

## SOCIAL MODIFICATIONS OF INDIA'S FAMILY UNITS

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### Abstract

*The institution of marriage, like other social phenomena, is undergoing significant changes. Historically, monogamy has been widely accepted and practiced across all social strata. Some of the obvious changes taking place in the institution of marriage include the practice of getting children's approval before getting married, the decline in marital stability, and the increase in the avarice of the bridegroom's family. Numerous causes, including economic growth, the introduction of new technologies, rising levels of materialism in society, and legislative initiatives, have contributed to shifts in the marital landscape. Gay and lesbian relationships, cohabitation, and the "DINK Syndrome" are contemporary social phenomena that were unknown in classical Indian culture. The significance of marriage has not lessened, despite the emergence of new trends.*

### INTRODUCTION

Although varied methods of finding a life partner and marriage structures exist, marriage is a key social institution in every culture throughout the globe. That it legalized marriage between sexes for the sake of starting a family, having children, and caring for them is a major flaw of the system (Majumder, 1977). Because of its centrality in the formation of human capital resources and the authority bestowed upon it to shape the actions of individuals, families, and communities, marriage is the most fundamental and significant social institution (Sriram, 1993). It connects the past with the present and serves as a vital means of nurturing, connecting, and socializing (Desai, 1995). The only constant in life is change. Change is the one constant in this ever-shifting planet. Family and marriage are two social institutions that are feeling the effects of modernization. Both of these stalwart establishments have weathered the storms of millennia without a hitch. The institution of marriage in India has experienced substantial change, including but not limited to the age at which people marry, the

prevalence of divorce, the shortening of wedding ceremonies, and the elimination of lavish wedding celebrations. A few adjustments are acceptable to most people but not to others because of their negative effects on society. The purpose of this essay is to investigate marriage as an institution and the factors contributing to the changing nature of marriage in India.

### Methodology

The research and analyses are based entirely on secondary sources. The major objective of this study was to highlight the modification of traditional marital practices in modern India. These findings are the result of a great deal of investigation and are based on old Manu scripts, books, journals, printed material, and other works that have dealt with this topic.

### How We Got Together and Why We're Not Together Anymore

The first known documentation of a wedding takes place in Mesopotamia around the year 2350 B.C. In all likelihood, our ancestors were part of a larger group known as a "primal horde" (Coontz, 2005). The primeval horde did not practice monogamy; rather, both sexes mated with several partners. It was impossible for men to develop friendships, and prehistoric men and women were well ahead in development compared to today's when both sexes are completely grown at delivery (Fisher, 2004). Some 5,000 years ago, when the plough was devised and utilized widely, along with draught animals, there was a shift in how people interacted with one another. Increased agricultural production led to the development of larger towns, which in turn made it possible to divide and specialize labor, leading to the rise of far more sophisticated civilizations. Marriage and family life are profoundly impacted by major socioeconomic shifts. In certain societies, especially in more urbanized agricultural nations, spouses are expected to share the financial burden of raising a family approximately equally. The most noticeable impact of industrialization on the family institution was the separation of work and

home life. There are several repercussions on marriage when work and family life are kept apart. At first, nuclear families were much smaller than typical ones. The rise of the industrial economy facilitated the transition from producers to consumers. Everything from furniture to clothing was made at home in primitive cultures. The family unit has been profoundly impacted by the shift from provider to consumer roles. (Sinha, 1984). The trend of increasing female education coincides with a decreasing birthrate. These changes have reduced the economic dependence of one sex on the other and increased opportunities for women in the workforce. (Leete, 1994). Even if divorce rates are on the rise in the contemporary day, society as a whole has gained much by moving away from the view of marriage as a mechanism only for the sake of procreation and economic partnership. Not that there aren't still reasons to get married, but it's less typical to have to do so in order to support a family. The postmodern period has seen a rise in the prevalence and acceptability of nontraditional family structures such as cohabitation, single parenting, childlessness by choice, and same-sex marriage.

