations of pressure. During FGDs and in-depth interviews some men said that because of their migration to distant places the birth of their first child was delayed, as a result of which they underwent immense mental pressure. Rajput men of high socio-economic status were of the view that having a child within 1 or 2 years of marriage was better than being subjected to the scathing criticism and sneering remarks of elders.

- *After my Gauna, I stayed only for a month with my wife, then went away (migrated),*

came back again but was still not able to produce a child for 3 years. I was very tensed, but God finally heard my prayer.

(22 year old youngster who has migrated)

- *We feel that earlier the better (producing a child) so that both of us will be free of any tension.*

(Adolescent boy's FGD)

During FGDs men and women of all castes suggested that if a woman is unable to conceive within 4-5 years of Aana then she should get an extensive medical check up done and also follow up with proper medication. An unexpected revelation which came up during FGDs was that men FGDs considered both sexes equally responsible for being unable to produce children. A woman is not solely blamed for infertility and they believe that in all probability there could be some defect in the male as well. Therefore, it was suggested that in such cases both the male and female should undergo proper check ups.

- *There could be some problem with the man, may be something is wrong with the female also.*
 - *Both the husband and wife are taken to temples, faith healers etc. and a check up is done.*
- (Men's FGD)*

We learnt from our study that remarriage is not the only necessary outcome of being unable to produce a child. In many high socio-economic castes men and women under such circumstances said that they raise the children of their own kith and kin, nurturing them as their own, though it must be stressed here that nobody used the word 'adopt' in this connection.

It appears that it is almost necessary for the newlywed couple to prove their reproductive abilities as soon as they can to prove they are not sterile or infertile. Perhaps this expectation of producing a child early is linked to the social and economic utility of the child.

The socio-economic utility of a child: In southern Rajasthan, where there is a dearth of resources of any type, financial pressures will often force boys and girls from both scheduled and other castes to start working or labouring at a very young age. Girls start sharing most of the household burdens like collecting firewood, fodder for cattle, and looking after their younger brothers and sisters. Boys initially start working in fields and as they become adolescents, start labouring in mines, migrating to other cities in search of jobs, etc. In some cases they continue their studies in addition to working.

We observed that the usually prevalent belief that education plays a major role in providing better job opportunities in various fields was not that widespread among the people of these regions. Since the land is arid and stony, most people do not regard agriculture as a very lucrative means of income, and mostly rely on money earned either through labouring at mines or else through migrating to other places in search of jobs. Many tribals do not even own any land, let alone adequate land for farming, and migration seems like an inevitable option. The rate of migration of male adolescents of other castes is higher than adolescents of the tribal castes. Migration mostly occurs to cities like Surat or Ahmedabad in Gujarat or Mumbai in Maharashtra .

It emerged from our study that on the average, male adolescents of other castes had been educated till the 5th or 8th standard before they started working between the ages of 14 - 17 years whereas in the tribal caste only a few adolescents were educated and that too on a primary level, the rest being totally illiterate. Their age of starting work ranged between 10-12 years. The above fact was verified during FGDs and interviews where it was revealed that both boy and girl adolescents play a major role in contributing to the income of the family. However, once a male migrates, the role of a daughter/daughter-in-law in shouldering financial/household responsibilities becomes very vital. In tribal castes not only do daughters and daughter-in-laws share household responsibilities, agricultural liabilities, managing cattle, etc. but if they are energetic and active enough, they also labour in mines or do other paid work.

- *At present I work in the fields, but I have a job in the city as well, I bear the expenses of my family.
(22 year old youngster who has migrated to Mumbai)*
- *After finishing all household work, she even goes out to labour. (Women's FGD)*

Daughters-in-law were asked to comment about their in-laws' expectations toward them and their responses were free listed. The responses revealed that the prime expectation from the daughter-in-law was that she served them well and looked after all their needs, the second was that she made some kind of apparent contribution to the family's income and the third was that she managed all household affairs (see annexure 6).

4.4 Information on health issues - Since engagement, marriage and Aana occur at such an early age in these regions, the age of conceiving is also very early. Under such circumstances it is vitally important to analyze whether adolescent boys and girls are well informed on issues of sex and pregnancy.

4.4.1. Physical growth and development - It emerged from FGDs that most girls are aware in advance of their oncoming menstrual cycle, learning about it from their co-aged friends, older sisters, co-sister-in-laws, etc. It appeared that this matter was not a subject of discussion between mothers and daughters, because mothers were too embarrassed to talk on these issues comfortably, and girls were too shy to ask them anything. The topic would then become taboo and girls did not directly inform their mothers when their periods commenced (mothers were informed by relatives etc. about this new development in their daughter's physical state). Surprisingly some girls even revealed that their mothers came to know about their menstruation only after the birth of their first child. "My mother came to know only after my first baby was born."

