

TOPIC:

# FORCED MARRIAGES: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES

OUTLINES:

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1.2 Background

1.3 Thesis

## II Causes

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2.2 Tribal and feudal traditions

2.3 Practices like watta-satta, vani, suwa

2.4 Social stigma attached to unmarried women

### 3) Economic causes

3.1 Poverty and financial insecurity

3.2 Dowry-related pressures

3.3 Settling debt and dispute through marriages

3.4 Viewing marriage as economic protection

### 4) Educational causes

4.1 Illiteracy especially among women

4.2 Lack of awareness of legal and

## Religious rights

### 4.3 Early school dropouts

5) Legal and institutional causes

5.1 Weak implementation of marriage laws

5.2 Poor birth and marriage registration systems

Social acceptance of under-age

5.3 marriages

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6.1 Cultural practices falsely justified using religion

6.2 Selective religious narratives

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## III Consequences

7 Individual consequences

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7.1.2 Loss of identity and autonomy

7.2 Physical

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7.2.3 Health complications

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7.3.1 Interrupted education

7.3.2 Limited skill development

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# The Essay

Throughout history, marriage has been portrayed as bond of companionship and choice, yet for some individuals, it has functioned less as a voluntary union and more as an imposed obligation by society. Ideally grounded in consent and dignity, marriage loses its moral foundation when coercion replaces choice. Forced marriages, sustained by traditions, economic vulnerabilities, and institutional weaknesses, continue to persist across societies despite legal safeguards and evolving human rights discourse. Far from being isolated domestic matters, such practices reflect deeper structural inequalities embedded within social systems. This essay contends that forced marriages originate from interconnected socio-cultural, economic, educational, legal and institutional factors and religious misinterpretations, producing consequences for individuals and societies.

One of most enduring causes of forced marriages lies in rigid socio-cultural norms that prioritize collective honour over individual autonomy. In patriarchal societies, marriage is often treated as a family controlled institution rather than a personal choice, particularly for women. Cultural expectations surrounding honor, obedience and conformity, normalize coercion while discouraging dissent. Historically even beyond South Asia, marriages among aristocracies in early modern Europe were arranged to preserve lineage and power. While now-a-days in tribal and feudal settings, marriages function as a social instrument to preserve alliances, settle disputes and maintain hierarchies. Practices such as exchange marriages and conflict-resolution arrangements including watta-satta, rani and swara exemplify how women are reduced to bargaining tools within customary systems. Moreover, the pervasive social stigma attached to remaining unmarried, particularly for women, intensifies familial pressure and silences resistance. Collectively, these cultural factors

normalize coercion, allowing forced marriages to persist.