Attitude of Youth towards Marriage in India: A Sociological Study

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Abstract

Marriage is one of the oldest socially recognized institution and essential for the procreation of children and satisfaction of sexual urges. The aim of present study is to assess the attitude of youth towards the institution of marriage and changing trends in marriage in India, because lot of transformation which has been taken place in India over the past several decades due to modernization, materialist approach of youth, attainment of higher education, professionalism and so on. The study is based on secondary sources of data and not any other test has been utilized to carry out the research. The paper intends to highlight the problems of youth towards marriage in India & it will also examine the attitude of youth towards late marriage in India. The author has found the impact on these variables.

1. Introduction

Marriage is one of the universal social institutions. Marriage involves the union of two individuals who decide to live in an intimate relationship throughout their life. Marriage is the approved social pattern whereby two to more persons establish a family. The real meaning of marriage is the acceptance of a new status, with a new set of privileges and obligations, and the recognition of this new status by others. A legal marriage legitimizes a social status and creates a set of legally recognized rights and duties. Edward Westermarck in the "History of human marriage" defines marriage as the more or less durable connection between male and female lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of offspring. According to Robert H Lowie, "Marriage is a relatively permanent bond between permissible mates.[1] The custom of arranged marriages has been a part of Indian culture since the fourth century. The practice was begun primarily to maintain and pass on the family traditions from one generation to the other. It is still prevalent in both rural and urban parts of India, former being more inclined towards the system. In fact, arranged marriages are in majority, because not all people have accepted the concept of love marriage. However, with the changing time, people in India have accepted the concept of love marriage, which is otherwise considered against the Indian culture. People in the rural India are now more liberal, when it comes to love marriages. Therefore, both arranged and love marriage find equal importance in the wedding scenario of India.[2]

1.2. Attitude of youth towards marriage

With the change from parent arranged marriages to dating individual choice courtship emerged as an activity in its own right, creating a new institution in culture. It involves individual choice with a defined time period. It also differs from parent arranged marriages in the aspect of sexual permissiveness (the extent to which couples physically intimate before marriage). Although increases in the incidence of premarital sex represent a departure from the strict association of sex, love and marriage research evidenced strongly suggests that love is still a major justification, for premarital sex. Nonetheless, the attributes of marriage are changing. Historically, marriage signified the formation of a new household unit, the initiation of a sexual relationship, and the birth of children. With the increasing social acceptance of premarital sex, cohabitation, childbirth outside of marriage, and same-sex partnerships, the fundamental aspects of this institution have been separated and, for some, redefined.[3]

1.3. Changing Trends in Marriages

The India of today is the land of changes. As noble laureate Amartya Sen., has said "If time can change India, then India can change the times". The last two decades has seen a tremendous drift in morals and values existing in the Indian society. Marriage has always been a very important part of the Indian society. The changing times have greatly influenced the marriage trends existing in the society.[4] In the modern era we see the youth giving importance to changing trends in marriage viz. love marriage, inter-caste marriage, live in relationship, lesbian Gay Bisexual transgender marriage etc. The Indian society is also undergoing a drastic change due to economic prosperity and the Internet revolution that has exposed people to social trends prevalent across the world. Traditionally, parents found the match for their children and the marriage was formalized strictly as per the rituals. But today, many youth are choosing their own partners. Earlier, the boy and the girl were not allowed to meet before the marriage. They saw each other only on the day of marriage. Eventually, it gave way to phone chats and then few meetings in the presence of a family member before the marriage. But today in the 21st century, both the partners try to spend maximum time together before marriage. Unlike yesterday, many girls are working before marriage and they put forward their condition to continue working after marriage.[5] As a result, girls are managing both their personal and professional lives smoothly. This, in turn, has dissolved the demarcation between gender roles. Today, boys are equally involved in household chores as girls. On the other hand, girls are also providing financial support in time of need. As joint family system is being replaced by nuclear families, the closeness and the level of comfort between the partners is increasing. They have ample space to talk and strengthen their relationships. In a joint system, the partners spent very few hours together because of lack of space due to a large number of members in the family.[6] This acted as a bottleneck in removing communication gap between the couple. An increase in the women employment ratio and the number of women-centric laws has led to the empowerment of women financially and mentally. Now, it is not easy to subject her to any sort of harassment because she is equipped with all the means to live an independent life. In the light of above discussion, an attempt was made to study the attitude of youth towards marriage and changing trends in marriage.[7]

