

# **Marriage Dissolution in India and its Associate Factors**

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## **Abstract**

This paper investigates the factors affecting the marriage dissolution in India and also separately by the geographical region. District Level Household Survey-3 (2007-08) data has been used. One of the largest ever demographic and health survey carried out in India, covering all the districts of country. The hazard regression analyses has been carried out, it suggest that age at marriage, age, birth-cohort, region, place of residence, religion, caste, children-ever born, education level had significant effects on the chances of marriage dissolution. Age at marriage is an important factor affecting the marriage dissolution. Women marrying at their later ages, their risk of marriage dissolution is greater, i.e. 16.752 times more than those marrying at their early ages. Educated women have higher chances of marriage dissolution than the illiterate ones. Results suggest that dissolution rates are quite higher in Northeastern, Western and Southern regions.

## **Introduction**

Marriage is an important social event from which a person starts his/her marital union. Marriage can protect mental health by giving people a greater sense of emotional support and care in their lives and allowing them to fill multiple social roles (Burton 1998). Married people have higher levels of psychological and physical well-being than individuals who are single, separated or divorced (Horowitz, McLaughlin and White 1997; Lillard and Waite 1995; Waite and Gallagher 2000; ASPE 2007). During the past few centuries it has been seen that development has powerful influence on family dynamics in many parts of the world. Many changes are occurring in the family patterns worldwide, which include change in marriage and fertility practices i.e. delayed marriages, divorce and remarriage, changing living arrangements, out of wedlock childbearing, movements toward individual partner's choice, lower fertility and better prospects for the women etc.

One of the marked demographic trends observed in twentieth century is increased rate of divorce, and changing marriage pattern (Pezzin and Schone 1999). Marriage Dissolution through divorce draws the attention of social scientists as it is a social phenomenon deeply rooted in the socio economic status and cultural factors of society. It varies across the culture and over the time. In most of the western countries divorce rates have shown an increasing trend. Most of the European countries are experiencing two to five times higher divorce rates, than the in the 1960. There is a universal trend of increasing divorce rates has been seen in Europe since 1970s (Sobotka and Toulemon 2008). Social scientists opined that the way urbanization and industrialization have brought changes in marriage pattern in European countries the changes may take place in developing countries in the same way. Urbanization industrialization and education lead to a change in society; family structure and preoccupation of women into labor force which help them come out of unhappy marriages (Ogburn 1961). It is found that contrary to the general belief it is not always true that by rising modernization there is rise in divorce rates (Hirschman and

Teerawichitchainan 2003). For example, traditionally high divorce societies, i.e. Islamic Southeast Asia, have experienced a decline in divorce with modernization.

The frequency and pattern of divorce varies within and across the countries. For example Australian couple's divorce less frequently than Americans do, and generally after a much longer duration of marriage (Day 1964). Divorce and separation occur more frequently among black and poor couples (Kerckhoff 1976). A study on Bangladesh found that divorce rate was higher in rural areas, than in urban areas in all the age groups (Ahmed and Chowdhury 1981). On contrary to that it has been seen that divorce is higher in case of urban women than in the rural areas (Yi et al. 2002). Probabilities of divorce are high during the earlier years of marriage and declines sharply with the increase of marital duration (Land 1971; Ahmed and Chowdhury 1981; Thronton and Rodges 1987; Thakur 2009). There are various consequences of rising divorce rates on individual level as well as at the family level. However many western countries are facing many adverse impact of marriage dissolution.

### **Consequences of divorce**

Many studies on consequences of divorce reveal that divorced persons as compared to married persons experience low level of psychological well being, poor self esteem, low happiness, psychological distress, (Aseltine & Kessler 1993; Davies et al. 1997; Demo & Acock 1996b; Lorenz et al. 1997; Marks 1996; Johnson and Wu 2002). Divorced persons experience poor health condition than the married ones, further it leads to greater mortality (Aldous & Ganey 1999; Hemstrom 1996; Lillard & Waite 1995; Murphy et al. 1997; Rogers 1996; Zick & Smith 1991). A study found that socio-economic status, household size and income are important determinants of differences in mortality by the marital status (Rogers 1995; Martikainen et al. 2005). There is direct relationship between divorce and suicide rate (Trovato 1986).

Studies have shown that married persons increase the wealth as compared to single ones. Whereas divorced person's wealth starts falling since his/her divorce (Zagorsky 2005). Divorce has harmful effects on intergenerational transfers, predominantly for elder fathers (Pezzin and Schone 1999).

### **Consequences of divorce on children**

Study suggests that there is extensive research on the relationship between marital satisfaction and its effect on child development; dissatisfaction among the parents is predictive of poorer child outcomes (Morrison and Coiro 1999; Stzman et al. 2009). Divorced parents children are more likely to be disadvantaged. These children suffer from early behavioral and academic problems, early school leaving and poor mental health (Sigle-Rushton et al. 2004). Children brought up in such an atmosphere are more likely to be less successful in school achievement, compared to their peers who were brought up in homes characterized by stability, affection, and warm relationships. There is negative effect of parent's separation on their academic performance (Sharma and Wan 1970-71; Cherian 1989; Cherian and Cherian 1998). The children from divorced parents in their adulthood are found to have lower levels of occupational status, low income, higher levels of economic hardships, they often marry young, they have more chances of divorce, they remarry several times and find themselves in unhappy relationships (Ross, and Mirowsky 1999).

