Marriage in Indian Society: Forms, Types, Rules and Changing Patterns

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Abstract: In Indian society marriage is a universal phenomenon referred to as the legal union of persons of opposite sexes constituted by acts, ceremony or process and the legality of this union may be established by civil, religious or other means recognized by the laws. Marriage provides for the biological continuity of the society through procreations and also for its cultural continuity by providing a suitable atmosphere for socialization. In the traditional Hindu society, the main aims of marriage are believed to be: dharma (righteousness or the performance of duty), praja(progeny), and rati(pleasure). Dharma was given the top most importance, followed by procreation and sex-gratification. Daftri (1948; 61) has also argued that sexual enjoyment was not regarded as the sole objective of (Hindu) marriage. There have been discernible changes in the pattern of marriages throughout the world. It has played a major role in determining the growth rate of a population through its linkage to marital fertility. Historically, changes in the pattern of marriages have played significant roles with respect to demographic transitions in many countries of Europe (Van de Walle, 1972). Several less developed countries experiencing slowdown in population growth rate demonstrate changes in marriage patterns (Das et al., 1998). In many societies, reproduction is primarily confined within marriage; changes in respect to marriage age and resultant reduction in the proportion of women remaining in the married state are directly linked to fertility and thus determine the future trend of demographic transition. In this paper, forms, types, rules and the changing patterns of marriages in India are discussed and analyzed.

Key Words: Marriage patterns, age at marriage, marriage squeeze, divorce, north and south India

1.Introduction: Family is the basic unit of society comes into being as consequence of marriage; it is also continued through marriage. There by meaning that marriage has important implications for the family **(Dube, 1994:72)**.

Marriage is a universal phenomenon in India. As the country has passed through significant changes in socioeconomic, cultural and demographic spheres in recent decades, it is reflected on marriage. This paper examines the changes in marriage patterns in India. In India, Mean Age at Marriage for women has increased in Northern region from 17.1 in 1971 to 21.4 in 2011, while in Southern region it has increased from 18.7 to 21.3. However, the age gap between spouses has decreased in Southern region over the three decades and in Northern region, it has not changed significantly. The proportion of ever-married women aged 15-19 years was higher in Northern region in 1971 but in 2011 it was lower as compared with Southern region although it has decreased in both the regions.

The result of modernization, education and employment is reflected on the divorce rate. In 1991, 6.5 women per 1000 ever-married females were divorced or separated which reached 9.7 in 2011. Changes in marriage pattern have occurred in both the regions but the transition in northern region is rapid compared with the south.

Browman (1954) opines that the basic objects of marriage are: sex gratification, desire for home and children, social position and prestige, and economic security and protection. **Majumdar (1944)** believes that the objects of marriage are: sex gratification, need for a dependable social mechanism for the care and rearing of children, transmission of culture, economic needs, and inheritance of property. He argued that although regularized and socially sanctioned sex gratification is a basic reason for marriage (and the formation of family), yet it is not the only not the final cause.

2.Objective of the Paper:
1.   To discuss the eight forms of marriages in India.
2.   To discuss the several types of marriages in India.
3.   To discuss rules of marriage in India.
4.   To discuss the changing patterns of marriages in India.

3. Forms of Hindu Marriage
The Hindu scriptures admit the following eight forms of marriage:

3.1.Brahma marriage: In this form of marriage the girl, decorated with clothes and ornaments, is given in marriage to a learned and gentle bridegroom. This is the prevalent form of marriage in Hindu society today.

3.2.Prajapatya marriage: In this form of marriage the daughter is offered to the bride-groom by blessing them with the enjoyment of marital bliss and the fulfilment of dharma.

3.3.Aarsh marriage: In this form of marriage a rishi used to accept a girl in marriage after giving a cow or bull and some clothes to the parents of the girl. These articles were not the price of the bride but indicated

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the resolve of the rishi to lead a house-hold life. According to P.K.Acharya the word aarsh has been derived from the word rishi.

3.4.Daiva Marriage: In this form of marriage the girl, decorated with ornaments and clothes, was offered to the person who conducted the function of a Purohit in yajna.

3.5.Asura marriage: In this form of marriage the bride-groom gets the bride in exchange of some money or articles given to the family members of the bride. Such form of marriage was conducted in the case of marriage of Pandu with Madri.