2. Literature review

Dabla (2002)[8] in his study points out that there are tremendous changes towards the institution of marriage. Over the decades the practices related to polygamy are reducing and that of monogamy are increasing. Similarly, the patri-matri marriages and youth prefer late marriage. It has observed that there seems a clear direction in this pattern of change from traditional to non-traditional / modern type of marriage. Sullivan (2000)[9] in his study given the changes that have occurred towards the institution of marriage living still popular today. His survey reveals that both young people and their parents have quite attitude towards marriage. In a national sample of high school seniors there quarter reported that marriage and family life were "extremely important" to them and a survey of young adults aged eighteen to twenty- two found that most of them play to marry before the age of thirty. The vast majority of them also believed that when people marry, it should be "for life" despite positive views of marriage however the survey defected some important changes. Compared with attitudes of the 1960s these young men and women have fewer advantages I getting negative attitudes towards staying single. Khursheed (2008)[10] concluded that the institution of marriage is very complex with number of rituals and practices there are some peculiar function, rites and rituals. But all this is going through some drastic change. Mate selection, marriage ceremonies, child and wife care, and in-laws selection all this is experiencing a new look " love for one's own children, affective bonds between husband and wife become more particularized and become intense, and bond uniting collateral relatives tend to be weakened, thus altering the very structure of traditional joint family sentiments. Ahuja (2010)[11] in his study reveal that mate selection today involves three important issues: party to selection, criteria of selection, and field of selection. While earlier mates for children were selected by parents, now children believe in joint selection by parents and children, though cases of individual selection are not rare. The criteria of selecting mates by parents are quite different from those of children. While parents give importance to family status, caste, dowry and so forth, children give importance to education, character, physical appearance, equipment and skill etc. Abraham (2010)[12] in his work discusses some of the patterns including alternative lifestyles in advanced industrial societies. Although most of these practices are not prevalent in India, at least not on a significant level, students must be aware of these trends. Cohabitation, the sharing of a household by an unmarried couple, has increased dramatically during the last two decades. In the United States alone there are five unmarried couples for every hundred married couples. Because of the increased social acceptance of cohabitation many men and women don't see the need for legal marriages. In many ways, the personal lives of unmarried couples have also started to resemble those of married couples.

3. The aim of the present paper is as follows:

1) To highlight the problems of youth towards marriage in modern India.
2) To examine the attitude of youth towards marriage in contemporary India.

4. Research Methodology

The present study is based on secondary sources of data such as journal articles, books, official and non-official reports and other relevant sources wherever necessary and not any other test has been utilized to carry out the research. The statement will also be supplemented by observation of the author. The experience regarding marriage in the present study has been taken from Indian perspective with special focus on Indore city of Maharashtra. The Indian society is also undergoing a drastic change due to economic prosperity and the Internet revolution that has exposed people to social trends prevalent across the world and particularly in India. Traditionally, parents found the match for their children and the marriage was formalized strictly as per the rituals. But today, many youth are choosing their own partners. As a result of modernization, materialist approach of youth, attainment of higher education and professionalism lot of transformation has been taken place in the institution of marriage in India which further led to change in the attitude of youth.

5. Results and discussions

5.1. Problems of marriage in modern India

Child Marriage is one of the burning problems of Indian society. In India, despite amended laws advocating 18 as the legal minimum age at marriage for females, a substantial proportion i.e. every third adolescent girl in the age group of 15-19 year is married and every second married adolescent girl has given birth to a child. According to the Registrar General of India (RGI) Report (2001) Rajasthan has the highest 40.8 percentage of females ever married among15-19 year old girls as compared to India 24.9 percent followed by Bihar 39.6 percent, Madhya Pradesh 34.1 percent, Jharkhand 32.9 percent and Andhra Pradesh 32.3 percent. Among the various districts of Rajasthan, Bhilwara is at the top with 61.9 percent.[13] Child marriage in India has been practiced for centuries, with children married off before their physical and mental maturity. The problem of child marriage in India remains rooted in a complex matrix of religious traditions, social practices, economic factors and deeply rooted prejudices. Regardless of its roots, child marriage constitutes a gross violation of human rights, leaving physical, psychological and emotional scars for life. Sexual activity starts soon after marriage, and pregnancy and childbirth at an early age can lead to maternal as well as infant mortality. Moreover, women who marry younger are more likely to experience domestic violence within the home.[14] But at present the legal age for marriage in India is 18 years for a female and 21 for a male as per Section 6 of the Hindu Marriages Act, 1956. Any marriage of a person younger than this is banned and punishable in India under the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006. But child marriages still take place in India, particularly around the Hindu holy day of Akshya Tritiya. Normally Hindus decide the date for marriages based on horoscopes interpreted by pundits. Some dates however are considered so auspicious that no pundit needs to be consulted. One such day is Akshya Tritiya (also known as Akha Teej), the third day of Vaishakh, and the month of the Hindu calendar generally falling in May. During this time lots of marriages take place. Unfortunately, many of them are child marriages. It is a religious tradition in many places in India and therefore quite difficult to change.[15] But very often parents paid a substantial dowry at the time of marriage[16]. Dowry is