## **Divorce in Context of India**

In country like India, marriage has always been seen as sacred event. In the past several decades Indian marriage system has experienced various changes as a result of socioeconomic development and improvement in education, dramatic increase in age at marriage of both the sexes, changes on attitude towards marriage, love-marriages, inter-caste marriages, divorce and separation has been observed (Kadi 1987; Singh 1992). Growing literacy among women has opened new avenues as well as challenges. Their role in the modern society is fast changing. These changes affect matrimonial relations (Hussain 1983). Unhappy marriages are being terminated by divorce, which is an effective alternative initiated by legislative action and strengthened by legal sanction.

Divorce in India is a long legal procedure, which takes at least six months. The divorce procedure varies from the marriage acts of one personal law to another. India has different divorce laws for different religions. All Hindus can seek divorce under Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. However, Christians, Muslims, have their own laws related to divorce, e.g. Christians have Indian Divorce Act, 1869; Muslims have Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939; Parsis have Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936.

Procedure of divorce in India: A man or a woman can file for divorce in the court, on the basis of 4 different grounds: Adultery, Desertion, Cruelty, Impotency and Chronic Diseases. In case, the divorce is on mutual consent of wife and husband, they can file a petition for the same under Section 13B of the Hindu Marriage Act. However, for getting a divorce, it is necessary that husband and wife should have lived separately for at least one year. The entire procedure of getting a divorce in India will take close to one year.

In many developing countries including India; marriage dissolution (divorce) is growing with the time. In recent decades there has been alarming increase in incidences of divorce (Thakur 2009). In Indian society social stigma is attached with divorced men and women especially with women. Despite the introduction of marriage laws and legal sanction to the divorcee to remarry, divorce is not easily accepted in Indian society. In India divorce is highly stigmatizing and undesirable (Gore 1968; Kurien 1982; Choudhary 1988; Singh 1988; Amato 1994). However in modern times, divorce is more or less acceptable in Indian society. It is a way to come out of unhappily marriages. Continuation of broken marriages which have failed to achieve their objectives will do more harm than good to the society (Hussain 1983).

A study on villages of Himachal Pradesh indicates that over seventeen percent of women were divorced at least once in their life. Evidence suggests that divorces by cohort were higher prior to 1960. The mean age of marriage for ever divorced women was much lower than for never divorced women. (Singh 1992).

A study on Gulbarga (Karnataka) found that socioeconomic and demographic factors broadly affect the divorce rate; the causes leading to divorce are interpersonal rather than institutional (Thakur 2009). In a study on Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) reveals that twenty-four percent out of the total sample, both the partners jointly filed divorce petitions by their mutual consent. It shows that spouses are longing for relief from turbulent marital life (Rao and Sekhar, 2002). Data from the judicial courts clearly reveals that even women in the last few decades are increasingly taking the initiative as petitioners to approach the courts for divorce (Siganporia 1993; Thakur 2009). It shows that divorce is now less of a stigma and couples as well as society are accepting this. This shows the changing attitudes towards divorce.

It is suggested by some scholars to encourage more meaningful marriage and family life, delayed marriages and higher education will help young people to nurture rational and mature attitude (D'Souza 1972). Women's level of education and high economic status were motivating factors for filing the petition in the court (Choudhary 1988). Some kind of relationship is also found between childlessness and divorce (Fonseca 1966).

Table 1 presents the numbers and percentage distribution of persons in India by their marital status. It shows that number of females is more than twice of males among the divorced/separated, i.e. 2342 as compare to 988 persons (in thousands). In urban area it is more than thrice, 605 females and 242 males respectively. This may be because of the remarriage or mortality factor, as it is well known that male mortality is higher than the females. And in Indian culture males face fewer restrictions for remarriage as compare to the females.

**TABLE 1**

Number of persons (in thousands) by sex, marital status and residence, Census of India, 2001

	Total				Rural				Urban			
Marital status	Males		Females		Males		Females		Males		Females	
All Categories	532,156	(100)	496,453	(100)	381,602	(100)	360,887	(100)	150,554	(100)	135,565	(100)
Never Married	289,619	(54.4)	223,048	(44.9)	208,231	(54.6)	162,299	(45.0)	81,387	(54.1)	60,748	(44.8)
Married	231,820	(43.6)	236,772	(47.7)	164,990	(43.2)	171,904	(47.6)	66,829	(44.4)	64,868	(47.9)
Widowed	9,728	(1.8)	34,289	(6.9)	7,634	(2.0)	24,946	(6.9)	2,094	(1.4)	9,343	(6.9)
<b>Divorced/Separated</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>(0.2)</b>	<b>2,342</b>	<b>(0.5)</b>	<b>745</b>	<b>(0.2)</b>	<b>1,737</b>	<b>(0.5)</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>(0.2)</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>(0.4)</b>

**Note:** These figures exclude the population of three sub-divisions of Senapati district of Manipur State, namely, Paomata, Purul and Mao Maram.

**Source:** Marital Status and age at marriage: An analysis of 2001 census data, Census of India, 2001, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India, Ministry of Home Affairs.

In India, very few studies have been carried out to understand marital dissolution (Kuppuswamy 1957; Mehta 1975; Kundu and Ghosh 1977; Choudhary 1988; Kumari 1989; Desai 1991; Badiger and Krishnaswamy 1999). Consequently there is scanty of literature available in India over the marriage dissolution issues.

