

---

# **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROHIBITION OF CHILD MARRIAGE ACT, 2006 IN TRIBAL AREAS: A SOCIO-LEGAL STUDY OF GOPANARI**

---

Chandhana S Priyan, BBA LLB (Hons.), Symbiosis Law School, Pune

## **ABSTRACT**

Child marriage continues to be a significant social and legal issue in India, despite the enactment of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. Particularly, this practice is widely evident in the tribal settlements where socio economic reasons, cultural traditions, limited educational opportunities and lack of legal awareness contribute to the prevalence Child marriage. This research paper examines the implementation of the Prohibition of Child marriage Act, 2006 in Gopanari, a tribal settlement in the mountains of Anaikatti, through a socio-legal perspective.

This paper aims to identify the factors and reasons that contribute to child marriage and evaluate the effectiveness of legal mechanisms established by law to prevent and prohibit child marriage. The study further explores the level of awareness among the community members regarding the legal consequences of child marriage and assesses the role of government authorities, local institutions, and non-governmental organisations in enforcing the provisions of the Act.

The research adopts a socio legal methodology combining doctrinal analysis of statutory provisions and primary sources with empirical data collected through field observation, interviews and community interaction with the tribal members of Gopanari.

Furthermore, the paper also highlights the actions and measure taken by NGO's and community stakeholders to prevent child marriage through awareness campaigns, educational support, counselling initiatives and collaboration with governmental agencies and CSR initiatives of corporates. Based on the findings the paper identifies challenges in the implementation of measure taken to prohibit child marriage and suggest recommendations to overcome the barriers both legally and socially

The research therefore concludes that the legal initiative to eradicate child marriage that is the implementation of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 has not been an effective measure of preventing child marriage in tribal areas. Therefore, with the implementation of the legal framework, sustained social, educational and community-based intervention and effective assessment of implementation of such legal provisions are also necessary.

## Introduction

Child marriage refers to a marital union in which either one or both the parties have not attained the legally prescribed age for marriage. In India, the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 defines child as male below twenty-one years of age and female below eighteen years of age. Child marriage is widely recognised as violation of children's rights, as it deprives them of opportunities for education, personal development, health, and informed decision making. In India and in most parts of the world child marriage disproportionately affects girls, resulting in school dropouts, early pregnancies, health risks, economic dependency and various forms of social vulnerabilities<sup>1</sup>.

Historically, In India child marriage has been prevalent for many centuries and has been influenced by social, cultural, religious and economic factors. During the medieval period, factors relevant to social status, preservation of caste-based identity, and protection of family honour contributed to the practice of marrying children at an early age.

Despite the consecutive efforts made by social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Mahatma Jyotirao Phule in advocating for prohibition of child marriage, the practice still continued across several communities<sup>2</sup>.

Legislative interventions were enacted from the implementation of Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, commonly known as the Sarda Act, which aimed to discourage child marriages by establishing minimum age for marriage. In present the legal provision of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 is in prevalence but still child marriage continues to be in practice across the country and beyond<sup>3</sup>.

The present study aims to examine the effectiveness of the implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 in the tribal settlement of Gopanari. It seeks to understand the factors contributing to the prevalence of child marriage within the community and to propose recommendations for its prevention and eradication<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-39958307>

<sup>2</sup> Yogita P. Pandya & Dinesh J Bhandari, An Epidemiological Study of Child Marriages in a Rural Community of Gujarat, 40(4), Indian J Community Med, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> <https://womensmediacenter.com/women-under-siege/in-tamil-nadu-child-marriage-was-already-rampant-then-came-the-pandemic>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/1783/Child\\_marriage\\_in\\_India\\_law\\_guide\\_and\\_directory.pdf](https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/1783/Child_marriage_in_India_law_guide_and_directory.pdf)

## **Legal Framework Governing Child Marriage in India**

Legal framework that governs child marriage in India has evolved through various measures by the legislative aimed at protecting children from early marriage and forced marriages. The first significant legislative interaction to prevent child marriage was the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929<sup>5</sup> (Sarda Act), which aimed to discourage child marriages by prescribing minimum age for marriage. However, the act was replaced by Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006<sup>6</sup> because of the legal gap in the implementation of the initial act. Therefore, Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 remains as the principal legislation governing child marriage in India<sup>7</sup>.