## The Hindu View on Marriage

To put it simply, marriage is the bedrock of society. The four tenets of Hinduism are known as the dharma Sagrada, and they are Brahmachar Aya, Grihasta, Vanaprastha, and Sannyasa. The second act of Grihasta dealt with the topic of marriage. The second grihasta stage comprised the ideals of dharma, rather, and kami, and it emphasized the joy of marriage. According to (Mandelbaum, 1995). Dharma is ethical and spiritual well-being, Artha is monetary prosperity, and Kama is sexual gratification. The Vedas and the Smritis both provide valid, textual justification for marriage. Marriage is referred to as the "Grihasta ashram" ("stage without which one cannot reach Mukti") in several religious writings (salvation). In the Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, marriage is considered a sacred ritual and a moral imperative. To some extent, it was true (Sengupta, 1967). They've reached a major turning point in their lives when a man and a woman decide to tie the knot. In traditional Hindu belief, marriage is a sacred rite. Marriage is vital to the continuation of any species or living entity. Most people, when beginning a family, exclusively look to other members of their faith. To wit: (Sonipat, 2008) Because of its importance, many Hindus consider virama to be a sacred duty. At the right time in their lives, both men and women must undergo the satire -

samskara [sacrament sanctifying the body] of virama. According to Hindu belief, a person's progeny significantly contributes to his or her personal pleasure in this and the next life (Manu Smriti). The Manu Smriti states categorically, "He is a complete man, who consists of his wife, himself, and his children."

## Changes in the Couple's Regular Routines

Traditional Hindu society typically upheld monogamy, but also permitted and even encouraged various forms of matrimony, including polyandry, polygamy, bigamy, and marriage as a business transaction. The majority of Indians have been monogamous since the early modern period, when polygamy, polyandry, and exchange marriages all began to decline. Historically, a Hindu marriage was considered to be "dharmic" when it resulted in the two people completing their religious obligations. There was a religious significance to ancient marriages. Getting accepted into the family as a relative and protector was the key objective. Due to several factors, such as the proliferation of mass media, consumerism, and globalization, the prevalence of the most sacred types of relationships is on the decline. Words that formerly meant something like respect, loyalty, and sincerity now have new connotations that convey something closer to less respect, greed, unfaithfulness, etc. a. Modifications to the Procedures Parents used to have a lot of say in who their children married, and women seldom have a say in the matter. The practice of parents arranging weddings for their daughters is supported by several stories and historical sources. Due to numerous factors including the growing education of females, urbanization, economic independence, etc., children are now consulted in marriage problems, and girl and boy communicate and endeavor to know the perspectives of each other prior to completing marriage ceremonies. The old Indian system has crumbled under the weight of reality as a result of the consequences of educating women for longer on marriage age and bride choices (Cadwell, 1992). Matchmaking services, as well as newspaper and social media ads, have essentially replaced traditional matchmakers in the modern practice of setting up couples for marriage (Jones, 2010). Looking at the average age of Indian brides reveals that women in the past were often married off at a very early age. In other parts of the world, such as Rajasthan, girls as young as three or four were married, often without their parents'

knowledge or consent. Marriages in traditional Indian societies typically took place at an early age and were arranged by parents. Limiting women's sexual freedom and discouraging romantic sentiments between husbands and wives are necessary safeguards for the patriarchal family's honor (Jones, 2010). It weakens the marriage bond, encourages young women to remain unmarried, and symbolizes a clean break from one's biological family (Reddy, 1982). This rapid change may be attributed to the introduction of new factors, such as technology and improved awareness among women. Women may be married at the age of 18, but males must wait until they are 21. Furthermore, with the rise of professional schools, today's youth are spending longer in school than ever before, putting off marriage by another quarter of a century. Economic and social changes, such as more opportunities for women to pursue higher education and earn a living outside the home, have been related to a delay in marriage (Puri, 1999). This element has been critical in determining the rate of global population growth because of its association with the birthrate of couples. Postponing marriage has the potential to drastically slow the birthrate. The fertility rate in India peaked at 5.6 in 1970 and has since progressively dropped to its present level of 2.8 in 2008. The World Bank first reported this in 2008.

### **Repercussions of Domestic Instability f. (Increase in Divorce Rates)**

Marriages were far more stable in the past, and divorce was quite unusual. Couples who want to stay together in a marriage often can't because of the fear of the kinship system and the rigid societal restrictions. Divorce was discouraged in the past for two primary reasons: protecting children's best interests and preserving the family's good name (Goody, 1973). As a consequence of legislation, education, technological advancement, and heightened consciousness, marriage has experienced a major change in recent years. The global divorce rate has been increasing. Divorce rates have increased by 350 percent in Kerala, the most educated state in the nation, and by 150 percent in Punjab and Haryana, two agriculturally oriented states, during the last decade. Love, sacrifice, and satisfaction are the hallmarks of today's conception of a happy marriage (Allen and Grow, 2001)A Phenomenal f. Shift in the Deciding Sweet Spot (Increasing number of Inter caste Marriage)For a

while there, it was against the law for two people to be married if they were from different social strata or religions. Kapadia's (1982) research on intercaste weddings in India found that over half of parents surveyed claimed they would be OK with their children marrying outside of their caste. Nearly two-thirds of those polled didn't think this was a good idea. Afzal's (2009) investigation of the topic of intercaste marriage reveals that religious affiliation is a major motivating element. While Hindu women were more inclined to marry within their caste, Muslims and non-Hindu women were less likely to do so. As with non-working women, the rate of intercaste marriage was greater among working women in Punjab.

