Restructuring of Family and Marriage System in India

[1]Dr. Rajesh Kumar Sharma & [2]Dr. Anita Sharma

[1]Dept. of Sociology, Govt. College, Saipau, Dholpur, Rajasthan, India

[2]Principal, Vivekanand Girls' College, Dholpur, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT: Families have both structure and function. Like the skeleton and muscles in a body, the structure is what gives a family it's size and shape. Also, like organs within the body that perform necessary functions to keep the body working, there are certain necessary functions that keep families healthy. It sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability. It asserts that our lives are guided by social structures, which are relatively stable patterns of social behaviour. Social structures give shape to our lives – for example, in families, the community, and through religious organizations and certain rituals, or complex religious ceremonies, give structure to our everyday lives. Each social structure has social functions or consequences for the operation of society as a whole.

KEYWORDS: family, marriage, structure, India, social behavior, rituals, society

I.INTRODUCTION

Social structures consist of social relationships, as well as any social institutions within a society. One example of a social structure is a social class (upper-class, middle-class, and poor). Another example of a social structure is the different levels of government. Family, religion, law, economy, and class are all social structures.

India   and   its   family   structure
India has a rich family structure with a patrilineal background, which help the family members to sustain a life with kinship groupings. Earlier, mostly joint families were found where family members live together under one roof. They all mutually work, eat, worship and co-operate each other in one or the other way. This also helps the family to get strong mentally, physically and economically, the children also get to know about the values and traditions of the society from their grandparents and elders. The family system has given a lot of importance in India and has worked more often to make the bonding among families stronger. The family system has given a lot of importance in India and has worked more often to make the bonding among families stronger. Meanwhile, urbanization and westernization had its influence on the basic structure of the Indian family structure. The division of the joint family into smaller units is not the symbol of people rejecting this traditional structure. The circumstances and conditions also made the need for people to split the family.

The family as a social institution has been undergoing change. Both in its structure and functions changes have taken place. In India, as in many traditional societies, the family has been not only the centre of social and economic life but also the primary source of support for the family members. The increasing commercialization of the economy and the development of the infrastructure of the modern state have introduced a significant change in the family structure in India in the 20th century. Especially, the last few decades have witnessed important alterations in family life.
India's fertility rate has fallen, and couples have begun to bear children at a later age. At the same time, life expectancy has increased, resulting in more elderly people who need care. All of these changes are taking place in the context of increased urbanization, which is separating children from elders and contributing disintegration of family-based support systems.

Factors   affecting   family   structures
Change in Fertility: An inevitable outcome of declining fertility rates and increasing age at first birth in most of the countries in the world, including India, is a reduction in family size. Fertility declined due to the combined effect of substantial socio-economic development achieved during the last two decades and the effective implementation of family planning programmes.

Hence, it has become irrational for many people to have large families as the cost of children is increasing. In traditional societies, where human labour was a source of strength to the family, more children were preferred to fewer. But as the economic contribution from the children in a family decreased, because of a move away from agriculture, the need for large numbers of children decreased. Improvements in health care and child survival also contributed. The emphasis was on the quality of life rather than the number of children, a new concept added to the family.

Change in Age of marriage: In many countries in the world where significant declines infertility are being experienced, reductions in the proportion of people never married have often coincided with or preceded declines in marital fertility. A substantial increase in the proportions never married, among both males and females, at young ages, has been noted in many countries. A consequence of the increase in the proportion of never-married young adults is the gradual upward trend of the average age at marriage. Postponement of marriage among females resulted in the postponement of childbearing with a reduction in family size.

Change in Mortality: Mortality declines, particularly infant mortality, everywhere preceded the decline of fertility. Improved survival rates of children mean that when women reached the age of 30 they increasingly had achieved the completed family size they desired. Earlier, much larger numbers of births were required to achieve the desired completed family size. In the last three decades, infant mortality has declined significantly in every country and this trend undoubtedly influenced the fertility decline. Mortality decline, followed by fertility decline, altered the age structure of the population and also the structure within individual families.

