

The Changing Nature of Marriage in India: A Sociological Perspective to the International Journal of Multidisciplinary Science Research Review

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KEYWORDS

Marriage, Changing, India, Relationship, Women.

ABSTRACT

In recent decades, marriage - a basic social institution in India—has experienced substantial change, especially in the wake of fast modernization, globalization, and technological advancement. The Indian marriage system, which was once thought of as a family-arranged union based on caste, religion, and social customs, is currently changing to a model that places a greater emphasis on respect for one another, individual choice, and emotional compatibility. This essay examines the evolving sociological aspects of marriage in India, highlighting the impact of liberal legal frameworks, urbanization, digital platforms, and evolving gender roles. The increase in late marriages, love marriages, and even cohabitation shows a departure from strict social norms in urban and semi-urban areas.

Expectations in marriages have changed as a result of women's empowerment, more educational and professional options, and a greater understanding of legal rights. Concurrently, the extensive usage of dating apps, social media platforms, and matrimonial websites has transformed the process of choosing a partner, making it more independent, varied, and intricate. The COVID-19 pandemic's effects further sparked a reconsideration of marriage customs, resulting in smaller nuptials, online courtships, and a greater emphasis on emotional health rather than social duty. Traditional values like family participation and cultural continuity endure in spite of these shifts, especially in rural areas, resulting in a dynamic interaction between modernity and tradition. This essay uses a modern sociological perspective to examine how India's marriage customs reflect broader changes in cultural norms, generational

INTRODUCTION

In Indian society, marriage has long been a fundamental institution with strong roots in social hierarchies, cultural norms, and religious traditions. In the past, marriage in India was mostly a group decision that was frequently planned by families to maintain social standing, protect caste purity, and strengthen patriarchal systems. Arranged marriages, gender-specific roles, and joint family systems were not just social customs but mechanisms for maintaining order and continuity across generations. However, urbanization, economic liberalization, globalization, and the rise of individualism have all had a significant impact on the structure and meaning of marriage in India over the past few decades. Today, there is an observable shift from strictly arranged marriages to self-selected partnerships or “love marriages,” as well as an increase in inter-caste and inter-religious

Review of Lecture:

Archana Handa (2024)-The study examines the evolving marriage patterns and the changing role of women in Ludhiana, Punjab. It highlights that over 50% of respondents had full autonomy in selecting their marriage partners, indicating a shift towards individual choice in marital decisions. Anup Yadav (2024). This large-scale survey analyses how traditional and emerging sociocultural dynamics affect marital satisfaction across various Indian states. It emphasizes the positive impact of egalitarian gender roles and the challenges posed by rapid societal changes. Ms. Neetu, Naveen Malik, Joginder, Sunil Kumar-Focusing on rural Haryana, this study investigates the transformation of marriage rituals and ceremonies, assessing their effects on family structures and the institution of marriage. It provides a descriptive and exploratory analysis of changing matrimonial practices in four districts. Koyel Sarkar(2023). This research examines the increasing prevalence of self-arranged marriages in India, analysing how higher education levels among parents influence this trend. It discusses the interplay between traditional expectations and modern individual choices in partner selection.

Historical Context of Marriage in India:

In India, the decision to get married has historically been made collectively by the family, with arranged marriages being the most common type. The idea of love marriages was uncommon in this system, where decisions were governed by social factors such as caste, class, and religion. Women were primarily responsible for household chores, and marriage was seen as an institution that upheld social order. These conventions are being challenged, though, as a result of globalization and growing urbanization, and younger generations are approaching marriage more from a standpoint of personal preference and love.

Impact of Modernization and Globalization:

In India, modernization has had a significant impact on how marriage is viewed, particularly in urban areas. Individual decision-making is becoming more and more valued these days over family decision-making. New values brought about by globalization, frequently from the West, place an emphasis on equality in marriage, love, and individual freedom. Traditional values continue to have a significant influence in rural areas, even though these values are now more prevalent in urban areas. This produces a dichotomy in which traditional and modern values coexist, complexly influencing the marriage landscape.

The Influence of Technology and Digital Platforms:

In India, technology has completely changed the way people meet and get married. Social media, dating apps, and online matrimonial websites have given people new ways to look for possible mates. These platforms give users more freedom when choosing a spouse in addition to making it simpler to access a larger pool of applicants. As more people looked to digital platforms to build relationships, the COVID-19 pandemic was a major factor in the rapid uptake of these technologies. Online matchmaking has become a commonplace method of meeting people in 2024, including those looking for interfaith or cross-cultural unions, which were previously taboo in many communities.

Changing Gender Roles:

With more women joining the workforce, going to college, and exercising more control over their marital decisions, the role of women in marriage is changing. Many women in 2024 are looking for partners who share responsibilities both inside and outside the home because they are unwilling to continue playing the stereotypical role of housewives. Gender equality in marriage is a growing expectation, with both partners contributing equally to financial and domestic matters. As men are expected to assist with childcare and household duties, their roles are also changing. Marriage is becoming a more balanced partnership as a result of this evolution.

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic:

In India, the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant effect on marriage patterns, forcing couples to spend a lot of time together during lockdowns: for some, this strengthened the bond, but for others, it revealed cracks in their relationship, which led to an increase in separations and divorces. The pandemic also accelerated the adoption of online matrimonial platforms and virtual dating, and in 2024, many couples are choosing more intimate weddings because of the pandemic's lasting effects on large gatherings. Additionally, people are now more concerned with emotional compatibility and connection than with social norms.

