

Marriage assistance for poor families

Lok Samiti is assisting with group marriage ceremony for youth of 21 poor families on April 30, 2007. These families are facing difficulty in marrying their children for lack of funds. Since dowry is still prevalent in Uttar Pradesh, these families contacted Lok Samiti for help [and we decided to organize this activity]. All these families have chosen the bride and groom on their own. About 33 families contacted us but we did not select the families that had some income from occupation or ones that had sufficient resources to conduct marriage. These locals are from notified backward classes including Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes and other backward classes and most of them work are employed in wage labor.

By keeping the expenses for marriage ceremony at a minimum the Lok Samiti wants to send the message that families that can not afford exorbitant marriages and dowry can also marry their children. [This will also reduce the pressure on other families to spend lavishly in future and the girl children will not think of themselves as burden on their parents.]

We are expecting about 50 guests from each family (total of about 2500 to 3000 guests) at the group marriage ceremony. We are asking locals to contribute and expect to raise equivalent of Rs 100,000 from local contributions of cash, clothes and food materials.

A list of 15 couples is final and presented below, the names of additional 6 couples will be available in another week.

1)Raju Prasad , S/o Jhumkar, Mila devi, Age- 23, Caste - SC

Address- Vill and post- Mehadiganj Rajatalb, Varanasi.

Weds

Nitu D/o Chhedi, chamela devi, Age- 18, Add- vill- bhadawer, post- kashipur, thana- rohaniya, dist- Varanasi.

2) Bhonu S/o shree Amaranath, age- 21, Caste- St, Add- vill/ post- shahpur, dist- Varanasi.

Weds

Sanju devi, D/o Bipat ram, munni devi, Age- 19, add- vill/ post-Benopu, maheshpatti, P/s- mirjamurad, dist- Varanasi

3)Rajesh kumar, S/o Shree Mitthu ram, Age- 22, Caste- Sc, Add- Vill, post- Lodhipur, Allahabad.

Weds

Lakhmina, D/o chhabbu ram, Lalmani Devi, Age- 19, Add- vill/post- Benipur usarapatti, P/s- mirjamurad, dist- Varanasi

4)Vindu devi D/o sukhram rajbher, Radha Devi, Age- 20, Caste- St, Add- Vill/post- Kallipur, Mirjamurad, Dist - Varanasi.

Weds

Balvir rajbhar S/o Ramcharan, Badama devi, Age- 22, Add- vill/post- Sandaha Sarnath, dist- Varanasi .

5) Usha Devi D/o Chekhuri, Tara Devi, Age- 20, Caste- Sc, add- vill- mahmadpur, post- harsos, dist- Varanasi

Weds

Sunil kumar S/o Udit narayan, subha devi, Age- 23, add- Basaratpur, post- Adalpura, dist-Mirjapur.

6) Anita devi D/o Shree Dukkhu, Prema devi, Age-18, Caste- Sc, Add- vill- Nagepur, Post- Benipue, Thana- Mirjamurad, dist- Varanasi

Weds

Shivji S/o Gyani ram, Kalawati devi, Age- 21, Add- vill/post- Koirajpur harhua, Dist- Varanasi.

7) Savitri Devi D/o Rajkumar patel, minta devi, Age-18, Caste- Obc, Add- vill/post- Kallipur saida, P/s- mirjamurad, dist- Varanasi

Weds

Anil kumar S/o Ramji patel, Age- 21, Add- vill/post naipura, Dist- Varanasi

8) Punam Devi D/o gaurishanker, mala devi, age- 18, Caste- Sc, Add- vill/post- Kakrahiya, lohata, Dist- Varanasi

Weds

Sonu S/o jhukar, mila devi, Age- 21, Add- vill/post Mehadiganj rajatalb Dist- Varanasi.

9) Jira Devi D/o Sewalal, munesara devi, Age- 19, Caste- St, Add- vill/post- Mehadiganj rajatalab, Dist- Varanasi

Weds

Mitthu S/o Sree Bechan Ram, Age- 20, Add- vill/post kudi, P/s- Badaganw Dist- Varanasi

10) Lakho D/o Sree Bipat rajbhar, Mantora devi, Age- 20, Caste- Bc. Add- vill/post- Kallipur pahi, P/s Mirjamurad, Dist- Varanasi

Weds

Rajan rajbhar S/o Sadanand, Kismati Devi, Age- 22, Add- vill/post- Unchganw korauta, P/s- lohata, Dist- Varanasi

11) Guddi Kumari D/o Ramlal patel, chandrawati devi, Age- 18, Caste- OBC, Add- vill/post- Kallipur saida, P/s- mirjamurad, Dist- Varanasi.

Weds

Gulab patel S/o Kharbhan patel, Age- 21, Add- Vill/post- Bhikhampur, babhaniyaw, Dist- Varanasi.

12) Usha Devi D/o Lalchand Rajbher, late shanty devi, Age- 20, Caste-

Bc, add- vill/post- Harsos, P/s- Jansa, Dist- Varanasi.