Marriage Dissolution: It is no longer the case that all marital unions, whether formal or informal reach final dissolution through death. A considerable proportion of unions are disrupted suddenly for reasons such as desertion, separation or divorce. An obvious failure in a family relationship is where husband and wife cease to live together. Those women who are divorced at latter ages mostly remain single for the rest of their lives and live with their dependents. The idea that when a couple has children it will be less likely to divorce is widely accepted in most societies. However, it is believed that in the last couple of years even in most of the Asian cultures, including India, a growing proportion of divorces involve couples with young children (Goode 1993).

Participation of Women in Economic development: The commercialization process which opened markets in many developing countries has succeeded in replacing the traditional co-operation in the economic relationship, with that of competition. In this process, the social institutions in these countries found themselves in conflict with the key aspects of the new economic systems. The economics of the family and the sexual division of labour within the family is very much determined by opportunities in the labour market. The developing economies of system India have facilitated the freeing of women from household chores and their entrance to the labour market. The declining ability of men to earn a 'family wage' along with the growing need for cash for family maintenance has resulted in an increasing number of female members (particularly the wife) in the family engaging in economic activities (Lloyed and Duffy 1995).

Talcott Parsons, theoretical insights on the family have attracted widest attention and deliberation. Parsons (1954, 1956) argues that modern industrial society has led to the growth of what he calls "isolated nuclear family". This family is structurally isolated as it does not form an integral part of the wider kinship group.

Family is a very fluid social institution and in the process of constant change. The modern family or, rather the post-modern family is also witnessing several new forms of it cropping up. Modernity is witnessing the emergence of same-sex couples (LGBT relationship), cohabitation or live-in relations, single-parent households, a large chunk of divorced living alone or with their children.

II.DISCUSSION

In India there is no greater event in a family than a wedding, dramatically evoking every possible social obligation, kinship bond, traditional value, impassioned sentiment, and economic resource. In the arranging and conducting of weddings, the complex permutations of Indian social systems best display themselves.

Marriage is deemed essential for virtually everyone in India. For the individual, marriage is the great watershed in life, marking the transition to adulthood. Generally, this transition, like everything else in India, depends little upon individual volition but instead occurs as a result of the efforts of many people. Even as one is born into a particular family without the exercise of any personal choice, so is one given a spouse without any personal preference involved. Arranging a marriage is a critical responsibility for parents and other relatives of both bride and groom. Marriage

alliances entail some redistribution of wealth as well as building and restructuring social realignments, and, of course, result in the biological reproduction of families.

Some parents begin marriage arrangements on the birth of a child, but most wait until later. In the past, the age of marriage was quite young, and in a few small groups, especially in Rajasthan, children under the age of five are still united in marriage. In rural communities, prepuberty marriage for girls traditionally was the rule. In the late twentieth century, the age of marriage is rising in villages, almost to the levels that obtain in cities. Legislation mandating minimum marriage ages has been passed in various forms over the past decades, but such laws have little effect on actual marriage practices.

Essentially, India is divided into two large regions with regard to Hindu kinship and marriage practices, the north and the south. Additionally, various ethnic and tribal groups of the central, mountainous north, and eastern regions follow a variety of other practices. These variations have been extensively described and analyzed by anthropologists, especially Irawati Karve, David G. Mandelbaum, and Clarence Maloney.

Broadly, in the Indo-Aryan-speaking north, a family seeks marriage alliances with people to whom it is not already linked by ties of blood. Marriage arrangements often involve looking far afield. In the Dravidian-speaking south, a family seeks to strengthen existing kin ties through marriage, preferably with blood relatives. Kinship terminology reflects this basic pattern. In the north, every kinship term clearly indicates whether the person referred to is a blood relation or an affinal relation; all blood relatives are forbidden as marriage mates to a person or a person's children. In the south, there is no clear-cut distinction between the family of birth and the family of marriage. Because marriage in the south commonly involves a continuing exchange of daughters among a few families, for the married couple all relatives are ultimately blood kin. Dravidian terminology stresses the principle of relative age: all relatives are arranged according to whether they are older or younger than each other without reference to generation.