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 defines a child as a male below twenty-one years of age and a female below eighteen years of age. The act prohibits the solemnization of child marriages and provides legal remedies to children who are parties to such marriages.

The Act prescribes penalties for adult males marrying children, individuals solemnising child marriages, and parents and guardians or any person who promote, permit or facilitate such marriages.

To strengthen the enforcement and implementation of the legal provisions, the act provides for the appointment of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers who are responsible for preventing child marriages, creating awareness about child marriage collecting evidence regarding the same and assisting law enforcement authorities.

Additionally, legislations such as Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012<sup>8</sup> and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015<sup>9</sup> complement and strengthen the objectives and effective implementation of Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 by providing broader protection of children. Collectively, all these legal measures have a common objective to eliminate child marriage and safeguard the rights, welfare and development of children in India<sup>10</sup>.

---

<sup>5</sup> Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929

<sup>6</sup> Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006

<sup>7</sup> <https://iasscore.in/current-affairs/conflict-between-tribes-and-the-legal-provisions-of-marriage-in-india>

<sup>8</sup> Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012

<sup>9</sup> Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

<sup>10</sup> <https://supremetoday.ai/issue/tribal-underage-marriage-legal-status-customary-law-india>

## **Gopanari a Tribal Settlement and the Prevalence of Child Marriage among the community**

Gopanari is a tribal settlement situated in Anaikatti region of Coimbatore District, Tamil Nadu, near the Tamil Nadu - Kerala border and within the foothills of the western ghats. The community is predominantly inhabited by tribal families whose traditional way of life remains closely connected to the surrounding natural environment. The inhabitants are dependent on agricultural, forest-based activities, collection of minor forest produce, livestock rearing and daily wage labour for their livelihood. The community have distinct language of their own which is a mix of Tamil, Malayalam and Sanskrit.

Due to its geographical isolation and location in a hilly terrain, the settlement has historically experienced limited access to educational institutions, healthcare facilities, legal services and other developmental resources. As a consequence of such isolation the community remains vulnerable to various socio-economic challenges and continues to rely significantly on traditional customs and cultural practices in matters relating to family and social life.

In recent years, many government initiatives and efforts made by NGO's has led to significant development of the settlement of Gopanari especially in the field of Housing and Education, despite these efforts, child marriage continues to remain a significant concern within the settlement. Field observation and community interaction indicate that girls are often married of shortly after attaining puberty, primarily due to cultural practices, economic considerations, and limited awareness of the legal consequences of child marriage. As the population of the community has increased, the number of child marriages among the community has also increased significantly<sup>11</sup>.

### **Consequences of Child Marriage in Gopanari**

The field study conducted in Gopanari revealed that child marriage has far reaching consequences for individuals, families, and the community as a whole. Information gathered through community interactions with tribal residents of Gopanari has resulted in identification of major consequences of child marriage in the tribal settlement of Gopanari.

Firstly, child marriage often results in the discontinuation of education, particularly among

---

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mapsofindia.com/villages/tamil-nadu/coimbatore/mettupalayam/gopanari-rf.html>

girls, thereby limiting their opportunities for personal and professional development. Many young girls who are married in Gopanari are uneducated and claim that their education was stopped to marry them off as soon as they attained puberty<sup>12</sup>.

Secondly, early pregnancy as a result of child marriage has resulted in serious health issues and health risks to the girls. During community interaction many women shared their painful and horrible experience of child birth and the health difficulties they had to face post-delivery. Thirdly, child marriage places a significant psychological burden on young girls, who are often required to assume marital and household responsibilities before attaining emotional maturity. Also, it is widely evident that there are high rates of domestic violence against girls who were married in a very young age to adult men<sup>13</sup>.

Fourthly, through community interaction it was observed that early marriage restricts the freedom and autonomy of girls, limiting their ability to make decisions regarding education, employment, and family life. Fifthly, child marriage contributes to economic hardship, as young couples frequently lack stable sources of income and financial security.

Finally, as many girls were married off in a young age to adult men, early death of the husband has resulted in an increase in the number of young widows, struggling emotionally and economically to raise their children in the absence of their spouse<sup>14</sup>.