3.6.Gandharva marriage: This form is marriage is the result of mutual affection and love of the bride and the bride-groom. An example of this type of marriage is the marriage of the King Dushyanata with Shakuntala. In this form of marriage the ceremonies can be performed after sexual relationship between the bride and the bride-groom. In TaittariyaSamhita it has been pointed out that this type of marriage has been so named because of its prevalence among the Gandharvas.

3.7.Rakshas marriage: This type of marriage was prevalent in the age when women were considered to be the prize of the war. In this type of marriage the bride-groom takes away the bride from her house forcibly after killing and injuring her relatives.

3.8.Paisach marriage: This type of marriage has been called to be most degenerate. In this type a man enters into sexual relationship with a sleeping, drunk or unconscious woman. Such acts were regularized after the performance of marriage ceremony which took place after physical relationship between the man and woman.

4.Rules of marriage in India: In India there are two types of rules of marriage exit. They areExogamy and Endogamy.

4.1.Exogamy: Exogamy means marriage outside the group. Generally people prohibit marriage between individuals sharing certain degrees of blood or affinal relationships. A man must not only seek a wife out of his own clan but also must avoid the clans of all the grandparents. Then there are certain relations that are not to be married, but the degree of nearness differs from community to community.The following forms of exogamy are found in India:

4.1.A.Gotra Exogamy: Among the Hindus, the prevailing practice is to marry outside the 'gotra' people of the same 'gotra' are believed to have similar blood and so their inter-marriage is prohibited.

4.1.B.Village Exogamy: Among many Indian tribes, there is the practice to marry outside the village.

4.2.Endogamy: Marriage within the class is known as endogamy. Hence, marriages with out-group members are prohibited. Even today intercaste marriages are not encouraged. Hitler had declared an Aryan-Jewish marriage a criminal act. In India, a Brahmin can marry only a Brahmin and that too of his/her own sub-caste. A marriage of a Vaishya with a Brahmin is not socially approved. In the old Polynesian society, marriages between nobles and commoners were severely deprecated. Even today, a labourer cannot marry the daughter of a big industrialist. In India, endogamy is mostly obligatory. However, today endogamous attitudes have somewhat relaxed and softened and we sometimes hear of an intercaste marriages, but that is not common as yet.

In India, we find the following forms of endogamy:

4.2.A.Tribal Endogamy: No one can marry outside his own tribe.

4.2.B.Caste endogamy: Marriage take place within the caste.

4.2.C.Class endogamy: Marriage is contracted between people of one class or of a particular status.

4.2.C.Sub-caste endogamy: choice for marriage is restricted to the sub-caste

4.2.D.Race endogamy: People marry within the race

4.Several Types of Marriages in India: The institution of marriages differs from society to society.In Indian society there are several types of marriages. They are discussed below**.**

5.1.Polygamy: Polygamy is a type of marriage in which men can marry more than one women at the same time. Polygamy is still exists and legal in many countries especially in Muslim countries. The laws of majority Muslim states are derived from their religion. Taking more than one wife is considered normative behavior in Muslim countries. However, in country like India polygamy is considered as unlawful and unethical practice after the enactment of Hindu Marriage Act 1955. The Hindu Code Bill was introduced inthe Constituent Assembly on 11th April, 1947 by Dr.B. R. Ambedkar with the intention to liberalize thepersonal laws so as to broaden the freedom of theindividual and the equality of men and women in theHindu social system. The bill mainly covered; right toproperty; order of succession to the property; andmaintenance, marriage, divorce, adoption, minorityand guardianship. On the basis of Ambedkar's Hindu Code Bill Hindu Marriage Act 1955 was prepared. Polygamy is further divided into two types, which are as follow, sororal polygamy and non sororal polygamy.

5.1.A.Sororal Polygamy: The word sororal is derived from Latin word soror which means sisters. When a man is married with two sisters simultaneously is called sororal polygamy.

5.1.B.NonSororal Polygamy: In this type of marriage man is married to more than one women but the wives are not blood related or sisters.

5.2.Polygamy: When one woman is married with more than one man is called polyandry. This type marriage still exist in some African and Indian tribes. Polyandry is further divided into two types, which are as follow, fraternal and non-fraternal polyandry.

