



## CHANGING MARRIAGE PATTERNS IN HINDU SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT:

The institution of marriage is India's oldest social institution and constitutes the foundation on which the entire structure of civilization and success is built. Various personal laws, both philosophical and practical, have given different meanings to the concept of marriage, from sacramental to contractual positions.

Alternation is a natural law that also affects the institution of marriage. Advances in technology and widespread changes in family composition from joint to nuclear families have changed the concepts and patterns of marriage and other social phenomena. From arranged marriages to love marriages, cohabitation and homosexuality, DINK syndrome, age at marriage, increased divorce due to family greed and selfishness, excessive costs, child marriages, etc., today's society has changed excessively. It has never been an integral part of traditional Indian society. Monogamous practices, financial developments, technological changes, rising greed in life, and legislative measures have profoundly impacted all aspects of society. This paper is a modest attempt to discuss the changes that are attracting attention in the Hindu marriage system and to examine the various factors responsible for these changes with specific intent.

**Key words:** - *Marriage, Divorce, Cohabitation, Lesbians, DINK Syndrome.*

**Subject:** Family Law (Social Sciences and Humanities)

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Based on the main purpose of this paper is to shed light on the changing patterns of marriage in Indian society. Data for the study were collected from various secondary sources such as books, legal journals, articles, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, archival documents, and other relevant research to guide the findings to meaningful conclusions.

### INTRODUCTION:

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

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

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.

#### **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 postnatally, 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

children has given modern society many options.

**Changes in Marriage Patterns:** Changes in Hindu marriage institutions can be analyzed in the following areas-

**a. 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.

**b. 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.

**c. 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.

**d. 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.

**e. 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

pressure for appearance, family honor, and family well-being was very strong.

As modernization and technological progress, the rigid boundaries that governed traditional Indian life began to give way to new perspectives and lifestyles, and gender inequality was reinforced due to the changing status of women. The dissolution of marriage in modern society stems from the idea that, from the point of view of personal happiness, it is better to lead an independent life than to be married. In this way, divorce rates in India have steadily increased due to the passage of the Marriage and Family Acts and many other factors.

**f. 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.

**g. 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

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'. A lot of money is spent on this.

### **Emerging Marriage Systems :**

In addition to changes in age, education, caste, dowry, and divorce, there are structural changes in marriage patterns that are having a major impact on society. Although few in number, large cities, and urban areas face serious problems such as:

#### **1) Homosexuals/Lesbians:**

Homosexuals/Lesbians are appearing in India at a rapid rate, which appears to have shocked Indian society. According to a study, there are thousands of gay/lesbians in the metropolitan areas of Indian society. A type of relationship in which same-sex couples get married. In 2004, the Civil Partnership Act gave same-sex couples the same legal rights as married couples regarding pensions, inheritance, rentals, and property. Early institutions of this kind were not conducive to society's smooth functioning, but marriage followed a different pattern than in traditional societies.

#### **2) Living Together:**

Previously, premarital and extramarital relationships were not allowed. Love was the result of the marriage of a boy and a girl, marriage was not the result of love. Young people may lose the meaning of marriage.

However, there have been significant changes in sexual customs and values. Premarital sex, completely unknown in traditional Indian society, became increasingly visible. Cohabitation is the transition of a couple from dating to living together, which may or may not result in marriage.

Adolescents began sexual relations long before they were married. The Brahmacharya Vrata

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 non-partner sexual relationships. It is now socially acceptable for couples to have sexual relations, own homes, and have children outside of formal marriage.

#### **3) DINK Syndrome (Dual Income No Kids):**

A slang term for a couple who both work and have no children. DINK explains more than your position as a childless couple. It has become synonymous with a particular type of lifestyle, often focused on career advancement and wealth building.

#### **4) Single-Person Households:**

A single-person household is called a one-person household. People are becoming more and more self-centered now. Both men and women want to establish their identity by building their own homes. New Economic opportunities have enabled more young men and women to become financially independent and less dependent on their parents for housing and other needs. India's single-person household penetration rate is low compared to other parts of Asia and is expected to increase.