On the Indo-Gangetic Plain, marriages are contracted outside the village, sometimes even outside of large groups of villages, with members of the same caste beyond any traceable consanguineal ties. In much of the area, daughters should not be given into villages where daughters of the family or even of the natal village have previously been given. In most of the region, brother-sister exchange marriages (marriages linking a brother and sister of one household with the sister and brother of another) are shunned. The entire emphasis is on casting the marriage net ever-wider, creating new alliances. The residents of a single village may have in-laws in hundreds of other villages.

In most of North India, the Hindu bride goes to live with strangers in a home she has never visited. There she is sequestered and veiled, an outsider who must learn to conform to new ways. Her natal family is often geographically distant, and her ties with her consanguineal kin undergo attenuation to varying degrees.

In central India, the basic North Indian pattern prevails, with some modifications. For example, in Madhya Pradesh, village exogamy is preferred, but marriages within a village are not uncommon. Marriages between caste-fellows in neighboring villages are frequent. Brother-sister exchange marriages are sometimes arranged, and daughters are often given in marriage to lineages where other daughters of their lineage or village have previously been wed.

In South India, in sharp contrast, marriages are preferred between cousins (especially cross-cousins, that is, the children of a brother and sister) and even between uncles and nieces (especially a man and his elder sister's daughter). The principle involved is that of return--the family that gives a daughter expects one in return, if not now, then in the next generation. The effect of such marriages is to bind people together in relatively small, tight-knit kin groups. A bride moves to her in-laws' home--the home of her grandmother or aunt--and is often comfortable among these familiar faces. Her husband may well be the cousin she has known all her life that she would marry.

Many South Indian marriages are contracted outside of such close kin groups when no suitable mates exist among close relatives, or when other options appear more advantageous. Some sophisticated South Indians, for example, consider cousin marriage and uncle-niece marriage outmoded.

Rules for the remarriage of widows differ from one group to another. Generally, lower-ranking groups allow widow remarriage, particularly if the woman is relatively young, but the highest-ranking castes discourage or forbid such remarriage. The most strict adherents to the nonremarriage of widows are Brahmans. Almost all groups allow widowers to remarry. Many groups encourage a widower to marry his deceased wife's younger sister (but never her older sister).

Among Muslims of both the north and the south, marriage between cousins is encouraged, both cross-cousins (the children of a brother and sister) and parallel cousins (the children of two same-sex siblings). In the north, such cousins grow up calling each other "brother" and "sister", yet they may marry. Even when cousin marriage does not occur, spouses can often trace between them other kinship linkages.

Some tribal people of central India practice an interesting permutation of the southern pattern. Among the Murias of Bastar in southeastern Madhya Pradesh, as described by anthropologist Verrier Elwin, teenagers live together in a dormitory (ghotul), sharing life and love with one another for several blissful years. Ultimately, their parents arrange their marriages, usually with cross-cousins, and the delights of teenage romance are replaced with the serious responsibilities of adulthood. In his survey of some 2,000 marriages, Elwin found only seventy-seven cases of ghotul partners eloping together and very few cases of divorce. Among the Muria and Gond tribal groups, cross-cousin marriage is called "bringing back the milk," alluding to the gift of a girl in one generation being returned by the gift of a girl in the next.

Finding the perfect partner for one's child can be a challenging task. People use their social networks to locate potential brides and grooms of appropriate social and economic status. Increasingly, urban dwellers use classified matrimonial advertisements in newspapers. The advertisements usually announce religion, caste, and educational qualifications, stress female beauty and male (and in the contemporary era, sometimes female) earning capacity, and may hint at dowry size.

In rural areas, matches between strangers are usually arranged without the couple meeting each other. Rather, parents and other relatives come to an agreement on behalf of the couple. In cities, however, especially among the educated classes, photographs are exchanged, and sometimes the couple are allowed to meet under heavily chaperoned circumstances, such as going out for tea with a group of people or meeting in the parlor of the girl's home, with her relatives standing by. Young professional men and their families may receive inquiries and photographs from representatives of several girls' families. They may send their relatives to meet the most promising candidates and then go on tour themselves to meet the young women and make a final choice. In the early 1990s, increasing numbers of marriages arranged in this way link brides and grooms from India with spouses of Indian parentage resident in Europe, North America, and the Middle East.

