



# CHANGING PATTERNS OF INDIAN MARRAIIAGE SYSTEM

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## ABSTRACT:

In India, marriage forms the basis of a social institution. Arranged marriages have always been the preferred norm in contrast to the norms of love marriage. But today, the fact is that the entire process of mate selection has gone through several changes in contemporary times. The advent of computers has made the way to various websites and portals. These new vectors have taken over the occupation of traditional matchmakers. Many marriage portals have emerged in this age to assist the people for mate selection process. This paper makes an attempt to explore the changing patterns of marriage. An effort has been made to draw a comparison between the patterns of marriage alliance prevalent in ancient times with that of patterns in progress.

**Key Words :** Marriage, Divorce, interpersonal relationships...etc

## I. INTRODUCTION

Among all the interpersonal relations, marriage is the most important one as mostly people marry only once in their lifetime. More than a personal relationship, marriage is also considered as a social institution. It starts with the selection of a marriage partner. The way people select a marriage partner, follows different procedure along with the rules and regulations of selection, the whole criterion varies from one culture to another and from society to society.

In the ancient societies, marriages were considered compulsory and an important institution which was based on religion, religious rites and for the pursuit of religion. Marriages were regarded as one of the most important social events which everyone should have to make. Marriage was measured as a sacrament and not an agreement between two individuals. Marriage was a life-long commitment of husband and wife towards each other and they used to share a strongest bond in that relationship. Marriage was believed to be the main duty and the only way to continue one's family. Moreover it was thought that for the achievement of Moksha, marriage is required. In the traditional societies, people generally preferred early marriages, arranged marriages, higher age difference between spouses and lesser dowry payments. The tradition of monogamous form of marriage, non-existence of widow remarriage, lack of provision for trouble-free

divorce and chastity were regarded as significant ideals. The patterns of making a marriage alliance have changed in modern times. In traditional Indian society, religious matchmakers like priests played the role of middlemen. With changing time, some castes like Nai (barber) and Marassi played the role of Vichola or middleman. However, in contemporary India, self-selected spouses have replaced the traditional spouses selected by families or other cast members. New vectors of matrimonial information have completely changed the alliance-making pattern in India.

Marriage is the most common, universal, and admirable institution in human society that has evolved. Marriage is as old as the institution of the family. Family is the backbone of human civilization because it depends on marriage. Marriage helps to establish a new relationship between a woman and a man. Marriage boundaries are not always precisely and clearly defined. But it is a very important institution of society. It replaces the elderly and dying and helps to relieve social stress from the woman are socially permitted without loss of standing in the community to have children". It is believed to be a fundamental, important institution for spouses' physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being and their offspring's protection and education. It is protected so that children can be cared for and properly cultured.

### **METHODOLOGY:**

The discussion in the paper based on the secondary sources. The prime purpose of the Paper was to highlight the changing patterns of marriage of in Indian society. Old Manu scripts, Books , Journals, printed material and other related sources were made base to arrive at conclusion.

### **OBJECTIVES:**

- ❖ discuss the aspect of age at marriage.
- ❖ discuss variations in the pattern of selection of spouses.
- ❖ examine the issues of divorce and remarriage.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE :**

(Das & Dey, 1998) According to on marriage in developing countries has been somewhat narrow in scope because of both conceptual and data limitations. Marriage has historically been universal and remains so While age at marriage has risen slowly largely through decline in child marriages, mean age at marriage remains low. India has been a country with low age at marriage, where marriage is universal. India follows the Hajnal's Non-European pattern (1965) which is characterized by universal marriage and very low age at marriage among females. The pressure to marry early persists with rising dowry and marriage expenses in several parts of the country.