Legal and Policy Changes:

The institution of marriage has been significantly impacted by recent legal reforms in India. The legalization of same-sex unions in certain states represents a major advancement in sexual and gender equality. Furthermore, the acceptance of gender-neutral marriages and changes to divorce laws are examples of a larger cultural movement toward inclusivity. In addition to giving people more control over their marriage decisions, these legislative reforms also represent the changing views on marriage in an increasingly multicultural and accepting India.

Impact of Social Media and Changing Attitudes Toward Love and Marriage:

Social media platforms have radically changed how people view and interact with marriage. Couples can create a new kind of relationship visibility by publicly documenting their relationships on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. The concept of love marriages, in which the selection of a spouse is determined more by a personal bond than by family approval, has also become more common as a result of this. As the concept of "couple goals" has gained popularity, it has raised expectations for romantic relationships. Marriage is now more about respect and emotional compatibility, but it has also resulted in the rise of irrational expectations that can put strain on partners.

Challenges and Criticisms:

The development of marriage in India has not been without difficulties, notwithstanding the improvements. Traditional marital norms are still upheld by older generations and rural communities, even though younger generations may embrace the ideals of love and personal freedom. The sustainability of marriage when it is founded primarily on personal preferences rather than social or familial expectations is also called into question by the rising divorce rates, especially in urban areas. Additionally, the emergence of online platforms has occasionally resulted in fleeting connections that prioritize short-term satisfaction over long-term commitment, which may jeopardize the stability of relationships.

- **Changes in the Stability of Marriage and Divorce Rates in 2024** - In 2024, changing personal priorities, economic pressures, and changing societal norms all continue to have an impact on marriage stability. A growing number of people are reevaluating the traditional idea of lifelong commitment, even though marriage is still a significant institution for many.
- **Marriage Trends and Stability** - Cohabitation, delayed marriages, and alternative relationship models have all contributed to the gradual but noticeable drop in marriage rates in a number of developed nations. Nowadays, a lot of couples put their personal development, professional aspirations, and financial security first before getting married. This change frequently results in more solid, purposeful relationships, but it also lowers the number of marriages in general. Younger generations are also more likely to look for emotional compatibility, shared values, and mental health awareness in their relationships, especially Millennials and Gen Z. While some marriages may benefit from these changing expectations, others may experience pressure that, if unfulfilled, results in divorce.
 - **Increase in Divorce Rates** - In 2024, divorce rates have shown a slight uptick in some regions, particularly in urban areas. Contributing factors include:
 - **Post-pandemic relationship strain:** Many couples are still adjusting to lifestyle and work changes that began during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - **Financial stress:** Inflation, housing costs, and job insecurity continue to put strain on households.
 - **Changing stigma:** Divorce is less stigmatized, making it easier for individuals to leave unhealthy relationships without societal backlash.
 - **Digital age dynamics:** Increased social media use and online connectivity have changed how people form, maintain, and sometimes dissolve relationships.
- **Cultural Shifts and Gender Roles** - More than ever, traditional gender roles are being questioned. Many people anticipate that childcare and household chores will be divided. When these expectations are not fulfilled, conflict may occur, and the marriage may fail.

Factors Responsible for the Changing Nature of Marriage in 2024

1. **Increased Focus on Individual Fulfilment**-Modern marriages often prioritize personal happiness, emotional support, and mutual growth over conventional obligations. People are less willing to remain in unfulfilling relationships, leading to rising divorce rates and delayed marriages.
2. **Economic Independence**-With more financial independence, especially among women, individuals are not compelled to marry for economic stability. This shift empowers people to choose marriage on their own terms or opt out altogether.
3. **Technological Influence**- Online dating apps and social media have revolutionized how people meet and build relationships. Virtual communication and long-distance relationships have become more normalized, influencing how people form marital bonds.
4. **Changing Career Priorities**-Many individuals prioritize career growth and personal goals over early marriage. The pressure to marry young has lessened, and people are increasingly choosing to settle down later in life.
5. **Cultural Globalization**-Exposure to diverse cultures and lifestyles through media and travel has influenced people's perceptions of marriage. There's greater openness to intercultural and interfaith marriages.

Recommendations

Considering how marriage is changing in India, a few important suggestions can aid in fostering and directing this social shift. The first step in bridging the gap between traditional family expectations and contemporary individual preferences in partner selection is to encourage open communication between generations. To encourage wholesome, polite partnerships, relationship and gender sensitization education ought to be incorporated into college and school curricula. More secure and knowledgeable decisions within marriages can be ensured by fortifying legal and psychological support networks, particularly for women, LGBTQ+ people, and victims of marital abuse. Furthermore, user safety guidelines and ethical regulations are urgently needed, given the increased reliance on online dating services. Normalizing same-sex, inter-caste, and interfaith relationships can also be achieved by promoting inclusivity in marital norms through public campaigns, media, and community outreach.

Conclusion-

The institution of marriage saw substantial change in 2024 as a result of a confluence of social, cultural, technological, and economic developments. Marriage today, which is no longer solely based on custom, reflects a growing emphasis on individual autonomy, emotional compatibility, and respect for one another. Individuals are increasingly choosing to marry later in life, often after establishing their careers and gaining financial independence, which has reduced the pressure to marry for economic

or social security. Furthermore, the idea of what constitutes a committed union has expanded due to the broad acceptance of various relationship types, including same-sex marriages, cohabitation, and civil partnerships. Long-distance and digital connections are now more feasible due to the way that technology has changed how people meet and sustain relationships, especially with the rise of dating apps and virtual communication. Additionally, the diminished impact

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