Almost all Indian children are raised with the expectation that their parents will arrange their marriages, but an increasing number of young people, especially among the college-educated, are finding their own spouses. So-called love marriages are deemed a slightly scandalous alternative to properly arranged marriages. Some young people convince their parents to "arrange" their marriages to people with whom they have fallen in love. This process has long been possible for Indians from the south and for Muslims who want to marry a particular cousin of the appropriate marriageable category. In the upper classes, these semi-arranged love marriages increasingly occur between young people who are from castes of slightly different rank but who are educationally or professionally equal. If there are vast differences to overcome, such as is the case with love marriages between Hindus and Muslims or between Hindus of very different caste status, parents are usually much less agreeable, and serious family disruptions can result.

In much of India, especially in the north, a marriage establishes a structural opposition between the kin groups of the bride and groom--bride-givers and bride-takers. Within this relationship, bride-givers are considered inferior to bride-takers and are forever expected to give gifts to the bride-takers. The one-way flow of gifts begins at engagement and continues for a generation or two. The most dramatic aspect of this asymmetrical relationship is the giving of dowry.

In many communities throughout India, a dowry has traditionally been given by a bride's kin at the time of her marriage. In ancient times, the dowry was considered a woman's wealth--property due a beloved daughter who had no claim on her natal family's real estate--and typically included portable valuables such as jewelry and household goods that a bride could control throughout her life. However, over time, the larger proportion of the dowry has come to consist of goods and cash payments that go straight into the hands of the groom's family. In the late twentieth century, throughout much of India, dowry payments have escalated, and a groom's parents sometimes insist on compensation for their son's higher education and even for his future earnings, to which the bride will presumably have access. Some of the dowries demanded are quite oppressive, amounting to several years' salary in cash as well as items such as motorcycles, air conditioners, and fancy cars. Among some lower-status groups, large dowries are currently replacing traditional bride-price payments. Even among Muslims, previously not given to demanding large dowries, reports of exorbitant dowries are increasing.

The dowry is becoming an increasingly onerous burden for the bride's family. Antidowry laws exist but are largely ignored, and a bride's treatment in her marital home is often affected by the value of her dowry. Increasingly frequent are horrible incidents, particularly in urban areas, where a groom's family makes excessive demands on the bride's family--even after marriage--and when the demands are not met, murder the bride, typically by setting her clothes on fire in a cooking "accident." The groom is then free to remarry and collect another sumptuous dowry. The male and female in-laws implicated in these murders have seldom been punished.

Such dowry deaths have been the subject of numerous media reports in India and other countries and have mobilized feminist groups to action. In some of the worst areas, such as the National Capital Territory of Delhi, where hundreds of such deaths are reported annually and the numbers are increasing yearly, the law now requires that all suspicious deaths of new brides be investigated. Official government figures report 1,786 registered dowry deaths nationwide in 1987; there is also an estimate of some 5,000 dowry deaths in 1991. Women's groups sometimes picket the homes of the in-laws of burned brides. Some analysts have related the growth of this phenomenon to the growth of consumerism in Indian society.

Fears of impoverishing their parents have led some urban middle-class young women, married and unmarried, to commit suicide. However, through the giving of large dowries, the newly wealthy are often able to marry their treasured daughters up the status hierarchy so reified in Indian society.

After marriage arrangements are completed, a rich panoply of wedding rituals begins. Each religious group, region, and caste has a slightly different set of rites. Generally, all weddings involve as many kin and associates of the bride and groom as possible. The bride's family usually hosts most of the ceremonies and pays for all the arrangements for large numbers of guests for several days, including accommodation, feasting, decorations, and gifts for the groom's party. These arrangements are often extremely elaborate and expensive and are intended to enhance the status of the bride's family. The groom's party usually hires a band and brings fine gifts for the bride, such as jewelry and clothing, but these are typically far outweighed in value by the presents received from the bride's side.