With the fast development in the last decades, there is rise in the percentage of divorce cases i.e. 0.25 in 1991 and 0.32 percent in 2001, which is considerably new phenomenon in Indian context. According to Census of India (2001), divorced/separated/deserted females are 2.3 million against one million males. Marital history is an important indicator to understand the current and future behavior of mothers as well as their children (Adams 2004; Thornton 2001). It is also helpful to understand the changing pattern of marriage and families as well as demographic behavior of people. Despite the stigma attached with divorce in Indian families, divorce rates are on rise.

Various studies have been carried out in other countries on causes and consequences of divorce, its linkages with working women, psychological health, suicide rates, intergenerational transmission of divorce, health condition of offspring, affluence etc (Glick and Norton 1977; Teachman 1982; Aseltine

and Kessler 1993; Davies et al. 1997; Johnson and Wu 2002). Many studies have examined the link between parental divorce and subsequent wellbeing of children. (Sharma and Wan 1970-71; Cherian 1989; Cherian and Cherian 1998; Ross and Mirowsky 1999). Therefore, it is essential to study the recent changes in marriages pattern i.e. marriage dissolution among the Indian couples, and its associate factors.

Sixteen percent of the world's population is living in India and it is the seventh largest country in case of area. Thus, there are huge diversities among the people of the country i.e. race, caste, religion, language, socio economic conditions. It is evident from the study that marital well being varies by race of person (Goodwin 2003). Therefore, present study is an attempt to understand the dynamics of marriage dissolution in India and attempts to estimate the hazard of marriage dissolution by various socio economic characteristics.

Present study tries to focus on the issue of marriage dissolution through the divorce, separation and desertion by various geographical regions and its associate factors.

## Data and Methods

***District Level Household Survey (DLHS-3) 2007-2008*** - Third Round of District Level Household Survey (DLHS-3, 2007-08) has been used for the present study. District Level Household Survey (DLHS-3), 2007-08 one of the largest ever demographic and health survey carried out in India , with sample size is about seven lakh households, covering all the districts of country. The present DLHS-3 is the third in the series preceded by DLHS-1 in 1998-99 and DLHS-2 in 2002-04. Husbands are not interviewed in this survey, therefore only ever married women (aged 15-49) are included in the present study. For the first time in this survey timing of divorce/separation is asked to those women who have reported their marital status as divorced/separated.

Table 2 presents total sample size by the marital status. Total 643,944 women of all marital statuses were interviewed. Out of these women, currently married was 604,804 and divorced women was 9,791 women. Marriage dissolution through the death of spouse and currently married but **Gauna not performed** were excluded from the study. Marriage dissolution confined to separated, deserted and divorced women in the present study. There is a slight overestimation of results, as some of the separated and deserted women may reunite with their husbands. Analysis is based on the first marriages and dissolutions only.

**TABLE 2**

Total sample size, District Level Household Survey (DLHS-3), 2007-08

<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Un weighted</b>	
Currently married	604,804	93.9
Gauna not performed	5,131	0.8
Divorced/Separated/Deserted	9,791	1.5
Widowed	24,192	3.8
Missing	26	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>643,944</b>	

## Methods

**Survival analysis:** Survival analysis has been carried out to understand the effects of independent variables on the dissolution probabilities at various marriage duration (in years) among the Indian women. Socio economic characteristics: place of residence, religion and caste/tribe, age, age at marriage, marital duration, educational status, children ever born etc. of women has been considered for the analysis.

Regions wise separate analysis has been carried out to see the variation by geographical location. On the basis of locality and cultural similarity regions are divided into six groups: Northern region, Central region, Eastern region, Northeastern region, Western region and Southern region.

**Northern region:** Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Chandigarh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi, and Rajasthan

**Central region:** Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh

**Eastern region:** Bihar, west Bengal, Orissa, and Jharkhand

**Northeastern region:** Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim

**Western region:** Goa, Maharashtra, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Daman & Diu and Gujarat

**Southern regions:** Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Lakshadweep, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh

**Dependent Variable:** Time variable for the survival analysis is marital duration (in years); failure variable is marriage dissolution (divorce/separated/deserted).

## Results

### *Sample Characteristics of Marriage Dissolution Women*

Table 3 presents percentage distribution of women (15-49 years) ever experienced marriage dissolution in their lives and their median marital duration (in years) at the time of their dissolution, according to certain demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. More than 60 percent women got married before the legal age (18 years) and apart from that around 30 percent women got married before attaining age 15. Median marital duration at the time of their marriage dissolution is higher i.e. 18 years for those married at their early ages. As the age at marriage increases the median marital duration decreases with it. Around 15 percent women got separated at their early ages (15-19 years) and later ages (45-49 years). Out of total women, around 50 percent born before the year 1975 whereas their median duration is higher than the other women i.e. 21 years. This shows that the older generation women are coming out of the unhappy marriages at their later ages. The proportion of dissolution women are less than 10 percent in

Northern region whereas it is higher than 20 percent in Northeastern and Southern region. Around 75 percent women are from the rural areas and 25 percent from the urban area. Out of the total dissolution women around 70 percent belongs to Hindu religion and 28 percent Muslim and Christian respectively. Median marital duration is higher 14 years for the Hindu women as compare to Muslim and Christian i.e. 12 and 10 respectively. Marriage dissolution is higher among the Other backward caste women 34.8 percent followed by Scheduled Tribes 26.7, General/None 18.6, Scheduled Caste 17.5 and No caste 2.4 percent respectively.