### **The Changing Economic Stability of Marriage**

It's more frequent for couples to be married in a social or civil ceremony as opposed to a religious one in metropolitan regions. Modifications to the traditional Indian wedding have occurred often in recent decades. It was a tiny, low-key family affair, even though there were many people invited. More elaborate pre- and post-event rituals are commonplace in modern festivities. A contemporary "big fat Indian wedding" has a large number of guests, an extravagant setting, a lavish meal, and a series of rituals. The bride's family traditionally gives the groom's family a hefty dowry on the wedding day and continues to do so on a monthly basis. (Maher, 1988). The 'grand gala' vibe was created at great expense. Large sums of money are spent on various aspects of weddings, including the decoration of marriage mantas, the preparation of elaborate meals, the distribution of wedding favors, the hiring of a live orchestra, the taking of wedding photographs, the recording of wedding videos, and the holding of wedding processions.

### **The reasons for the change in marriage trends are as follows.**

The institution of marriage has been affected by several factors, including women's increased engagement in the workforce outside the house, the rapid expansion of metropolitan centers, and the spectacular improvement in educational opportunities for both sexes. In recent decades, women have followed males in "stepping out of the house" to enter the workforce. Females have more self-respect and assurance as a consequence of this. These shifts have

an effect on marriage as a social institution (Kapadia, 1982). The conspicuous spending of the well-off also has a role. Thanks to technological progress, individuals may today enjoy greater living standards and more leisure time. Because people can afford to pay for things like divorce proceedings, legal representation, child care, and extracurricular activities for both sets of children, divorce rates have been rising in recent decades (Afzal, 2009). Things are changing, and that includes our perspective on marriage. Second, societal pressures: back in the day, people tended to cluster together in large, multigenerational households that shared resources. Due to greater specialization in the workplace, today's highly urban and rich society has less of a need for social connection. As a result of this shift, uniqueness has emerged (Sonipat, 2008). Social complexity increases with the spread of structural differentiation and specialization, and this trend is characterized by "system Ness," a concept from functional theory. These days, we tend to specialize on narrower and narrower niches of the economy, the classroom, the hospital, and the highways. Prior to the rise of specialization, families were responsible for their members' every material need. However, as industrialization has progressed, this responsibility has shifted away from families and onto institutions (Sinha, 1984). Marriage has evolved with other aspects of patriarchal society, such as the standard of living, the values upheld, the rules established, and the customs practiced. Girls were silenced in the home and in matters of marriage. They had hitherto been unable to question or interfere with the repair of any marriage, even their own. Although society formerly stigmatized divorce, modern views have changed. From the initial choice of a spouse through the potential of a divorce, modern women are no longer reluctant to express their views. When referring to movements in public opinion or other events, the term "changing times" is also often used. Many individuals in today's more independent culture forgo traditional marriage in favor of the benefits of cohabiting as a family without the formality of a wedding (Herzberger, 1993). 3. Psychological factors: Women have traditionally placed a high value on marriage, childbirth, and the creation and upkeep of a peaceful home and family life. There is no other experience that can compare to this one in terms of making you feel important. The stability of a man's profession, his capacity to find and marry his perfect mate, and his financial stability were all crucial to his contentment. Gender roles in modern society are well established. But increasing urbanization, institutionalization of family obligations, technical

advances in home care items, and rising money have all lessened the capacity for home life to provide stimulation and emotions of worth via rewarding personal efforts. (Hines, 1997). And the individualist concept encouraged people of both sexes to develop to their greatest potential. Rising female economic independence has led to calls for more gender-neutral approaches to parenting, decision-making, and household chores. Conflict at home grew as families struggled to adapt to new norms and responsibilities after years of routines were upended. Marriages and families become unstable when mothers strive to advance their careers while still caring for their children. 4. Technological aspects the rapid spread of new technology is a recent phenomenon that may have unexpected effects on conventional marriage. Modern nuclear families, in which both parents must work and children are frequently ignored, have replaced the traditional joint family model, which saw grandparents and other elder relatives exercising responsibility over younger relatives. Not being monitored causes them to go within and seek solace in media and technological aids. While children's use of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter increases their connections to the outside world, it also causes them to spend less time with their own families (Kolenda, 1987). As a consequence of legislative actions made by the government over the last half century or more, marriages are now afforded legal safeguards that did not exist in traditional Hindu society. Many of the customs, beliefs, values, and ideals of the Hindu Shastra karas concerning marriage have lost their original meaning. The Hindu marriage system has been the subject of legislative efforts both during and after independence from British rule. There were regulations on (i) when and where individuals could be married, (ii) how many people may be married at the same time, (iii) what would happen if a marriage ended, (v) how much dowry would be demanded and provided, and (vi) whether or not a divorced person could get married again. Several barbaric practices associated with marriage have been made illegal, including sati. The legal age of consent for marriage in the United States is now 18 for both men and women, making it illegal for minors to marry. The legislation also provides a crystal-clear framework within which couples may make marriage decisions, including about whom they should wed. They have also made it possible for marriages between people of different religions or castes to be legally recognized. As of this writing, divorce may be filed for and granted legally. This is a right enjoyed equally by both sexes. (Rao, 2004) Legal criteria for divorce are now also established in