The following case studies, collected through community interaction, illustrate the practical impact of child marriage on the lives of women and their families<sup>15</sup>.

The names have been changed to protect the identity of the respondents.

---

<sup>12</sup> Ajay Kumar Sinha, Vikram Srivastav, Md Salam Khan, Nikhil Verma, Jasleen Klu, Arvind Singh, Jarjum Ete, Manish Kumar, Resmi Bhaskaran, Sindhu Nambiath, Shashi Obeid, Nafees Ahmad, Kumud Prabha, Neera Arora, Alex George, Avinash Singh, Dipali Sharma and Sameet Panda, Child Marriage, Vol 28, Economic and Political Weekly, 2013 (Child Marriage | JSTOR)

<sup>13</sup> [https://rflgd.org/2024/01/21/the-effects-of-child-marriage-on-girls-sexual-and-reproductive-health-in-togo/?gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=23235319399&gbraid=0AAAABBmaIdo0250YVJuesF193gaLW8tvf&gclid=CjwKCAjwyuDTBhB-](https://rflgd.org/2024/01/21/the-effects-of-child-marriage-on-girls-sexual-and-reproductive-health-in-togo/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=23235319399&gbraid=0AAAABBmaIdo0250YVJuesF193gaLW8tvf&gclid=CjwKCAjwyuDTBhB-EiwANCQhLPSfNikCkctbV3l7E0SHi3umuyTOxaXzTev10pQNx5EmqkQVo9AkwhoCN88QAvD_BwE)

<sup>14</sup> PALLAVI GUPTA, Child Marriages and the Law: Contemporary Concerns, Vol. 47, No. 43, Economic and Political Weekly, 2012 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41720300>)

<sup>15</sup> Nicola Jones, Elizabeth Presler-Marshall, Sarah Baird, Sara Luckenbill, Jennifer Seager, Shruthi Dileep, Khadija Mitu & Workneh Yadet, Child marriage and its consequences for adolescent mental health in conflict-affected contexts: evidence from Bangladesh, Ethiopia and Jordan, 20, Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies, 2025 (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17450128.2025.2467697>)

## Case study 1

---

Sundari, a 21-year-old woman from Gopanari, was married at the age of 15 due to prevailing cultural practices within the community. As a result of her early marriage, she discontinued her education and assumed household responsibilities at a young age. She became the mother of two children before attaining adulthood.

During the field study, Sundari stated that she was unaware of the legal age of marriage and the legal consequences associated with child marriage at the time of her marriage. Her husband, who was engaged in daily wage labour, died in an elephant attack while working near a forest area, leaving her solely responsible for the care and upbringing of their two children.

With limited educational qualifications and employment opportunities, Sundari now faces significant economic hardship and relies primarily on daily wage work and support from family members. Her experience illustrates the adverse consequences of child marriage, including educational deprivation, early motherhood, economic vulnerability, and the increased difficulties faced by young women in the event of unforeseen circumstances such as the loss of a spouse.

## Case study 2

---

Radha, a 19-year-old woman from Gopanari, was married at the age of 14 due to her family's poor economic condition and the prevailing practice of early marriage within the community. Following her marriage, she discontinued her education and assumed domestic responsibilities.

Within a short period of marriage, Radha became pregnant at a young age and experienced serious health complications during pregnancy and childbirth. During the field interaction, she reported facing prolonged health issues, which affected her ability to carry out daily activities and care for her child. She further stated that she had no knowledge of the legal age of marriage or the legal protections available to women and children at the time of her marriage.

Radha also revealed that her husband frequently consumed alcohol and subjected her to domestic violence. Due to a lack of legal awareness and limited access to support mechanisms, she did not seek assistance from any authority or institution. Her case demonstrates how child marriage can contribute to educational deprivation, health risks associated with early pregnancy, economic vulnerability, and exposure to domestic violence, particularly among young women from marginalized tribal communities.

## Case study 3

---

The case of Rani was narrated during the field study by her mother. According to her, Rani was married to her cousin at the age of 15 in accordance with prevailing customs within the community. Following her marriage, she discontinued her education and assumed household responsibilities at a young age.

Within a few years of marriage, Rani gave birth to two children and became pregnant for the third time before attaining the age of twenty. Her mother stated that repeated pregnancies, poor health, and limited access to healthcare services adversely affected Rani's well-being. Despite experiencing health complications, she continued to perform domestic work and childcare responsibilities.