Weds

Munna S/o Shree Bhola singh, Endu devi, Age- 23, Add- vill/post- serka panchdeura, Dist- Chandauli

13) Nilam devi D/o Late munnalal, Lalmani, Age-18, Caste- Bc, Add- vill/post- Harsos, P/s Jansa, Dist- Varanasi

14) Shila Dedi D/o jhaganu Banwasi malti devi, Age-18, Caste- St, Add- vill/post- Mehadiganj rajatalab, Dist- Varanasi

Weds

Phoolkumar S/o Syamlal, Age- 21, Add- vill/post- kushai, P/s Jalalpur, Dist- jaunpur

15) Sima devi D/o Makoi Prasad sukkhiya devi, Age- 19, Caste- OBc, Add- vill/post- Mahesh Patti Benipur, P/s- mirjamurad, dist- Varanasi

Weds

Rajkumar S/o Lallan Maurya, Age- 22, Add- vill/post- Gotawa, Dist- Varanasi.

Marriage Program

Date- 30 April 2007 , Monday

Time- 11 A.M

Venue- R.M. Lohiya P.G College Bhairav talab Rajatab Varanasi

Total Participants- 20 members

Budget

1. Gift Items

A) Bicycle	20 nos.	40,000=00
B) Watch	20 nos.	10,000=00
C) Sewing machine	20 nos.	40,000=00
D) Cloth (pant, shirt, silk, etc.)	20 set	30,000=00
E) Pots and Pans		20,000=00

2. Food (2500 members) 1,00,000=00

3. Tent, Band, Mike, Music etc 25,000=00

4. Travel 10,000=00

5. Others 25,000=00

Total Budget 3,00,000=00

Local Contribution 1,00,000=00

Total requirement Budget **Rs 2,00,000** (or \$4600)

Proposal prepared by Nandlal Master
Lok Samiti, Rajatalab, Varanasi
+91-9415300520
napm_up@yahoo.com

(Translated by Sirish from DC)

Background information about the marriage program and some clarifications

- The group has received tremendous support from the community - they have received 20 bags of grains for the food, and have received clothes from many people. Some people like the District Chairman have committed to getting some cycles/sewing machines; some have helped out with the pots and pans.
- The traditional weddings are very expensive and there is a huge dowry that we would like to clip at source. Average cost of wedding where the boy's side has not asked for anything is Rs.50000. Gifts, clothes, money for the groom, clothes for the bride, clothes for the family are all expenses and it is pretty unthinkable under Rs.20000.
- Government has a scheme for below-poverty-line (BPL) families wherein they provide Rs.15,000-Rs.20,000 for marriages. You need to prove that the couples are BPL with certificates, etc and it takes a long time after the marriage has been done and the forms have been filled out. They need to take loans and get reimbursed by the government. The problem is that the government does not recognize everyone who is BPL as BPL. Lok Samiti tries to get some people married under programs organized by MLAs
- On every activity rather than depending on the government, Lok Samiti wants the community to take up the responsibility and put in their resources. Community needs to have a responsibility that if someone is not able to get married due to finances they try to fix it. For this program, local community has given 20 bags of grains, cycle, machines, etc.
- Since we were doing it the very first time if we pick up something as delicate like marriage, then we can't do it exactly how we would like to do it based on our principles and we also need to give way a bit. We had a big meeting in the group with the family and our own members to try to balance their expectations with what we were trying to accomplish. We wanted them not to have the feeling that they were not being married in a good way. We wanted to limit the number of guests to 50 from boy's side and 50 from girl's side.
- We want to be able to do the wedding in Rs.10000 - Rs.15000 per family. At the same time not make them feel like they were left out.

- Some of the things that have come out of trying something like this is that it is remarkable how the families have even accepted to be all married at the same time and this is a very big deal here. The second is how the community is so positive and coming together. The Panchayat will give the registration on the day of the wedding.

Q: What is the rationale behind the gifts – sewing machines and bicycles?

A: Most of the women being married are from the local area and Lok Samiti has met with the guardians and with women and they decided on the gift of the sewing machine for the women. Some of the women have already learnt sewing through the sewing center run by Lok Samiti. Lok Samiti invited all the women to come to the sewing center and learn to use the machines, in the hope that they could use it for their family needs and some of them could earn some money after marriage. The gift of cycles for the men was to help them to get to work or to go find work.

Q: Why is the watch a useful gift?

A: This is a question that we had a discussion about earlier today and we were not clear about it either. We did not want the boy/girl to feel that their marriage was not being done in a proper way because they were poor. So we put it in initially as a good gift item, but now we are thinking of going with utensils for their new home instead.

Q: Why aren't the gifts personalized?

A: If we give each person different things then it might cause issues like comparison, jealousy, etc. Some of the local people wanted to take up one marriage and do it in their own way. But, that would have made each wedding different and we had to standardize.

People also like to give with kind rather than funds and this was logistically easier to tell people what to get too.