The distribution of dissolution women by their education shows that around 45 percent are illiterate, and it declines with the level of education. Median marital duration is higher for illiterate women 17 years, whereas it is 11 years for women literate below high school and 10 years for high school and above. More or less same pattern has been observed for partner education.

**TABLE 3**

Percentage distribution of dissolution women Background Characteristics of Women (15-49)

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Numbers (un weighted)</b>	<b>Divorced/Separate d/Deserted</b>	<b>Median Marital Duration (in years)</b>
<b><i>Demographic Variable</i></b>			
<b>Age at marriage (years)</b>			
<15 years	2,777	28.4	18
16 -18	3,400	34.7	13
19+	3,611	36.9	10
<b>Current Age</b>			
15-19	502	5.1	3
20-24	1,636	16.7	5
25-29	1,924	19.7	9
30-34	1,691	17.3	14
35-39	1,674	17.1	19
40-44	1,383	14.1	24
45-49	981	10.0	28
<b>Birth Cohort</b>			
before 1975	4,582	46.5	21
1976-1985	3,753	38.3	9
after 1986	1,456	14.9	3
<b>Marriage Cohort</b>			
Before 1985	2,016	20.6	27
1986-90	1,552	15.9	20
1991-95	1,609	16.4	15
After 1996	4,614	47.1	6
<b><i>Socioeconomic Variables</i></b>			
<b>Region</b>			
North	952	9.7	13
Central	1,873	19.1	13

**TABLE 3 (Continued)**

East	1,376	14.1	13
Northeast	2,082	21.3	11
West	1,284	13.1	13
South	2,224	22.7	16
<b>Place of Residence</b>			
Rural	7,263	74.2	13
Urban	2,528	25.8	14
<b>Religion</b>			
Hindu	6,540	66.8	14
Muslim	1,347	13.8	12
Christian	1,326	13.5	10
Others	578	5.9	13
<b>Caste/Tribe</b>			
Scheduled Caste	1,711	17.5	14
Scheduled Tribe	2,609	26.7	12
Other Backward Caste	3,399	34.8	14
General/None	1,821	18.6	14
No Caste/ Don't Know	232	2.4	11
<b>Children Ever Born</b>			
No	2,778	28.4	9
1-2	4,878	49.8	12
3+	2,135	21.8	20
<b>Women's Education</b>			
Illiterate	4,379	44.7	17
Literate below High School	4,182	42.7	11
Literate above High School	1,230	12.6	10
<b>Husband's Education</b>			
Illiterate	3,518	35.9	15
Literate below High School	2,958	30.2	13
Literate above High School	2,108	21.5	11
Don't Know	1,206	12.3	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,791</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>13</b>

Table 4 presents percent distribution of divorced women out of the total women by the birth cohort. There is a slight variation in the percent of divorced women by the birth cohort. It is highest in the case of 1965-1969 birth cohorts (1.69 percent) and lowest in the 1990-1993 cohorts (1.33 percent) respectively.

**TABLE 4**

Percentage distribution of total women (married and widowed) and divorced women by their birth cohort (in year)

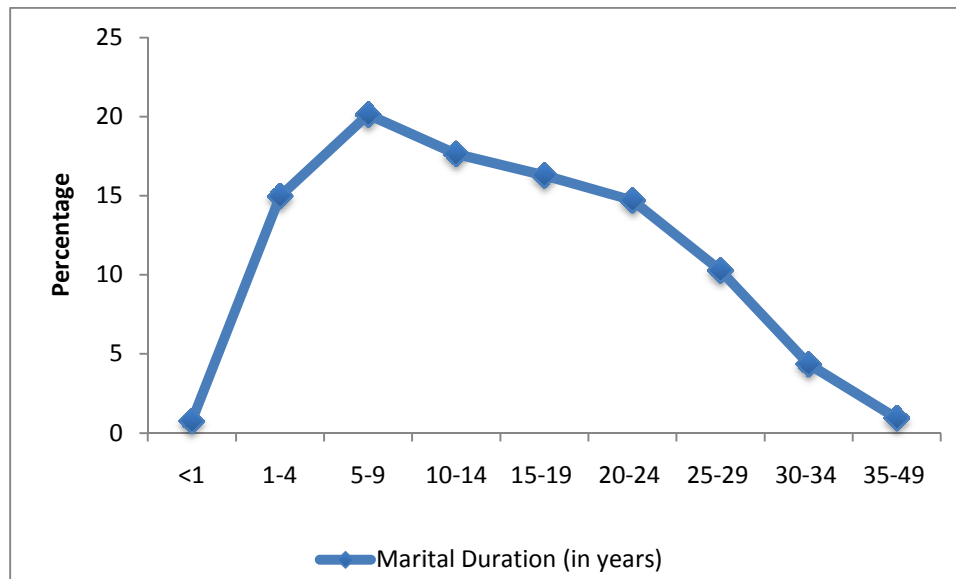
<b>Birth Cohort</b>	<b>All Women (un weighted)</b>		<b>Divorced Women (un weighted)</b>	
before 1964	88,054	(13.89)	1,379	(14.08)
1965-1969	95,108	(15.00)	1,558	(15.91)
1970-1974	105,734	(16.67)	1,645	(16.80)



**TABLE 4** (Continued)

1975-1979	122,669	(19.34)	1,860	(19.00)
1980-1984	120,389	(18.99)	1,893	(19.33)
1985-1989	90,904	(14.34)	1,314	(13.42)
1990-1993	11,267	(1.78)	142	(1.45)
<b>Total</b>	<b>634,125</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>	<b>9,791</b>	<b>(100.0)</b>

Figure 1 presents percentage of divorced women by their marital duration (in years). It is evident from the table that as the marriage duration increases the percentage of divorced women increases by the duration. For the initial and later years of marital period it occurs least. As the marital duration increases dissolution rises drastically at the initial years of marriage i.e. less than one year marital duration 0.75 percent women have experienced dissolution in their lives whereas it is 14.96 percent for women spent 1-4 years in marriage. Marriage dissolution is highest between the 5-9 years of marital duration.