At the age of 19, Rani died during her third pregnancy, leaving behind her husband and two young children. According to her mother, Rani had little awareness of the health risks associated with early pregnancies and child marriage. Following her death, her children have faced significant hardships and are compelled to engage in labour activities alongside their studies to support their education and contribute to the family's livelihood.

Rani's case highlights the tragic consequences of child marriage, including educational deprivation, early and repeated pregnancies, maternal health risks, and the intergenerational impact of child marriage on children who are left vulnerable to economic and social hardships.

## **Factors Contributing to Child Marriage in Gopanari: Findings from Community Interaction**

The field study conducted in Gopanari revealed that the prevalence of child marriage is influenced by a combination of social, economic, cultural and educational factors. Information gathered through interviews, and interactions with community members indicate that the practice continues to be viewed as a customary and socially accepted institution despite the existence of legal prohibitions.

Poverty merged as one of the most significant factors that contributes to child marriage. Many families in the settlement depend on daily wage labour and have limited and unstable source of income. As a result, parents often perceive the marriage of their daughter at an early age as a means of reducing financial responsibility<sup>16</sup>.

Educational barriers were another major factor identified during the study. Although schools and educational systems have been established in recent years, school dropout remain high due to various reasons. Several respondents state that once a girl discontinues her education or attain puberty, marriage is often considered the next appropriate stage of life. Consequently, educational opportunities are frequently sacrificed in favour of early marriage<sup>17</sup>.

Traditional customs and cultural beliefs continue to play a significant role in sustaining the practice. Community interactions revealed that child marriage has been followed for generations and is often regarded as a customary practice rather than a social problem. In many circumstances marriages between blood relatives are encouraged in order to preserve family relationships and strengthen social ties within the community<sup>18</sup>.

Another significant factor identified during the study was the concern of parents and relatives regarding romantic relationships and inter community marriages. Several respondents expressed the belief that marrying girls at an early age would prevent them from eloping. Such acts and relationships are perceived as affecting the honour and reputation of the family.

---

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.cry.org/blog/child-marriage-can-have-long-term-effects-on-young-girls/>

<sup>17</sup> Raj Coomar Roy, Child Marriage in India, Vol. 147, No. 383, The North American Review. 1888 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/25101631>)

<sup>18</sup> M. Mofizul Islam, Md. Nuruzzaman Khan & Md. Mashiur Rahman, Factors Affecting Child Marriage and Contraceptive Use Among Rohingya Girls in Refugee Camps, 12, Science direct, 2021 (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666606521000845?via%3Dihub>)

Furthermore, the most shocking and significant finding that was made in none of the members in the tribal settlement were aware of the legal provisions in relevance to child marriage. The residents of the community were not aware that child marriage is prohibited by law and breaching of such law is a punishable offence. Lack of such legal provision also is an essential reason behind higher rates of child marriage in the tribal settlement of Gopanari<sup>19</sup>.

### **Implementation and Effectiveness of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 in Gopanari**

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 was enacted with the objective of prohibiting child marriages through legal sanctions, awareness measures, and institutional mechanisms. The Act prescribes the minimum legal age of marriage, provides penalties and punishments for those involved in child marriages, and empowers authorities to take preventive action. However, the effectiveness of any legislation depends upon its implementation at the grassroots level. The present study aims to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the act within the tribal settlement of Gopanari through community interactions and field observations<sup>20</sup>.

The findings of the study indicate that the implementation of the Act within the tribal settlement of Gopanari remains limited. A significant number of residences in the settlement were unaware of any relevant legal provisions and almost everyone one was unaware of the legal age prescribed for marriage and had no knowledge of the provisions contained in the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. While some community members had heard that child marriage was prohibited by law, they were largely unaware of the legal consequences, penalties and remedies available under the Act. This lack of legal awareness was particularly evident among older members of the community.

The study further revealed that child marriage continues to be influenced by customary practices and traditional beliefs that have existed within the community for generations. Many respondents did not perceive child marriage as a criminal or unlawful act but rather as a socially accepted practice. In several instances, marriage soon after puberty was viewed as a customary expectation and an important aspect of family and community life. Consequently, cultural

---

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/end-child-marriage>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/tribal-marriages-child-rights-panel-intervenes/article8256327.ece>

norms often carried greater influence than legal provisions in decisions relating to marriage.