- *No parents give information on these issues. The girl understands on her own.*
- *Here and there people talk on issues (adolescent girls;' FGD)*
- *I feel very embarrassed to talk on these issues.*
- *Those who have daughters also have co-sister-in-laws who inform these girls. (Women's FGD)*

The only time mothers did talk on this issue with their daughters was when their daughters had absolutely no prior knowledge on menstruation. Under such circumstances the mother deemed it fit to explain her daughter this new development in her body and warned her to be careful not to stain her clothing etc. and to abstain from telling others.

Sometimes girls overhear the women of the neighborhood discussing these issues and thus obtain their knowledge. They feel that they are then well equipped to face their own situations. When boys were asked to comment on their own personal knowledge on issues related to health and body before marriage, it emerged that the knowledge of both tribal caste adolescents and other caste adolescents was insufficient, erroneous and impartial. They revealed that their peers never discussed such matters with them or gave them any information on matters of health, body or sex, though some Gameti boys did mention that their elders had forewarned them of not doing any wrong deeds once they grew up. The boys only knew that physical changes like increase in height, eruption of pimples and blackheads and growth of facial hair werethe characteristics of approaching manhood."

*"They tell us that we are grown up now and we should not do anything wrong."
When you are young, you get pimples and blackheads on your face; at the most you grow a beard when you are 16-17 years old."*

4.4.2. Knowledge of Pregnancy -- Most young men did not know anything about the process and procedure of pregnancy. Only after their own wives conceived and gave birth to children, did they make an effort to obtain relevant information. Disturbingly enough, many girls also did not realize that they were pregnant even after discontinuity of their menstrual periods for 2-3 months. However, once thy discussed this discontinuity with some other women, they were informed that they might be pregnant.

- *When I told my older co-sister-in-law about my missing periods, she told me that I might be pregnant.
(20-year-old female with two children)*

Before marriage most of the young men and women were totally ignorant on matters of what they call 'Dosti' (Dosti in these areas means any kind of activity like holding hands, kissing, hugging or sex). It also emerged that many of them did not know how women become pregnant (only two out of the eight participants had full information on these matters when they were questioned during in-depth interviews). Another assumption prevalent among some boys was that a girl gets pregnant only during the four to five days of her menstrual cycle and therefore only this period was unsafe for sexual activity. A Rajput boy said, "when a girl is on her menstrual cycle, then according to my view one should not have sex during those days to avoid pregnancy. The rest of the days are safe for intercourse."

The majority of these boys obtained what little information they had related to sex and pregnancy from their co-aged friends or from slightly older married and experienced friends.

4.4.3. Information on Contraceptives -- Most adolescent boys during FGDs admitted to having some knowledge of family planning methods, whereas most females showed complete

ignorance of the subject during group discussions. On the other hand, 50% of women during in-depth interviews admitted to having some knowledge of contraceptive methods. It was discerned that these youngsters were either only partially aware or ill-informed on the usage of contraceptives. The commonly cited sources of information about contraceptive methods were co-aged friends, television (accessible only to those who had migrated to cities or towns) or a health worker who had visited their village. Two young men even confessed that whatever knowledge they had on pills and copper T was because their wives were using them and had told them about these things.

- *Heard about pills from the nurse.*
- *We discuss these matters amongst ourselves (Women's FGD)*
- *My wife told me about pills and Copper T. (Men's FGD)*
- *Nowadays a lot of advertisements come on television (25 year old young boy who has migrated)*

In in-depth interviews conducted with eight young males we learned that only one of them consented to using Nirodh and only one said that his wife was using Copper T to maintain a gap between two children. In FGDs not a single male admitted to using any kind of contraceptives.

4.5 The Perception of the Community on the use of Contraceptives:

Both the older and younger generations have their own inhibitions regarding the use of contraceptives, especially before the birth of a first child. They believe that family planning methods harm the body and retard the chances of future conception and should be kept at bay before the birth of a first child.

- *Mother-in-law scolds and abuses, does not let use take pills, what if we don't conceive later.*
- *Don't eat pills, what if something goes wrong later*
(Women's FGD)

During FGDs it clearly emerged that the community was more concerned with issues of infertility than contraception because when the participants were questioned on the use of pills during the initial years of marriage, they presumed that we were talking about pills for conceiving. It seemed quite obvious that infertility was a major cause of alarm - so much so that they even talked about proper check-ups and follow-up medications to cure and rectify it.