**FIGURE 1**

Percent distribution of divorced women by the marital duration (in years)

### *Marriage dissolution and Associate factors among the Indian Women*

To understand the effect of demographic and socio-economic correlates on the marriage dissolution, hazard regression model has been applied for all the regions. Table 6 presents hazard coefficients for the marriage dissolution. In this model eight variables are included, and most of them found significant.

Age plays an important role in determining marriage dissolution. Age at marriage has significant impact on the risk of divorce. Persons who marry at younger ages have higher incidences of divorce in comparison to those marrying late (Glick and Norton 1977; Teachman 1982; Booth et al. 1986; Balakrishnan et al. 1987; Thornton and Rodgers 1987; Tilson and Larsen 2000; Yi et al. 2002). As contrary to the earlier studies it is found that those women married before attaining age fifteen, their risk for marriage dissolution is lesser than those married at their later ages i.e. 16.752 times more likely for marriage dissolution of women married after attaining age eighteen. Possibility of marriage dissolution was significantly higher when age gap between husband and wives is more, e.g. when husband is nine or more years older than wives and vice versa (Cherlin 1977). However age gap between husband and wives is important factor to affect the marriage dissolution, because of unavailability of the variable it is not included in the study.

While analyzing the age pattern, it is clear that there is a decrease in risk of marriage dissolution as the age increases i.e. 0.407, 0.119, 0.033, 0.011, 0.002 and 0.000 respectively. Chances of marriage dissolution are highest at the 15-19 ages.

Regional variation is clearly depicted in the probability of marriage dissolution. In comparison to the northern region the women living in other region have higher probability of dissolution, i.e. Central 1.549, East 1.551, Northeast 3.016, West 2.779 and South 2.862 respectively. Women living in Northeastern region have greater chances of marriage dissolution.

Heterogamous marriages are more likely to end in divorce (Singh 1996). Persons marrying with other religion and nationality have higher risk of marital dissolution (Kerckhoff 1976; Raschke 1987; Kalmijn et al. 2005). Religiosity of women decreases the chances of divorce (Cherlin 1977; Kalmijn et al. 2004). Divorce is more common among lower socioeconomic groups (Kerckhoff 1976; Raschke 1987). A study shows, that marital disruption varies by the race, including compositional factors on the risk of marital disruption, age at marriage, education, premarital childbearing and residence (Sweeney and Phillips 2004). It is found that probability of dissolution is more for the urban women; it is 1.453 times higher than rural women. Religion and caste significantly affect the risk of dissolution. As compared to the Hindu women, Muslim, Christian and other religion women i.e. Sikh, Parasi and Buddhist etc. have higher risk for dissolution. Christian women have the highest risk of dissolution as compare to the rest of the religions, i.e. more than 2.112 times. Scheduled tribe women have greater chances of marital dissolution than the other caste women.

Childless couples are more prone to divorce than the couples having children (Bumpass and Sweet 1972; Unisa 1999; Tilson and Larsen 2000; Kalmijn et Al., 2004). Sex composition of children is associated with marital dissolution. Having at least one son is associated with reduction in the risk of marital disruption among Indian women at lower parities. In India failure to produce a son raises the risk of marital dissolution. Families with a daughter have higher risk of divorce than families with a son. (Bose and South 2003; Diekmann and Schmidheiny 2004). The reason behind this is higher involvement of fathers in raising a son, which further turn to promotes marital stability (Diekmann and Schmidheiny 2004). It is found that women who have had children ever born in their lives have less chances of dissolution i.e. 0.130 times less (TABLE 6).

Education and divorce are strongly associated with each other. A study found positive effect of education on divorce (Kalmijn et al. 2004). Women with some college education were more likely to opt for divorce than the lower educated ones (Kposowa 1998). On the other hand few studies found it negative; women with at least 5 years of education were four times less likely to divorce than uneducated women. Women with uneducated husbands had a greater chance of being divorced than women with primary educated husbands (Singh 1996). Analysis shows that in case of India educated women have higher risk of marriage dissolution than the illiterate women. Conversely it is opposite, in case of husband's education.

Results from the multivariate analysis show that covariate, region is significant for all the regions. And there are lots of variations among the regions, so there is a specific requirement to do a separate analysis by the different region, as it will give a better picture to understand marriage dissolution in India. Hence separate analysis has been done by the various regions i.e. North, Central, East, Northeast, West and South (Table 7).