5.2.A.Fraternal Polyandry: When brothers take one woman as a wife is called fraternal polyandry. This type of marriage is still practiced by the tribe of India namely Todas tribe.

5.2.B.Non Fraternal Polyandry: In non-fraternal polyandry husbands of woman are not related with one another. It's up to woman, which ever husband she chose to live with.

5.3.Monogamy: Monogamy is universal type of marriage which almost exists in every society. In such type of marriage one man marry with one woman. Monogamy is further divided into two types which are as follow straight monogamy and serial monogamy.Monogamy seems to be superior to other forms of marriage. It enjoys certain merits over other forms. Some of them are as follows:

5.3.Universally Practicable. Since there is one-to-one ratio (One-man-to-one-women) in almost all the societies, only monogamy can provide marital opportunity and satisfaction to all the individuals. Neither polygyny nor polyandry can equally satisfy all.

5.3.Economically Better Suited. No man of ordinary income can thing of practicing polygyny. Only a rich man can maintain a couple of wives and their children. Only monogamy can adjust itself with poverty. For example, even though Koran permits a Muslim to have four wives at a time, no ordinary Muslim can think of marrying four wives for the simple reason that he cannot maintain them.

5.3.A.Promotes Better Understanding Between Husband and Wife: Monogamy produces the highest type of love and affection between husband and wife. It contributes to family peace, solidarity and happiness. Vatsayana, an authority on "Kama Sutra" remarked, "at best a man can only please one woman physically, mentally and spiritually. Therefore, the man who enters into marriage relations with more than one women, voluntarily courts unhappiness and misery".

5.3.B.Contributes to Stable Family and Sex Life: Mongamy family is more stable and long-lasting. It is free from conflicts that are commonly found in polyandrous and polygynous families. There is no scope for sexual jealousy also. Unlike polyandry and polygyny, it does not give

opportunity for having extra marital sex relationship because sex relations are more strictly regulated here.

5.3.C.Helps to Better Socialisation: Since husband and wife have better understanding, they can give greater attention to the socialization of their children. Children are well looked after and the parents can give their special attention to them. Under polygyny, the husband cannot devote himself fully to each of his wives and children because they are too numerous.

5.3.D.Aged Parents are not Neglected: It is only in monogamy that old parents are protected and looked after properly. Under polygyny, old wives are after discarded and in their place younger wives are brought in.

5.3.E.Provides Better Status of Women: Marriage patterns reflect the basic difference in the status of women from different regionsand communities (Karve, 1965). Women are given only a very low position in polygyny. Their rights are never recognized. They can be divorced at will. But in monogamy, women enjoy better social status. In the modern societies they enjoy almost equal social status with men.

5.4.Straight Monogamy: This is the type of marriage in which straight monogamy man and woman cannot marry again in case of divorce or in case spouse death.

5.5.Serial Monogamy: In serial monogamy man and woman can marry other person in case of divorce and death of spouse.

5.6.Group Marriage: In group marriage a group of women marry with a group of men. All of them have common wives and husbands.

6.Changing patterns of marriages in India: Changing marriage pattern is mostly affected by industrialization and educational development. A substantial increase in divorce rates in East Asia shows a significant change in circumstances and attitude towards divorce in the countries. Earlier people remained in disharmonious marriages because of the social stigma, for the sake of children or to maintain family honour **(Jones, 2010)**.

Traditional character of marriage **Karve (1963)** has pointed out "In India marriage is a sacrament and no normal man or woman must die without receiving this sacrament-if a man who has gone through the initiation ceremony dies without marrying, he is supposed to become a ghost.

To die childless is to miss heaven". Similarly **Kapadia (1966)** says, "Marriage is said to be essential for a woman because that is the only sacrament that can be performed for her". Keeping in view the importance of marriage, parents in Hindu society have always considered it to be their main duty to perform the marriage of their children. It has been laid down in the Hindu 'Shastras' that those parents who fail to give their daughter in marriage within prescribed limit of time are incurring a great sin **(Prabhu, 1963)**.