Opinions were recorded of participants during a hypothetical situation in which a woman wanted to space her second child by two to three years after her first baby. Results revealed that 69% of the people advised the woman to use family planning methods to maintain this gap, while 14% thought that natural methods were best as they did not harm the body. By natural methods they meant control over one's body and mind, & having sexual activity only during a safe period.

"A woman must know to calculate safe days for sex if she is sensible."

"She should keep control of her mind."

In the above-mentioned hypothetical situation, if any participant gave some suggestion on use of contraception, they were probed further in this regard.

When participants were asked what they felt was the best mode of contraception for spacing (total participants who answered the question =74), most of them said that copper T was a good mode of contraception for maintaining a gap between two children (18%). Forty one percent said that 'Mala' pills were also good for maintaining this gap, and some men said that condoms were good for spacing. No woman mentioned condoms. Some participants were firm on their stand of maintaining that natural methods of prevention were better than the various available contraceptives.

Around 38% of men and women said that they were scared to use contraceptives because their in-laws would then abuse or scold them. Others around 6% suggested that exercising discretion on these matters and using contraceptives without letting elders know was the only way out.

"If mother in law comes to know that we are using Pills etc. she fights with us so we use them only without letting her know."

However, 38% of men and women stated that some in-laws do not object to the use of contraceptives because they are sensible & well informed on these matters.

The responses gathered in the above-mentioned hypothetical situation varied immensely from the answers recorded during the in-depth interviews. It seems that the information collected during hypothetical situations was based more on idealism, while their actions differed in reality.

During our study we found that some fallacies and misconceptions in connection to the use of contraceptives were prevalent in the rural community. It is probable that these misconceptions have been major obstacles in contraceptive use within the villages. Some of these misconceptions were:-

- *It is said that if you take Pills you will die. A knot will form in your Stomach (20 Year old illiterate tribal woman).*
- *The first problem in taking Pills is that you get heavy menstrual bleeding and second that it generates so much heat in the body that it aborts the baby in your stomach. (25 years old illiterate tribal woman)*
- *Scared that the copper T might get entangled in the stomach. The Pill harms the body (25 year old illiterate woman with four children)*
- *Many don't stay alive, they die because of these things (women's FGD)*
- *If we use 'Nirodh', then it gets stuck on the man's genitals.*
- *What if we take pills now, and do not have children later when we want them? (Men's FGD)*

- *There are so many different pills, all for different purposes. What if they affect our fertility later?*

4.6 Care of adolescent girls

Care for common ailments

A few questions related to the health care of adolescent girls in situations where she was ill or pregnant were put forward to participants during group discussions. Two hypothetical situations were also posed to different participants, the first being care of an adolescent girl during common illness and the second, care of an adolescent girl during pregnancy.

The first hypothetical situation posed the question: who should take care of a married adolescent girl when she falls sick with a common ailment? At least 73% of the participants maintained that it is the sole responsibility of her husband and in-laws to look after her, as she is now a member of their family, and 19% said that since a daughter-in-law is an extreme necessity for the family she should be taken care of by her husband and in-laws. But at the same time, 8% of the people said that if the in-laws did not co-operate and take the responsibility of providing medication to their daughter-in-law then her parents would have to bear the medical expenses. Surprisingly people saw care and concern as being an obligatory responsibility rather than a duty.

In response to the question of follow up medication and cure for an adolescent girl's illness, the majority of participants (91%) again reiterated the need for proper provision of medicines by her in-laws /husband as it was entirely their responsibility to take care of their daughter-in-law /wife. "The in-laws must take responsibility of their unwell daughter-in-law, or else who will take care of her?" However, another opinion was that the parents of the girl must take initiative in providing care, medicines etc. for their ill daughters and if the in-laws were supportive and kind enough, their monetary contribution would be welcomed.

Yet another view was that if a girl was staying at her parents' house when she fell ill then it was the responsibility of her parents to provide for her care and if she was staying at her in-laws' house then it was their responsibility to take care of her. Some people also stated that medicinal expenses must be mutually borne by both parents and in-laws after consultation.