**TABLE 6**

Hazard coefficients for Marriage dissolution (N= 9,768)

Variables	Coefficients	Confidence Interval	
		(lower)	(upper)
<b>Age at marriage</b>			
Below 15 years@			
16 to 18	4.525***	4.249	4.819
19 and above	16.752***	15.515	18.086
<b>Age</b>			
15-19@			
20-24	0.407***	0.364	0.455
25-29	0.119***	0.103	0.138
30-34	0.033***	0.028	0.038
35-39	0.011***	0.009	0.013
40-44	0.002***	0.002	0.003
45-49	0.000***	0.000	0.001
<b>Birth Cohort</b>			
before 1975@			
1976-1985	2.334***	2.104	2.590
after 1986	5.221***	4.514	6.039
<b>Region</b>			
North@			
Central	1.549***	1.430	1.678
East	1.551***	1.426	1.688
Northeast	3.016***	2.755	3.302
West	2.779***	2.551	3.028
South	2.862***	2.645	3.098

**TABLE 6 (Continued)**

<b>Place of Residence</b>			
Rural@			
Urban	1.453***	1.383	1.527
<b>Religion</b>			
Hindu@			
Muslim	1.401***	1.315	1.493
Christian	2.112***	1.952	2.285
Others	1.244***	1.134	1.364
<b>Caste/Tribe</b>			
Scheduled Caste@			
Scheduled Tribe	1.159***	1.080	1.243
Other Backward Caste	0.860***	0.810	0.913
General/None	0.941*	0.877	1.010
No Caste/ Don't Know	0.986	0.851	1.143
<b>Children Ever Born</b>			
No@			
Yes	0.13***	0.123	0.136
<b>Women's Education</b>			
Illiterate@			
Literate below High School	1.638***	1.638	1.558
Literate above High School	1.408***	1.408	1.297
<b>Husband's Education</b>			
Illiterate@			
Literate below High School	0.405***	0.405	0.383
Literate above High School	0.395***	0.395	0.370
Don't Know	5.966***	5.966	5.572
<b>Log Likelihood</b>	209315.989		
<b>Model X<sup>2</sup></b>	55118.666		
<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	<b>29</b>		

### *Regional variation and kinship pattern in India*

Demographic pattern are the result of many factors (socio cultural, economic, political, geographical etc.), and socio cultural factors play significant roles in determining demographic behavior. In India kinship system is not homogeneous across the social strata or country. Indian society is based on the caste system (Srinivas 1962). Socio cultural variation in kinship pattern is deeply rooted in Indian society.

Regional variation has been observed in demographic behavior of the peoples by the geographic regions. There is clear north-south divide in terms of demographic performance i.e. in northern region there is low female autonomy, higher fertility, higher marital fertility, higher sex ratio (more males), low age at marriages, higher infant and child mortality etc. contrary to the southern region (Preston et al. 1979; Dyson 1979).

In southern India kinship pattern is totally different from the north. Endogamous marriage system exists in the south; it means marriage between cross cousins (Sopher 1980; Miller 1981; Moore, 1973).

In northern region kinship pattern has three main characteristics. Firstly, marriage are exogamic that means spouse must be unrelated in kinship should not be from the same place of birth or residence. Secondly males get help from their other family members whom they are related by blood especially males. Thirdly, women do not inherit property rights; neither they can transfer it to offspring (Dyson 1979). Most of the time marriage system is dominated by search for inter- group alliances, and women don't have any choice in these matters. Bride's parents are socially and ritually inferior, and dowry is given by them. Female autonomy and decision making is very low, their sexuality is very rigidly controlled in in-laws home (Preston et al. 1979; Dyson 1979).

Southern women avails more freedom in society as compared to the northern women. They have high status in the society (Karve 1953). Sometimes women can transfer their property rights. Usually females married to well-known persons with familiar household which is nearer to their parental home. Their personal movements and sexuality is less rigidly controlled by their in-laws. Females can help and support their parents after their marriage and they can choose any occupation (Luschinsky 1962).

Table 7 presents hazard coefficients of marriage dissolution by the region. As mentioned earlier that country has been divided into six major regions named: north, central, east, northeast, west and south. Table illustrates age at marriage is an important covariate to affect the marriage dissolution. In the northern region as the age at marriage (women) increases the chances of marriage dissolution increases more than four times i.e. if age at marriage is between 16-18 years 4.099 times and it is 12.066 times higher when women marrying at the later ages (19 years and above). Similar trend had been seen in all the regions but the chances of dissolution are higher than the northern region. It shows that in almost all the regions as the age increases the chances of getting marriage dissolution declines and all are significant.

Marriage dissolution probabilities are higher in case of younger women cohort. In case of eastern region women born at the later cohort (i.e. after 1986) the chance of marriage dissolution is 8.436 times higher as compare to the older cohort (i.e. before 1975) and for western region it is 7.919 times higher. Similar results have been seen throughout the region.

Women living in the urban locality have higher chances of marriage dissolution as compared to the rural area in all the regions. Religion wise heterogeneity has been seen among the regions. As compare to Hindu women, Muslim women have higher chances of dissolution in all the regions. Among the Christian women northern, northeast and southern women have higher chances of dissolution i.e. 2.114, 3.169 and 1.113 respectively. Other religion includes Shikh, Buddhist, Parsis, Jain etc. In some of the region chances of dissolution for other religion women is higher, but only for the western region it is coming significant.

Huge variations have been seen within the region and among the region (FIGURE 2). For example scheduled tribe women have higher chances of dissolution as compare to scheduled caste women in northern, central, eastern and northeastern regions, 1.011, 1.480, 1.490 and 1.101 respectively. Whereas for western and southern region it is 0.784 and 0.891 times lower. Women have had any children in their lives have less chances of marriage dissolution in all the regions. Educated women have higher chances of dissolution in all the regions. In case of partner's education it is contrast. Women doesn't know about their partners education level were coded as "don't know, this variable is significant for all the regions.