Community interactions also highlighted that the fear of legal action has not significantly reduced the practice of child marriage. Although awareness campaigns have occasionally been conducted by government departments and non-governmental organisations in the tribal settlement of Gopanari, the impact of such awareness campaigns remain limited. Several respondents stated that they had never received detailed information regarding the provisions of the Act or the punishments that may arise from violating the provision and being involved in child marriage. As a result, legal compliance is often not driven by awareness of the law but by personal or social considerations<sup>21</sup>.

Another challenge identified during the study was the limited accessibility of legal and administrative institutions. Due to the geographical isolation of the settlement and the distance from government offices and legal aid services, many residents have minimal interaction with enforcement authorities. Community members were generally unaware of mechanisms available for reporting child marriages or seeking legal assistance. Furthermore, no respondent reported direct engagement with Child Marriage Prohibition Officers, indicating a gap between the legal framework and its practical implementation at the community level<sup>22</sup>.

The findings therefore suggest that while the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 provides a comprehensive legal framework for preventing child marriage, its implementation in Gopanari has not been fully effective. The continued prevalence of child marriage can be attributed to inadequate legal awareness, socio-cultural acceptance of the practice, educational barriers and limited institutional outreach. The study demonstrates that legal prohibition alone is insufficient to eradicate child marriage in tribal communities. Effective implementation requires continuous legal awareness programmes, improved access to education, active involvement of local authorities, and sustained community-based interventions aimed at changing long-standing social attitudes. Only through the combined efforts of legal institutions, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and community stakeholders can the

---

<sup>21</sup> Arnab Sarkar, Pocso act with respect to tribal marriage', VOL. 2 ISSUE 2 Journal of Legal Research and Juridical Sciences, 2023 (<https://jlrjs.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/23.-Arnab-Sarkar.pdf>)

<sup>22</sup> Shivani Mohan, assessing the impact of legislative intervention on child marriage in bihar, india: untying the knots between law, economics and society, volume viii, gnlu journal of law & economics, 2025 (<http://gjle.in/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Paper-6-116-end.pdf>)

objectives of the Act be effectively realised in Gopanari<sup>23</sup>.

### **Role of Non-Governmental Organisations in Preventing Child Marriage in Gopanari**

Non-governmental organisations have played an important role in addressing child marriage in Gopanari through educational support, awareness programmes, counselling initiatives and community engagement. During the field study, it was observed that NGO's working in the region have undertaken various measures to improve educational access and promote awareness regarding consequences of child marriage<sup>24</sup>.

One such initiative is the Catalyst Learning Centre, an educational initiative established by an NGO to support the learning and development of tribal children. The initiative encourages children, particularly girls to continue their education and reduces the likelihood of school dropouts, which is one of the significant factors contributing to child marriage. By providing academic support, mentoring, and a safe learning environment, the centre has assisted many children in pursuing their education beyond the primary level and help them escape the consequences of child marriage<sup>25</sup>.

In addition to educational initiatives, NGOs regularly conduct awareness programmes and campaigns to educate parents and community members about the social, health, and legal consequences of child marriage.

Counselling sessions are also organised by the NGOs for children and families to address issues relating to education, early marriage and child marriage. NGOs further collaborate with schools, local authorities and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to strengthen child protection measures within the community<sup>26</sup>.

These interventions have contributed to improving awareness and educational participation in Gopanari. Although child marriage continues to persist, the efforts of NGOs have played a significant role in challenging traditional attitudes and promoting the welfare and rights of children within the settlement.