Care During Pregnancy

Group discussions with women and hypothetical situations with men and women revealed that matters related to pregnancy were generally not subjects of direct discussions between youngsters and parents/in-laws. 44% participants said that only when the stomach started showing did their in-laws come to know that they were pregnant, or else their friends, sister-in-laws, etc. informed their parents/in-laws about their pregnancy (23%) **or change in eating habits, nausea, vomiting etc. in an adolescent female signals her pregnancy (8%).**

In response to: “How does a husband come to know that his wife is pregnant?” 39% of participants said that they themselves tell their husband that they are pregnant: “will say it herself, the wife talks about it to her husband.” 12.5% said that because of the discontinuation of their menstrual cycle their husbands came to know of their pregnancy: “if for two months menstruation discontinues, then husband comes to know.”

FGDs with women participants confirmed that even after it is certain that a woman is pregnant, no conspicuous or special steps are taken in the direction of providing her with special care. Young women during in-depth interviews pointed out that in such conditions women are at the most not sent to mines to labour and are not given very hard and heavy jobs. Some young men during in-depth interviews talked about providing proper nutritional diet and care for the mother to be and also stressed the need for being financially equipped for any emergency during the pregnancy period, childbirth and post-natal care period.

During hypothetical situations (situation 2 see annexure 9) when elders were asked as to what was expected from husbands of pregnant women, they unanimously maintained that the husband should make proper arrangements for his wife’s complete check up (39%), should provide her a balanced diet, proper care (30%) should financially equip himself for any emergency, keep funds ready for child birth, (9%), etc. Almost all people advised that a husband should take full responsibility of his pregnant wife and look after her well.

4.7 Comparison between the attitudes of two generations.

Differences among viewpoints in four main issues emerge when comparing the ideas of the older and younger generations:

| Points of comparison | View of older generation | View of younger generation |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| 1 choosing a life partner | They are solely authorized to choose life partners for their children, and there is no need to take consent from their children regarding this matter. | It is fine if their parents chose a marriage partner for them, but their parents should also their preferences in mind. |
| 2 Age of marriage | They maintain that marriage should take place on attainment of maturity; however, there seems to be a disparity in that the elders put this age around 12-13 years, and those younger say maturity is attained around 16-17 years. | Most adolescent girls maintain that they should marry when they are old enough to be capable of comprehending and handling the responsibility of marriage. They felt that only then would they be able to enjoy married life. However, many young boys approved of their marriage age though they were married very early. 1.2 |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| 3. Age of child birth | The birth of a first child is expected within 2-3 years of Aana or marriage. Elders exhort the newlyweds to produce children as early as possible. | Youngsters who have children feel, in retrospect, that if they had waited for 2 or 3 years before the birth of their first child, they would have then enjoyed life and seen the world. But this viewpoint was mostly of young girls. (1.3) |
| 4. Information and use of contraceptives | Both the generations were either partially informed or unaware of the various modes of available family planning methods. A general consensus between the two generations was that contraceptives harm the body and should be kept at bay, especially before the birth of a first child as they lead of infertility and sterility. | |

" If I had seen my husband before, things would not have been as they are now. I married where my parents willed me to and see my condition today."
(25-year-old woman with 2 children, sharing her own experience.)

" As a rule, first the parents must see the girl and then the boy must go to see her. After that a meeting must be arrange where they can talk. If the boy then likes the girl they should go ahead and marry. This way there will be no difficulty in future."
(22 year-old-boy, educated till the 5th standard, migrated to Mumbai for work.)

"They married me off early. I wanted to settle my work and business first."
(25-year-old man, who got married at 21 years and had to migrate)

"I wish I had married late, then I would have enjoyed married life. A girl should at least be married late if she wants to enjoy married life."
(21-year-old illiterate female, who got married at the age of only 11 years)

"It is good to get married late. Early marriage means early children. Late marriage means children will be born after 2-3 years of marriage."
(24-year-old female whose first child was born within one year of Aana.)

" If you are mature, you feel like having children. Right now we are not mature so we do not feel like having kids."
(A 19-year-old boy who has migrated and whose Aana took place 3 years back)