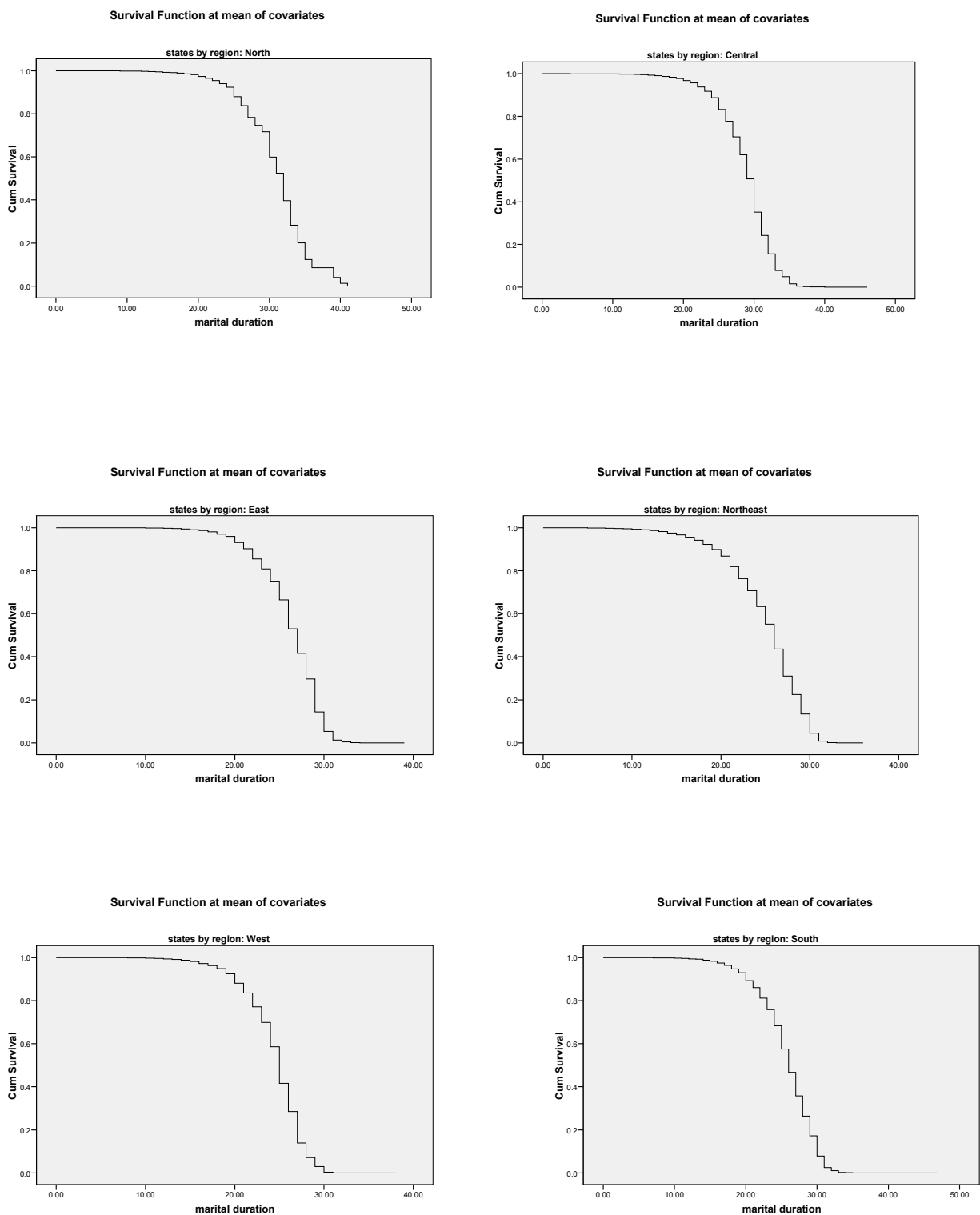
**TABLE 7**

Hazard coefficients for Marriage dissolution by Regions (N= 9,768)

Variables	North	Central	East	Northeast	West	South
N	952	1,872	1,375	2,073	1,284	2,212
<b>Age at marriage</b>						
<15 years@						
16-18	4.099***	5.695***	6.092***	3.072***	4.190***	4.070***
19+	12.656***	18.624***	26.907***	13.192***	16.860***	17.270***
<b>Age</b>						
15-19@						
20-24	0.462***	0.530***	0.264***	0.201***	0.281***	0.691*
25-29	0.157***	0.164***	0.065***	0.043***	0.075***	0.245***
30-34	0.043***	0.046***	0.014***	0.012***	0.014***	0.077***
35-39	0.028***	0.011***	0.004***	0.004***	0.005***	0.023***
40-44	0.006***	0.002***	0.001***	0.001***	0.001***	0.004***
45-49	0.001***	0.001***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.001***
<b>Birth Cohort</b>						
before 1975@						
1976-1985	2.930***	2.082***	2.950***	2.015***	3.224***	2.324***
after 1986	4.860***	4.475***	8.436***	4.474***	7.919***	5.964***
<b>Place of Residence</b>						
Rural@						
Urban	1.467***	1.829***	1.769***	1.780***	1.104	1.071
<b>Religion</b>						
Hindu@						
Muslim	1.507***	1.476***	1.614***	1.703***	1.556***	1.155*
Christian	2.114*	0.923	0.640*	3.169*	0.747	1.113
Others	1.155	1.240	0.939	1.754	1.400**	0.344
<b>Caste/Tribe</b>						
Scheduled Caste@						
Scheduled Tribe	1.011	1.480***	1.490***	1.101***	0.784*	0.891
Other Backward						
Caste	0.746**	1.014	0.673***	0.935***	0.789*	0.946
General/None	0.938	0.918	1.162*	0.948*	0.689***	0.940
No Caste/ Don't						
Know	2.213*	0.468	1.496**	0.897**	0.560*	0.906
<b>Children Ever Born</b>						
No@						
Yes	0.090***	0.089***	0.108***	0.269***	0.097***	0.162***
<b>Women's Education</b>						
Illiterate@						

