

## Why is the Trend in Consanguineous Marriage Declining among the Darbhanga Khotta Muslim Community of Malda District of West Bengal, India?

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### Abstract

This study examines the factors that are likely to be responsible for the decline in the prevalence of consanguineous marriage among a group of *Darbhanga Khotta* Muslim population of the Malda district of West Bengal. The group migrated from the Darbhanga district of undivided Bengal and got settled in twelve villages in Malda district, commonly known as *Bara Gaon Darbhanga Beradari*. 736 ever-married women from this community participated in this study and were categorised under three generations (Generation I is the oldest and Generation III is the youngest). We used a mixed-method approach to examine the causes and nuances in the decline of consanguineous marriage. Results showed that consanguinity had declined significantly from Generation-I to Generation-III ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). Binary logistic regression showed that respondents who belonged to Generation III were significantly 0.67 times less ( $p < 0.05$ ) likely to marry cousins compared to the respondents of Generation I. Respondents who married after 18 years of age and belonged to the middle socio-economic class were significantly 0.76 times ( $p < 0.05$ ) and 0.55 times ( $p < 0.05$ ) less likely to marry cousins compared to their respective counterparts. Qualitative analysis of the study revealed the following reasons behind the decline in consanguineous marriage: (1) Consanguineous marriages are no longer helping in maintaining family bondage, may generate conflict (2) members of the younger generation are increasingly involved in the decision-making process due to their enhanced educational and emancipation levels, and increased awareness of social and legal prohibitions of marriage types, and (3) there has been a change in the mode of marital payments (from property to cash), which has also contributed to the decline in consanguineous marriages among the study population.

**Keywords:** Consanguineous Marriage; Decline; Generation; *Darbhanga Khotta* Muslim; Malda; India.