5. Summary and Conclusions

1. In rural communities, girls and boys are engaged and married when they are still very young. In most castes a girl is married before she reaches 18 years of age.
2. Age and maturity level are the two determinants of the time of marriage. An approximate guess of age that takes into account the physical and social maturity of the boy and girl is the basis of marriage and "Gauna." However, both these criteria have the possibility of being overlooked circumstantially; for example, when there is the need to save monetary expenses, two or three sisters of varying ages are married together.
3. There is a common perception that the menstruation starts after sexual activity – this misconception leads to concerns among girls' parents that their daughter should not start her periods before marriage, hence a sense of urgency to marry her.
4. The decision of conducting the Gauna ceremony is taken only after making an assessment of the requisites of the in-laws family, and her necessity and requirement in husband's house. Gauna does not take place if a family's financial condition does not permit it.
5. Before marriage, boys and girls have very limited information regarding their own anatomical and reproductive health, as well as available modes of contraception. Whatever little information they do have is usually incomplete or erroneous.
6. Most of the adolescents are unaware of the process of pregnancy and childbirth before formal co-habitation with their married counter-parts. Only after a girl conceives does she understand the process of pregnancy.
7. There is a constant pressure upon newlyweds to prove their reproductive ability as soon as possible by producing a child within two to three years of marriage.
8. The majority of girls become mothers between the ages of 17-18. The community considers this a suitable age for motherhood and the birth of a child is an occasion of joy.
9. There is consensus amongst most age groups and communities that contraceptives should not be used before the first child is born. The fear of infertility (whether or not linked to contraceptives), and its social consequences is high, hence there is a sense of urgency in proving the fertility after marriage. However, many people suggested the possibility of using contraceptives to maintain a gap between two children.
10. Many concerns and misconceptions related to the probable ill effects of contraceptives are prevalent amongst the community, which is another reason that any efforts to prevent adolescent pregnancies in the community appear to have little success.
11. It seems that no special care is mandated for pregnant women in the community besides having to abstain from hard labour and other heavy jobs.

We feel that following actions might be useful to address the problem of teenage pregnancy:

- Adolescent girls need to be made aware of the various physical changes accompanying maturity, such as the onset of the menstrual cycle, etc. The awareness that menstruation is a natural process and its onset is in no way related to sexual activity, would be crucial to delay the age of marriage.

- This should include appropriate information on the processes of conception, pregnancy and childbirth, family planning methods and their benefits and limitations, side effects, as well as information regarding the available health services in the region, as well as the importance of pre and post natal care, and delivery care.
- There needs to be widespread knowledge among the community on the causes and treatment for infertility so that apprehensions related to it can be erased.
- Real-life examples of parents who have used contraception before their first child and have come to no harm should be used as role models and leaders for the community.

Customs and traditions related to engagement, marriage and cohabitation

Traditions related to engagement (Hagpan)

Customarily, the boy's family approaches the girl's family with a matrimonial proposal. The girl's family then assesses the financial and social status of the boy's family, while also taking into account the age difference between the boy and girl, and checking the character of the boy (to make sure that he is not addicted to any vices, etc.). If the boy is found suitable, the girl's parents go formally to see the boy, and if they like him, they approve the proposal. Then, as a formality, the boy's parents and relatives come to see the girl and sanction the proposal. Then an auspicious time is set for the ceremony of 'Gaud Bharai,' or filling the laps of the prospective bride with at least one rupee and a coconut. At this time, a sari is also wrapped around the bride to be. On this occasion a few close relatives of the groom also come. A feast is arranged for them and a formal engagement takes place. This kind of engagement does not usually break and if on any ground the groom's family wants to sever this connection, they are not liable to pay any penalty. On the other hand, if the bride's parents want to sever this tie then they are penalized in the form of money, and the amount they pay is double the amount the groom's family spends on the engagement. The Panchayat decides upon this amount, which could be up to Rs. 5,000 to 10,000. In the entire process of engagement the role of parents is very vital as they take all the important decisions and their decisions are always final and conclusive.

Traditions related to Marriage

Marriage ceremonies of the rural communities in these regions last from five to nine days. If the marriage ceremony is seven days, then on the first five days, relatives and women of the neighborhood gather and sing epithalamium (nuptial songs) and the ritual of 'haldi' in which the bride and groom are anointed with turmeric is carried out. The wedding is held on a day deemed auspicious by astrologers, and the groom's family and relatives as well as distant relatives of the bride are invited to attend. On the wedding day a procession is carried out in the village. Sacred threads are tied on the brides and grooms hands. According to custom, the 'Rodi' or the place where garbage is thrown is worshipped, and then 'Pheras,' or going around the sacred fire of God (who is witnessing the marriage), take place seven times. Clothes are distributed to the groom's family by the bride's family. After all these rituals, a feast of delectable delights is arranged for the guests. And in the end the function, a 'Vidai' or send off takes place in which the girl is sent to her in-laws' place. The relatives of the bride escort the groom and his relatives to the temporary place they have put up for the marriage. From here the 'Baraat' leaves for its own destination. The bride's family then ends the ceremony of marriage by lifting off the 'Mandap' or the canopy raised for ceremonial purposes and thus the ceremony from the bride's side comes to an end. On the other hand, when the 'Baarat' reaches