The changes in marriage system of the area under investigation have been analysed in six aspects: (a) Aims of marriage (b)formofmarriage (c) Area of Mate Choice (d) age of marriage (e)Cultural aspect of marriage (f)Economic aspect of marriage,i.e., dowry and bride price system.

6.1.Aim of marriage: In Indiamarriage is a social obligation rather than a provision for an individual's private pleasure **(Prabhu, 1963; Kapadia, 1965)**.

Fulfillment of dharma or religions duties: According to the Hindu scriptures marriage is a basic of all religion activities. In the words of K.M Kapadia "marriage is primarily for the fulfillment of duties; the basic aim of marriage was dharma".

Procreation is another aim of the marriage: In Hindu families the child is given a very important place. According to Riga Veda, the husband accepts the palm of wife in order to get a high breed progeny. According to manu, the chief aim of marriage is procreation Mahabarat has also maintained the same view.

Another aim is the sexual pleasure: The Hindu scriptures have compared the sexual pleasure with the relation of divine bliss. According to vatsyanyan sexual pleasure is the chief in aim marriage.

6.2.Most preferred form of marriage: In India most preferred form of marriage is monogamy. In researches it was found that polyandry andpolygyny practices are on the decline, as the young generation are no longer interested in such institutions. The reason behind it are Indian law, economic stability, social reputation etc.

6.3.Area of Mate Choice: In India, the area of choice or selection of bride or groom are , influenced by religion, caste, class, kinship, etc.In India the kinship system is not homogeneous across the country as Indian society is basedon the caste system **(Srinivas, 1962)**. Most marriages are still arranged by parents, although theproportion of self-selected marriages is increasing in recent years **(Nanda et al., 2014)**.

6.4.Age of marriage: The difference in average age at marriage is attributed to socio-cultural factors in India. A variety of factors like education, type of family, caste, religion and economic status have been identified as directly or indirectly responsible for the difference in age at marriage in different settings (Das et al., 1998).As the result of modernization and increase in the education of women. The proportion of single women in the higher age group is high among women who attained higher education (Kashyap, 2015). According to Kashyap a woman remains single with high education or with a higher position in professional life because she is unable to find an eligible groom with equal qualifications.

6.5.Cultural aspect of marriage:

6.5.a)Child Marriage: Universality of marriage and child marriages were the two predominant aspects in the historical feature of marriages in India. The practice of early and pre-puberty marriages was almost universal in northern India (Altekar, 1956). Even now, there are incidences of child marriages in the northern parts of India and in Rajasthan in particular. Various laws have been passed in India to prevent child marriages. According to the Child Marriage Restraints Act, 1978, the legal minimum age at marriage is 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys.

6.5.b) Marriage dissolutionrates: Marriage dissolution rates and patterns vary across countries and over time. In the last three decades, divorce rates have been rising steadily in the East Asian countries.

6.5.c)Homogeneous marriages: Section 377 of The Indian Penal Code, 1860 is presently in force in India by virtue of the Supreme Court decision in Suresh Kumar Koushal vs. Union of India that overturned the Delhi High Court decision in NAZ Foundation vs. NCT of Delhi. Section 377 was fully re-instated by the Supreme Court in 2013, and it criminalizes and punishes all penile non-vaginal sexual acts.

6.5.d)Change in residence: One recent trend illustrating the changing nature of families is the rise in prevalence of single-parent families and also nuclear families.

6.6.e)conomic aspect of marriage: The practice of paying dowry is associated with the economic aspect of marriage, however in the modern time the practice of paying dowry has not been changed a lot but particularly the young generation show a strong disfavour against this practice. The modern men do not prefer to take dowry from the girl's parents. Many educated youth refuse to take even a single penny from their in-laws and maintain their dignity.

6.7.f)An Increase in the Instances of Divorce and Desertion: The instances of divorce and desertion are on the increase.Though these new trends are observed today the importance of marriage has notdiminished. it is still universally practiced.

6.Conclusion: An economic development, arrival of technology, increased materialism in the life, legislative efforts are some of the important factors responsible for generating changes in the institution of marriage.There is a need of educating women and allowing economic independencewhich will make them stronger and more informed of her rights to prevent exploiation after marriage.Although the values of the youth are individualistic but those also provide space for each other's

growth and preferences. Even if, the new trends are emerging yet importance of marriage has not diminished.

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