According to Srinivasan and Lee (2004), a dowry "may also have been a way of compensating the groom and his family for the economic support they would provide for the new bride because women had little or no role in the market economy and would be dependent upon their husbands and in laws" (p. 1108). Dowries are still a common affair despite the significant changes that have been brought about in India. Even though many more women have been brought about in the work force, dowry still prevails in the society. Hyper gamy which is defined as the practice of marrying a partner whose social status is higher than that of hers is one of the main reasons why dowry is much in many communities. Larger dowries mean increasing the family's rank in the society. To add to that, families are motivated to provide generous dowry for their daughter to ensure her safety and respect by in-laws .

According to Rathor (2003), inter-caste marriage has been on the rise, especially among certain socio-economic groups such as the urban youth. Mixed marriages have been increasing due to modernization and socio-economic development. Various socio-economic differences are seen among inter-class marriages and it also affects their pattern of marriages.

## **ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF MARRIAGE:**

Our earliest ancestors probably lived in the "primitive group". In primitive groups, males and females mate with many partners without long intercourses. Mating became obsolete because there was no bond between males and females, infants were more developed at birth than postnatal, and males were neither providers nor protectors.

Big changes in society have a big impact on families and marriages. In some societies, particularly more modern agricultural societies, marriage is viewed as relatively equal partners, contributing equally to the family's economic survival. The greatest change that industrialization brought to the family system was the separation of work and home. The separation of work and home affects the institution of marriage in many ways. First, the family has shifted from a large family system to a small core household. The emergence of the industrial economy has also facilitated the shift from producer to consumer culture. The early family system produced all the goods a family needed, from housing to food to clothing. This producer-to-consumer shift has had a major impact on marriage regulation.

It triggered a trend of higher educational attainment and lower fertility among women. These changes have given women more opportunities outside the home and reduced the economic dependence of one sex on the other. Despite the problem of rising divorce rates, they shift away from seeing marriage as a mere means of economic cooperation and the birth of sexual competition. Marriage is undoubtedly a personal relationship and a private affair between parties, but it is a complex social affair. Marriage creates new social relationships and mutual rights between spouses. It establishes a child's rights and status at birth. Each society recognizes specific procedures for creating such relationships and rights. Society dictates prohibitions, priorities, and regulations when making decisions about marriage. Through this system, people maintain the continuity of their race and achieve happiness in a socially acceptable way. Defining marriage in a watertight compartment or any framework is very difficult because it involves sacredness. Marriage can generally be described as a legal bond/commitment between a man and a woman. Also, this bond is strongly associated with love, tolerance, support, and harmony. Starting a family also means entering a new stage of social progress.

According to H.M. Johnson, "Marriage is a stable relationship in which a man and a children has given modern society many options".

## **CHANGES IN MARRIAGE PATTERNS:**

Changes in Hindu marriage institutions can be analyzed in the following areas-

### **CHANGING FORMS OF MARRIAGE:**

Monogamy (technically refers to the condition or practice of marrying only one person at a time) was the predominant form of marriage in traditional Hindu societies, but polygamy (The habit of having multiple wives at once), bigamy (Being married to two people at the same time), and swap marriages (The temporary exchange of wives between married couples for sexual relations) were very popular. Over time, polygamy, and swap marriages declined sharply and most people in Indian society follow monogamy.

### **CHANGE OF PURPOSE AND OBJECT OF MARRIAGE:**

Traditional Hindu marriage regards "dharma" as the fulfillment of religious obligations. Some of the most important rituals associated with Hindu marriage include Kanya Dana, Vivaha Home, Pani Grahana, Agni Parinayana, and Saptapadi. On the one hand, we find that due to lack of time, rituals and ceremonies associated with Hindu marriage have been curtailed. In general, people sometimes ask priests to expedite the marriage ceremony. On the other hand, some marriages are contracted in civil courts. This greatly reduced the sanctity of rituals. Apart from that, the Arya Samaj movement also simplified marriage rituals.

Another factor in the declining religiosity of marriage is the shift across Indian society from the sacred to the secular. In this way with the advent of various factors such as mass media, consumerism, and globalization, sacred types of relationships are fading. Goals and purposes have changed meanings from respect, loyalty, and honesty to disrespect, greed, and dishonesty.