After the bride and groom are united in sacred rites attended by colorful ceremony, the new bride may be carried away to her in-laws' home, or, if she is very young, she may remain with her parents until they deem her old enough to depart. A prepubescent bride usually stays in her natal home until puberty, after which a separate consummation ceremony is held to mark her departure for her conjugal home and married life. The poignancy of the bride's weeping departure for her new home is prominent in personal memory, folklore, literature, song, and drama throughout India.

III.RESULTS

Historically, arranged marriages, the most common form of marriage in India, have been normally organized by the parents of the bride and groom, with no decisions made by the bride. Today, parents still play a vital role in the marriage arrangements; however, the bride is becoming increasingly involved in the decision-making process. This change is a result of modern education which has induced changes within the patriarchal social structure, cultural norms and value system of India. Modern education introduced Indian women to a new way of thinking and they were encouraged to go beyond their traditional roles of wife and mother to focus on their education and career, and find aspirations and goals outside of marriage. This has led to modifications of the beliefs and customs of Indian marriages, as the stringent rules and expectations that surrounded the traditional form of arranged marriage restructured to a form that is considered more lenient and accepting for Indian women. Through interviews conducted with three Indian women, I have shown how modern education has rearranged the Indian marriage institution as a result of the compromises made between the young and the old generation.

According to the National Council for Applied Economic Research, India's middle class will have burgeoned to include 53.3 million households – or 267 million people – by 2015-16. Within a decade, by future the number of middle-class households in India is predicted to double to 113.8 million households, or 547 million individuals. No doubt, the rapid growth of the middle class will challenge traditional notions of kinship, family values, gender roles, and reproduction. This series draws on recent research published by LSE faculty and fellows to examine how marriage norms among middle-class Indians are evolving with India's liberalisation policies. There are two broad streams of discussion about the Indian middle class: there's the economic angle, which is related to India's global image, but also geared to push particular kinds of policies to cater to the middle class, for example, urban restructuring or educational reform. The notion of the middle class is also associated with consumer culture and behaviour—we talk about the middle class when we're talking about new consumer practices.

My interest and long-term association has been with families and localities (at the neighbourhood level) so I have a different picture than what surveys and research on consumption present. An emphasis on new patterns of consumption, socialising, or youth cultures presents subjects in an individualistic mode. But when you talk to the same person in their family surroundings, a very different picture emerges, and that picture complicates understandings of being middle-class in India today. Suddenly, you sense moral tensions between being an individual and being part of a family; between traditional outlooks on gender roles and the desire to be part of a hip, modern youth culture; and practices and moralities promoted in the media and local discourse, for example where arranged marriages and love marriages are presented as opposed to each other.

IV.CONCLUSIONS

Discourses on marriage and the family are a huge part of modern South Asian middle-class identity; in fact, there's a sense of exceptionalism, the idea that Indians are focused on family relations while Westerners are not. Being appropriately middle-class is therefore often presented in terms of 'traditional' values and gender roles.

Of course, these ideals do not necessarily reflect the actual practices. Whilst the extended joint family is upheld as an ideal, nuclearisation is increasingly taking place, especially in places like Bangalore where middle-class employees migrate for work. These new opportunities in the Indian economy are grabbed by many, but at the same time they create a sense of insecurity, especially among those who were traditionally middle-class and benefited from government opportunities: on the one hand, these people now want to avail of different opportunities and provide the best for their families, but on the other hand, they are reluctant to give up the security that comes with such jobs (in the form of pensions and other perks). As a result, you get more people thinking very carefully about kin relations, how to arrange marriages, where and with whom to live in order to accommodate change.

There's such a diversity in how marriages work in India that you cannot say that there is one kind of Indian marriage and then pinpoint how it is evolving at the moment. What endures, however, is the middle-class ideal of marriage—that has not changed. Apart from the fact that love marriages are on the rise, same-sex relations have been decriminalised, and legislation exists to dissolve marriages, there is still the strong idea that marriages should be arranged, heterosexual, and lifelong unions. Anything that defies this norm has to be justified and is measured against this ideal, which serves to cement parental authority and a strong hold of affines over a couple's future.