---

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.tnsocialwelfare.tn.gov.in/en/social-legislations/prohibition-of-child-marriage-act>

<sup>24</sup> <https://srhformosapublisher.org/index.php/fjas/article/view/323/502>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.nmctngo.org/peace-public-co-operation.html>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www2.fundsforngos.org/articles-searching-grants-and-donors/10-international-ngos-supporting-initiatives-against-child-marriage/>

## Challenges in the Prevention of Child Marriage in Gopanari

The prevention of child marriage in Gopanari is still hampered by a number of issues, despite the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations.<sup>27</sup> The social acceptance of early marriage and deeply ingrained cultural customs continue to be major obstacles to change. The practice is also sustained by poverty, school dropouts, and a lack of employment options.<sup>28</sup> The geographical isolation of the settlement restricts access to legal institutions and awareness programmes, resulting in low levels of legal literacy among community members. Additionally, concerns relating to family honour and inter-community relationships often discourage families from delaying marriages, thereby limiting the effectiveness of preventive interventions.<sup>29</sup>

## Findings and Recommendations

The present study found that the practice of child marriage remains prevalent in Gopanari despite the existence of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. The research revealed that poverty, educational barriers, traditional customs, concerns regarding family honour, and fear of inter-community marriages are the primary factors contributing to the continued practice of child marriage. The study further found that legal awareness within the community is extremely low, with most respondents being unaware of the legal age of marriage, the provisions of the Act, and the legal consequences and penalties associated with child marriage<sup>30</sup>.

Community interactions also indicated that cultural practices and social norms often take precedence over legal obligations. Consequently, the implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 at the grassroots level remains ineffective, resulting in the continued prevalence of child marriage and its associated consequences, including educational deprivation, health complications, economic vulnerability, domestic violence, and emotional distress<sup>31</sup>.

---

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ihdindia.org/child-marriage-in-india-a-persistent-challenge/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.unicef.org/media/71781/file/GP-2020-Child-Marriage-in-Humanitarian-Settings-FactSheet.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Rajveer Singh, CHALLENGES TO PROHIBITION OF CHILD MARRIAGE (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2021, Volume 9, Issue 7, Journal of emerging technologies and innovative research, 2021, (<https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2207375.pdf>)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2212352&reg=3&lang=1>

<sup>31</sup> <https://childrenbelieve.ca/Portals/0/stories/downloads/India-ChildMarriageAug2022.pdf?ver=ODDJKpClki9A568FbiCF-w%3D%3D>

In light of these findings, there is a need to strengthen the implementation of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 in tribal settlements such as Gopanari<sup>32</sup>. Firstly, regular legal awareness programmes should be conducted to educate parents, children, and community leaders regarding the legal age of marriage and the consequences of violating the law<sup>33</sup>. Secondly, Child Marriage Prohibition Officers and other law enforcement authorities should undertake frequent visits to tribal settlements and periodically assess the status of children who are vulnerable to child marriage. Such monitoring would help in identifying potential instances of child marriage at an early stage and facilitate timely intervention. Thirdly, effective coordination should be established between law enforcement authorities, schools, healthcare workers, and local administrative officials to create a community-based monitoring mechanism. Fourthly, greater emphasis should be placed on improving educational retention among tribal girls through scholarships, transportation facilities, residential hostels, and vocational training programmes. Legal aid camps and outreach programmes should also be organised regularly to improve access to legal institutions and child protection mechanisms. Furthermore, awareness initiatives should actively involve tribal elders, community leaders, and parents, as their participation is essential for changing long standing social attitudes. Finally, the Government should undertake periodic assessments of the implementation of the Act in tribal areas to identify enforcement gaps and ensure that legal protections effectively reach vulnerable communities. Such measures would significantly enhance the effectiveness of the Act and contribute towards the eradication of child marriage in tribal settlements such as Gopanari<sup>34</sup>.

## Conclusion

The present study concludes that the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 has not achieved its intended objective especially in tribal settlements such as Gopanari due to inadequate legal awareness, weak grassroot level implementation and the continued influence of traditional practices. The prevalence of child marriage even after 20 years of implementation of an act to prevent such practice highlights the gap between law and social reality in tribal communities. While the law provides necessary protection, its effectiveness remains limited unless supported by active enforcement, continuous monitoring, educational empowerment, and community participation. Therefore, the elimination of child marriage in Gopanari requires not merely the

---

<sup>32</sup> <https://sansad.in/getFile/loksabhaquestions/annex/172/AU3369.pdf?source=pqals>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.cry.org/protect-children-from-tribal-communities/>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.haqcrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/haq-evaluation-report.pdf>

existence of legal provisions but their effective implementation through a sustained socio-legal approach that prioritises the rights and future of every child.