### **THE CHANGING PROCESS OF CHOOSING A PARTNER:**

In the past, parents usually chose a mate, and girls had little say. Many stories and records are showing that parents married the daughter of their own accord. Due to various factors such as higher education levels of girls, urbanization, and economic independence, children are consulted on marital issues. Even girls and boys are encouraged to discuss and express each other's opinions before the wedding ceremony. Marriages previously conducted by middlemen are now being replaced by marriage agencies and advertisements in newspapers and various social networks.

### **CHANGES IN THE AGE OF MARRIAGE:**

In India, children used to marry earlier when they reached marriage age, and girls tended to do so. In some special cases like Rajasthan, girls were married at a very early age, i.e., she was 3-4 years old, without knowing the meaning of marriage. The institution of marriage in traditional Indian society relied heavily on arranged marriages from an early age. With the advent of various factors such as technology and girls' consciousness, a big change is happening now. In 1929, the Child Marriage Restriction Act (commonly known as the Sarda Act) was passed, setting the minimum age of marriage for girls and boys at 14 and 17 respectively. This law applied to all Indians. The last amendment (1978) raised the minimum age of marriage to 18 for boys and 21 for girls respectively. Additionally, because they are professionally trained, their children are more involved in learning, delaying marriage by 25 to 30 years.

### **CHANGES IN MARITAL STABILITY (INCREASED DIVORCE RATES):**

The marriage system used to be fairly stable and divorces were rarely registered. Fear of the kinship system and strong social norms meant that marriages could not be dissolved whether the couple wanted to live together or not. The celebrations and various ceremonies can be seen today. Often, the female family is expected and obliged to provide a large dowry at the time of marriage and continue to give gifts to the male family afterward. Huge sums of money are spent to make the ceremony a 'great celebration'.

### **CHANGED OPTIONS IN RULES FOR ENDOGAMY AND EXOGAMY:**

Until recently, families were not allowed to marry people of different castes or religions. But now men and women of the right age are free to choose to marry. People living in cities were expected to have industrial jobs, be highly educated, choose marriage partners, live in nuclear families, and have few children. There

has been a major change in the rules of endogamy. The Hindu Marriage Barriers Elimination Act of 1946 permitted marriage between different subdivisions of the same caste. The Arya Samaj movement promoted inter-caste marriage. Inter-caste marriages, once considered unthinkable, are now not only allowed but encouraged. In addition to legislation, the freedom to choose a spouse facilitated inter-caste marriage.

### **CHANGING ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF MARRIAGE:**

Weddings in cities are often held as social or civil ceremonies rather than religious ceremonies. In recent years, the concept of weddings in India has changed dramatically. It was a family affair and had a long guest list, but limited manageable budgets. The occasion was generally celebrated lavishly, with many ceremonies before and after. Long guest Lists, colorful and extravagant venues, extravagant has become irrelevant because of the new values. The idea arose of exchanging women for pleasure. Due to the influence of Western culture and weakened regulation of sexual behavior, married people are engaging in nonpartner sexual relationships. It is now socially acceptable for couples to have sexual relations, own homes, and have children outside of formal marriage.

### **CONCLUSION**

This paper Earlier the selection of partner for marriage was the duty of the parents or guardians only. The most important value was chastity in early societies. Premarital and extra marital relations were not allowed. Love was the consequence of marriage between boys and girls and marriage was not the consequence of love. With the advent of liberalism and urbanization, many changes have occurred in the Indian society. Pre marital sex relationships which were totally absent in traditional society have gradually become common in present times. Now- a -days the young minds are not in favor of parental choice for the selection of the marriage partner. Moreover, there are no restrictions in marriage system regarding the choice of life partner as things have become easier for the young generation by the new legislations. Thus, the attitude of people has been increasingly changing towards the rules of endogamy and exogamy.

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