New opportunities force us to rethink about what marrying 'up' and marrying 'down' mean. Among most middle-class communities, classic hypergamy between status groups has been replaced with marrying up in economic terms. But even those kinds of class-related identities are being redefined; for example, differences in cultural and educational status are increasingly glossed over as economic standing can compensate for a lack thereof. That said families are crucially aware of differences in status, and those who marry 'up' are frequently reminded of their family's shortcomings. In a rapidly changing world, marriage becomes one of the main institutions to ensure the reproduction of class, which explains why arranged marriages are still very much the norm.

REFERENCES

1. Sari nights and henna parties Archived 2016-03-05 at the Wayback Machine, Amy Yee, The Financial Times, May 17, 2008
2. ^ India's love affair with gold Archived 2013-08-08 at the Wayback Machine, CBS News, February 12, 2012
3. ^ Hindu Saṁskāras: Socio-religious Study of the Hindu Sacraments, Rajbali Pandey (1969), see Chapter VIII, ISBN 978-81-208-0396-1, pages 153–233
4. ^ The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Hinduism: A-M, James G. Lochtefeld (2001), ISBN 978-0-8239-3179-8, Page 427
5. ^ History of Dharmasastra, Vaman Kane (1962)
6. ^ P.H. Prabhu (2011), Hindu Social Organization, ISBN 978-81-7154-206-2, see pages 164–165
7. ^ Natubhai Shah (1998). Jainism: the world of conquerors. Sussex Academic Press. pp. 203, 263. ISBN 978-1-898723-30-1.
8. ^ Axel Michaels (2015). Homo Ritualis: Hindu Ritual and Its Significance for Ritual Theory. Oxford University Press. pp. 102–104, 266–268. ISBN 978-0-19-026264-8.
9. ^ Three Days of a Traditional Indian Muslim Wedding Archived 2019-02-21 at the Wayback Machine, zawaj.com

10. ^ Das, Debomitra (21 June 2018). "Meanings of rituals in Christian weddings". The Times of India. Retrieved 24 September 2018.
11. ^ Heitzman, James. "India: A Country Study". US Library of Congress. Retrieved 26 December 2012.
12. ^ Women and men in India 2012 Archived 2013-10-12 at the Wayback Machine CSO/Census of India 2011, Government of India, pp xxi
13. ^ K. Sinha Nearly 50% fall in brides married below 18 Archived 2019-07-30 at the Wayback Machine The Times of India (February 10, 2012)
14. ^ Manjistha Banerji; Steven Martin; Sonalde Desai (2008). "Is Education Associated with a Transition towards Autonomy in Partner Choice? A Case Study of India" (PDF). University of Maryland & NCAER. Archived from the original (PDF) on 2016-03-03. Retrieved 2017-01-01.
15. ^ David Pilling (June 6, 2014) Review – 'India in Love', by Ira Trivedi; 'Leftover Women', by Leta Hong Archived 2014-09-28 at the Wayback Machine The Financial Times
16. ^ "The recession-proof Big Fast Indian Wedding just got more corporatised". cnbctv18.com. 5 October 2018. Retrieved 2019-08-27.
17. ^ Pandit, Virendra (7 April 2017). "Big fat Indian wedding market has foreign 'suitor' Zankyou lining up". @businessline. Retrieved 2019-08-27.
18. ^ Urs, Anil (22 April 2019). "Destination wedding industry to reach market size of Rs 45,000 crore by 2019". @businessline. Retrieved 2019-08-27.
19. ^ "The Big Fat Wedding Industry in India: Recap of 2015 and outlook for 2016". Business Insider. Retrieved 2019-08-27.
20. ^ "Indian celebs who married outside India". 26 August 2019.
21. ^ Behrawala, Krutika (2019-08-02). "Interactive rituals, GIF corners and VR: the story of 2019's small Indian weddings". The Hindu. ISSN 0971-751X. Retrieved 2019-08-27.
22. ^ "A 34-year-old Indian photographer's income has grown over 42 times in 15 years — thanks to big, fat Indian weddings". Business Insider. Retrieved 2019-08-27.
23. ^ "One wedding photo shoot..Make it viral please! - Times of India". The Times of India. Retrieved 2019-08-27.