usually a non-issue ion marriages of women with mental illness as the giver and the receiver are usually in agreement. However in marital problems erupt after marriage because of mental illness, allegations of dowry demand/ harassment are made and complaints are lodged at police stations. Sometimes these cases landed up in courts, leading to anomisty and worsening the mental disorder. In these partitions the usual play from the women side that she is normal and the husband has rejected the women because he is greedy and wants more dowry.[17]

5.2. Attitude of youth towards marriage in contemporary India

The attitude of youth towards marriage in India has been changed over the past several decades due to modernization, industrialization, materialistic approach, attainment of higher education and so on. In India marriage is considered a lifelong partnership. It is the rock on which the family is built, and which, in turn, is the foundation of society. Basically, marriage is a social and legal contract.[18] Frequently, it has very little to do with love or any other emotion; tradition, culture, religion, caste and community pressures all play an important part in the institution of marriage An arranged marriage can be defined as one in which the marriage partner is selected by the individual's parents, either with or without his or her consent and with little or no interaction between the partners prior to marriage.[19] A love marriage on the other hand, is characterized by an absence of, or a negligible role of parents in the choice of the partner, the choice being made by the two persons getting married and with considerable interaction between them prior to marriage. Today, a combination of the two forms a type of semi arranged marriage often seen, where the partner may be selected by the parents, or by the boy or girl, but there is complete involvement of the two young people and a relatively longer courtship period.[20] Indian adolescents have also found to be more liberal and dare to adopt new trends in marriage. Marriage once arranged by the parents is now usually a matter of free choice in Indian society. With the changing time, people in India accepting love marriage, inter-caste and inter-religion Marriage which was restricted earlier. To connecting with the world easily, led the young boys and girls to accept western values, new ideologies and modern trends in marriage. Leave-in concept seems to be losing its sanctity in the country as it is becoming the trend though not very much popular. Premarital sex is a growing phenomenon among young people who no longer consider sexual intercourse wrong or immoral, emerging as a threat to its basic objective to regulate the sexuality. Though marriage, for many is still an important occasion having emotional ties rather than only a sanction to have sex relations. It cannot be stated that marriage has lost its importance but certainly it has undergone some radical changes. As Stephan Harper put it, “I have no difficulty with the recognition of civil unions for nontraditional relationships but I believe in law, we should protect the traditional definition of marriage.[21] In the modern era we see the youth giving importance to changing trends in marriage viz. love marriage, inter-caste marriage, live in relationships, lesbian Gay Bisexual transgender marriage etc. Unlike past days many girls are managing both their personal and professional lives smoothly. Today, boys are equally involved in household chores as girls. As joint family system is being replaced by nuclear families the closeness and the level of comfort between the partners is increasing.[22]

6. Conclusion.

It is conclude from the above findings of the study that child marriage is one of the burning problem and still prevalent in Indian society. It is argued that child marriage constitutes a gross violation of human rights, leaving physical, psychological and emotional scars for life. Sexual activity starts soon after marriage pregnancy and childbirth at an early age can lead to maternal as well as infant mortality. Moreover, women who marry younger are more likely to experience domestic violence within the home. New generation deliberately delay their marriage, lot of transformation has been taken place in the institution of marriage, on the other hand, attitude of youth towards marriage in India has been changed due to modernization, industrialization, materialistic approach, attainment of higher education and caste and class consideration has tremendous impact on the institution of marriage.

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