**TABLE 7** (Continued)

Literate below High School	1.885***	1.590***	1.562***	1.741***	1.410***	1.495***
Literate above High School	1.706***	1.480***	0.980	1.829	1.445**	1.103
<b>Husband's Education</b>						
Illiterate@						
Literate below High School	0.445***	0.420***	0.426***	0.390***	0.407***	0.398***
Literate above High School	0.507***	0.404***	0.400***	0.397***	0.413***	0.365***
Don't Know	6.616***	4.633***	5.410***	7.524***	4.942***	5.959***
<b>Log Likelihood</b>	17704.79	34331.2	24511.48	36932.76	21201.35	39539.74
<b>Model X<sup>2</sup></b>	6340.94	12998.47	8549.45	9173.10	8868.27	9952.89
<b>Degree of Freedom</b>	24	24	24	24	24	24



**FIGURE 2**



## Discussion and Conclusion

Present study attempt to understand the associated factors affecting the marriage dissolution in India all together and also separately by the region i.e. North, Central, East, Northeast, West and South. DLHS-3 (2007-08), dataset has been used in the analysis, one of the largest ever demographic and health survey carried out in India, covering all the districts of country. For the first time the timing of divorce/separation/desertion is asked to the women who have reported their marital status as divorced/separated/deserted.

The hazard regression analyses suggest that age at marriage, age, birth cohort, region, place of residence, religion, caste, children ever born, both the partner's education had significant effects on the chances of marriage dissolution. Age at marriage is an important factor affecting the marriage dissolution. Women marrying at their later ages, risk for marriage dissolution is greater than those marrying at their early ages i.e. 16.752 times more likely for marriage dissolution in their lives. It is contrary to the earlier studies as women married before age eighteen have high risk of divorce than those married at the later ages (Yi et al., 2002). Educated women have higher chances of marriage dissolution than the illiterate ones.

In agricultural societies like India, most of decisions are influenced by kinship, family and marriage relationships. In India kin relationships is the dominating factor to constitute for majority of people the prime way to access social resources, economic security and political support. In northern India, married women have low autonomy, because of her lesser link with natal kin (Dyson and Moore 1983). Regional variations in kinship pattern and geographic distribution in India exist long back. Northern culture is called "Aryan" and southern is "Dravidian" culture, which is the basic difference (Sopher 1980). At last it can be concluded from the discussion that kinship pattern and regional variation strongly affects marriage pattern in India. Many issues related to these can be answered through the study of kinship pattern of that locality.

Regional analysis depicts huge variations within the region and among the regions. Region wise study is important to understand the marriage dissolution pattern in various regions of India. In India there is huge regional diversity in socio cultural status, kinship pattern, marriage pattern, religion, caste etc. Regional differences in marriage patterns have been observed during 1891-1951 by Agarwala and concluded that the southern states had the highest mean age at marriage (Hajnal 1951). Marriage dissolution rates are quite higher in Northeastern, Western and Southern regions also supported by the study conducted by Karve, 1953. Regional analysis shows that age at marriage, place of residence, children ever born and education are significant for all the regions. Rest of the covariates varies by the region.

There is rise in number of divorce cases in India, it is important to focus on the issue of marriage dissolution. It has various impacts on individuals well being and their family life. Many studies on consequences of divorce reveal that divorced persons as compared to married persons experience low level of psychological well being, poor self esteem, low happiness, psychological distress, (Aseltine & Kessler 1993; Davies et al. 1997; Demo & Acock 1996b; Lorenz et al. 1997; Marks 1996; Johnson and Wu 2002). Divorced persons experience poor health condition than the married ones, further it leads to greater mortality (Aldous & Ganey 1999; Hemstrom 1996; Lillard & Waite 1995; Murphy et al. 1997; Rogers 1996; Zick & Smith 1991).

Some of the important variables, such as women's work participation at the time of dissolution, type of occupation, wives share in family income, gender attitudes, poor child health, legislative action etc. are not available in the dataset.

**Concepts:** *Marriage or wedding* is the ceremony prescribed by law or custom which establishes such a union between man and a woman as spouses i.e. husband and wife. The end of union coincides with the *dissolution of marriage* i.e. the breaking of all legal obligations resulting from the status of spouse, including the removal of legal obstacles to a new marriage. If a marriage is dissolved by death the surviving spouse is called a widower or widow. Whereas *divorce* means dissolution of marriage which may take place through the granting of a decree of divorce to one of the spouses. Persons whose marriages have been dissolved by divorce are called divorced persons (IUSSP, 1982). In India many rural localities couples are not taking any legal advice regarding their separation they starts living separately or sometimes husband/wife deserted her/ him. Separated, deserted and divorce are considered as marital dissolution in the present study.

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