statute. Lawmakers have also worked to ensure that women are protected from abuse in their most vulnerable states. In an effort to liberate women from the constraints of patriarchal norms in traditional joint families, legislation has been enacted to guarantee them equal rights, advantages, and opportunities to men in all spheres of family life.

## **The emergence of new institutional forms is a reality**

Alterations to the marital structure, such as those in age, education, caste, dowry, and divorce, have far-reaching effects on communities. Smaller but more significant problems are appearing in big urban centers and metropolitan areas.

## **Loving lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender**

Homosexuals and lesbians are on the increase in India, which may surprise some traditionalists. According to a recent poll conducted by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), there are thousands of gay and lesbian persons residing in India's main urban centers. Marriage is a kind of same-sex relationship since it involves two individuals of the same sex living together. Since the passage of the Civil Partnership Act in 2004, same-sex couples have been afforded legal protections formerly reserved for married couples in areas such as pensions, inheritance, tenancy, and property ownership. As a result, marriages follow a different pattern than they would in more traditional societies, which might disrupt social order.

## **Cohabitation**

The increasing normalization of sexual activity before marriage has the potential to reduce the significance of marriage in the eyes of today's youth. Cohabitation is a step in the dating process that may lead to marriage (Manning, 2007). More individuals nowadays are open to the concept that a couple can have a family even if they aren't married. Since 2002, unmarried couples who cohabit have had the same legal rights to adopt as married ones.

## **Single-Member Households**

To put it simply, a "one-person household" is a dwelling in which there is just one permanent inhabitant. People in today's culture tend to focus on

themselves rather than others. Both sexes want self-actualization via career success and the ability to establish a loving family unit. About 6.8 million people, or about 30% of the total, live alone without any other family members (World Bank Report, 2008).

## **Dispersed inside a shared dwelling**

In the Western world, it is usual for married couples to have separate homes. Individualism and loneliness are on the rise, and as a result, more and more people are opting for the "living apart together" model. One 2008 survey by British Social Attitudes found that LATs, or people "living apart together," made up one in ten households.

## **DIN Syndrome (Double Income no kids)**

This term originally appeared in print in the 1980s, during the height of the "yuppie" era. Couples are putting off having children as a consequence of the economic crisis that started about 2000, with around 20% of those deciding against having children altogether. They all want to kick back and have a good time without having to worry about anybody else, especially kids. The children become an additional source of stress for them. Conclusion Like any other social institution, marriage can evolve over time. The roles played by changes in technology, the economy, teaching practices, and consumer habits are all crucial. Numerous factors, including but not limited to marriage rates, divorce rates, and the financial impact of marriage, have shifted significantly throughout time. Increasing marital ages have a significant effect on decreasing birth rates, hence this trend has undoubtedly big ramifications. Multifaceted factors, such as those in the social, economic, psychological, technological, and legal sectors, have had significant impacts on marriage's development throughout time. Because of the propensity of consumerism to promote false expectations, the gap between desires and necessities expands as people's freedoms expand as a consequence of liberalization. Furthermore, "getting rich quick any means available" has become a standard because to this kind of consumerism. It's a scenario in which the unequal power dynamics already present within the family are being used to amass wealth swiftly at any cost. New conflicts are emerging as old ways of doing things and new ways of doing things clash inside this institution. In addition, new marriage trends like Gay marriage,

cohabitation, etc. are emerging in certain areas, which may have far-reaching effects in the future. Despite all these changes, marriage is still widely acknowledged as a major social institution. Even in modern times, that practice is universally upheld. Its sanctity is diminished, but it is not turned into a common legal contract. Strong sentiments are still shown between husbands and wives in Hindu weddings.

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