### **Factors Involved in Changing Marriage Patterns:**

**1. Behavioral Factors:** In the past, women's greatest personal achievements and rewards were getting married, raising children, and ensuring optimal home and family life. It has no other purpose. For men, self-actualization meant keeping a good job, marrying the woman of their dreams, and supporting their families financially. Men and women have a clear understanding of their respective roles. However, increasing urbanization, the institutionalization of family roles, technological improvements in home care products, and increasing affluence have increased the potential

for family life to provide stimulation and a sense of value through satisfying personal outcomes. Moreover, the spirit of individualism encouraged both men and women to realize their potential. It leads to conflict in relationships and turmoil in family life.

## **2. Economic Factors and Materialism:**

Changes in the institution of marriage are linked to the rapid development of education, increasing urbanization, and women's participation in economic activities outside the home. Technological advances have improved individuals' living standards and real purchasing power. The main effect of this increase in wealth from failed marriages is that people can afford the cost of divorce. This includes legal fees, the costs of maintaining a second home, and additional recovery costs for the children.

**3. Legal Aspect:** Legislative actions taken by the government over the past 50 years have helped change the nature of the institution of marriage as it has given legal protection to marriages that were not part of traditional Hindu Society. Many of the beliefs, values, ideals, and rules of marriage established by the Hindu Shastrakara have now lost their original meaning and purpose. Laws have been passed about the Age of Marriage, Scope of Marriage Choice, Number of Spouses in Marriage, Divorce, Acceptance and Giving of Dowry, and Remarriage that bring about desirable changes to the system. Various inhumane practices related to marriage, such as the practice of sati, were abolished by law. Not only did the law abolish child marriage, but it set a minimum age for marriage for both boys and girls, 18 for girls and 21 for boys. They also legalized inter-caste/interreligious marriages and created provisions for registered marriages. Men and women have equal rights. Legislature also set the terms of the divorce. Laws were also enacted to give women special protection and to prevent

their helplessness and weaknesses from being taken advantage of by others.

## **4. Social Determinants and Technological Factors:**

Historically, there have been communal families where families are interdependent, and there have been closely interacting communities. In today's transition to highly urbanized and affluent societies, work patterns are more differentiated and require less interaction with the community. This pattern leads to individualism. The institution of marriage has undergone major changes as living conditions, values, norms, and traditions have changed significantly. In patriarchal societies, girls no longer had a say in family matters, especially in marriage matters. Even after the marriage was finalized, they were unable to intervene or ask any questions. It used to be considered a "stigma", but times have changed now. A girl has the full right to openly express her opinion, starting with the choice of her spouse, and to divorce if her marriage fails.

Previously, boys and girls were not allowed to meet before the wedding. They met only on their wedding day. As time moved it gave way to some meetings and phone calls in presence of their family members. But today in the 21st century, both are trying to spend as much time together as possible. We buy wedding favors together and chat on the phone for hours.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Change is inevitable and the institution of marriage has undergone many changes. Technological, economic, new educational patterns, and lifestyle changes are key factors that play an important role in this change. Over time, the age of marriage, the process of choosing a mate, the goals of marriage, trends in divorce rates, and the economics of marriage have changed significantly. Changes in patterns have serious repercussions. Various factors such as social, economic, psychological, technological, and legal factors play a major role

in changing the institution of marriage. As liberalization makes people more independent, consumerism and its generation of unrealistic aspirations are widening the gap between want and fulfillment. The new value even given is "get rich quick in every way". In such an environment, existing unequal power relationships within the family become conduits for the immediate acquisition of wealth at any cost. The conflict in this institution also arises through the interplay of tradition and modernity. New patterns of marriage such as homosexuality and cohabitation also appear in several places that may have further impact in the coming period. These new trends can still be seen today, but the importance of marriage has not diminished. It is still commonly practiced today. Its sanctity is somewhat diminished, but it is not reduced to the level of a mere civil contract. Hindu men and women are still emotionally involved in marriage.

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