home, a huge welcoming reception is held for them. The husband and wife opens each other's sacred threads, feed each other sweet meats and take the blessings of the family deities or 'Devi Devtas'. Then the 'Mandap' here is also lifted, signifying the end of the marriage ceremony at the groom's house. The first time a girl goes to her in laws house after marriage she is accompanied by another girl of the same age. At this time the girl stays at her in-laws' place for five to nine days, the days depending upon the grains of wheat sown at the beginning of the marriage ceremony (according to a custom). Finally, the brother or another close relative of the bride comes to pick her up and she goes back to her parents' house.

Traditions related to cohabitation

The groom's parents go to the bride's house. The bride's family arranges a sumptuous feast for the groom's family. The girl's parents gift clothes to the groom and his family and then a formal send off ceremony is conducted after which the bride leaves permanently for her in-laws' house. Upon reaching, her in-laws gift the bride 'ghanya' (a silver bangle worn above the elbow) which signifies the Aana ceremony. This bangle is worn by the girl her entire life.

The expenses incurred on a marriage ceremony

In tribal castes the minimum expenditure incurred on a girl's marriages amounts up to Rs. 15,000/-. Some of the community believes that marriages should be hosted according to one's potential and financial capability. If the marriage is extravagant then the amount spent is around Rs. 30-40 thousand. The main expense is on the food for guests and gifts of clothes for the relatives of the groom (pairavani). A custom of giving trousseau is also prevalent and mainly includes utensils for household purposes. An extremely poor person will have a meager trousseau of around Rs. 50-60. It should be mentioned that nobody from the bride's side gives ornaments or jewelry as a part of trousseau (a tradition common amongst the urban population). In a wedding a 'Barat' procession of around 20 to 50 people is welcomed and received by the bride's relatives. Generally the 'Barat' stays for 2 days at the bride's house and around three meals are arranged for them. In these celebrations around 100 people from both sides are collectively fed. The boy's side spends a minimum of Rs. 5,000. Sometimes the groom's parents provide financial help to the bride's parents who cannot afford to incur matrimonial expenses due to acute financial crisis. In this case the amount spent by the boy's family is raised to Rs. 15,000 to 20,000/-. From our studies we have been unable to gather the specific details of what is bought from the groom's side.

People also stated that in other communities, especially the Rajput communities, the minimum expenses incurred on marriages of girls is around 50,000/- Rs., and they felt that it was impossible to carry out this ceremony with fewer expenses. Again, the main expenditure is on trousseau and food. At least 500 to 1000 people attend the main feast, which is hosted on 'Maraat' (or the night of mother goddess). The trousseau given to a girl consists of household articles and some jewelry. Some people also mentioned that even a boy's marriage requires not less than Rs. 50,000, and the main expenditure is also on food.

Results obtained from free listing

| S. N. | Expectations from daughter in-laws |
|-------|---|
| 1 | Should serve her in laws well, look after all their needs, cook for them etc. |
| 2 | Should manage all household affairs. |
| 3 | Should make an apparent contribution to family income. |
| 4 | Give birth to children |
| 5 | Adjust responsibly in the house. |
| 6 | Partake all household responsibilities. |
| 7 | Not fight in the house. |
| 8 | Be obedient. |
| 9 | Take up job if educated. |
| 10 | Act as our own daughter would. |
| 11 | High moral character. |
| 12 | Take care of relatives and guests. |
| 13 | Foster mutual understanding between husband and wife. |
| 14 | Respect all elders in the house. |

| S. N. | Expectations from sons-in-laws |
|-------|---|
| 1 | Should look after the daughter in law and should not make her unhappy |
| 2 | Should visit in-laws frequently and maintain good relations |
| 3 | Should an income himself |
| 4 | Should not hit/ inflict violence on our daughter |
| 5 | He hope he behaves like a son |
| 6 | Husband & wife should have mutual understanding |
| 7 | Should be helpful at the time of a difficulty or illness |
| 8 | Should help out if there is a work in in-laws family |
| 9 | Should have a child |
| 10 | Take responsibility for household matters |
| 11 | Provide financial support to in-laws family if required |
| 12 | Should be educated |
| 13 | Should raise the standard of living |
| 14 | Should respect the mother and father-in-law |
| 15 | Should allow the wife to go to parents' house |