

CHAPTER - I

I N T R O D U C T I O N

The institution of marriage is as old as Adam. It involves most complex human relationship and a good many writers from all over the world have all written about it. This institution; still, attracts students, poets, philosophers and even film producers are not an exception. It is no wonder, if Sociologists, Anthropologists, Psychologists and Social Psychologists pay attention to it with a scientific approach.

Marriage is a corner stone of society and as such is a very necessary part of social system. It controls and regulates the sexual behaviour of human beings, and hence, occupies a unique place in the society.

Dr.Radhakrishnan writes :

"Marriage is not a mere convention but an implicit condition of human society..... It is an adjustment between the biological purposes of nature and the sociological purposes of man".

As mentioned earlier, the institution of marriage is as old as human society itself and has taken different forms in various societies from time to time. The main sources of our knowledge regarding the institution of marriage are legends of ancient literature which provide us some information about the development of marriage. However, there are few theories put forward by sociologists

and anthropologists regarding its various forms, modes and conditions in different areas and societies. A group of anthropologists like Morgan, Bachofen ^{and others} held the view at one time that an original state of promiscuity preceded the institution of marriage. They ranged the various forms of marriage as found today among diverse races of the world into evolutionary series and proclaimed that the marriage of civilized man has passed through all of them. Monogamy has become the order of the day.

Criticising this evolutionary theory, Malinowski (1950 : 940-950) has observed : "The different forms of marriages are not stages in an evolutionary series, as Bachofen, Spencer and others would make us believe, but marriage is fundamentally one and its variations are determined by the type of community, its political and economic order and the character of its material culture".

The institution of marriage is widespread and has an important role to play in human society. The institution of marriage, though often termed as a 'Social Institution' has a number of aspects, viz., ethical and ideological, religious, legal, economic etc; and hence it is significant.

Marriage, being predominantly a social institution, one has to take into consideration its social aspects.

Westermarck (1926) defines marriage "as a union between two or more partners, which is more or less durable, which is accompanied by some formality, which is recognized by some custom or law, and which gives rise to certain rights and duties both in the case of parties entering the union and in the case of children born out of it".

The institution of marriage has also ethical and ideological aspects. Lowie, Robert (1951 : 154) has emphasized this particular aspect. He writes :

"The future of marriage will be shaped not merely by utilitarianism but largely on the basis of remnant ideologies.... A reversal of the present attitudes to marriage is wholly conceivable; whether or not it shall occur depends on the potency of appeals involving the older ideologies".

Marriage has legal aspects too. Russell (1958 : 68) says, "Marriage differs of course, from other sex relations by the fact that it is a legal institution. It is also in most communities a religious institution, but it is the legal aspect which is essential" Dr. Kapadia (1972 : 168) has pointed out the religious aspects of marriage. He says, "there are certain rites which must be performed for marriage to be complete". Further

Dr.Kapadia adds :

" They are necessary for marriage to be complete, because when they or any of them are not properly performed, the marriage may be legally questioned. It is considered sacred because it is said to be complete only on the performance of the sacred rites accompanied by the sacred formula".

The fundamental basis of marriage is defined as " a personal association between a man and a woman and a biological relationship for mating and re-production. Biologically, the object of marriage is not to legalise a sexual union, but rather to ensure the survival of the species and of the race. From this point of view, marriage is not merely a sexual relationship, but a parental association. It is the union of a male and a female for production and care of offspring, and re-production is, therefore, another fundamental object or purpose of marriage" (Stone & Stone 1939 : 18).

'Vivah' is a Sanskrit substitute term widely, popularly known for marriage. Meaning of Vivah refers mainly to the ceremony of "carrying away" the bride to the house of bridegroom. (Vivah = to carry) But the term has long since come to be applied to the whole of wedlock ceremony" (Prabhu : 1961 : 149).

Contemporary Trends in Marriage :

Society is never static. In the best sense of the term it is most dynamic. Especially the rise of industrialization, Urbanization, along with widespread means of communication and transport, increasing propaganda of education, economic development and values like liberty, fraternity and equality etc. have contributed significantly towards the changing norms and values associated with marriage and family life. Traditional marriage, though ideal, is becoming dysfunctional in the evolutionary order.

The twentieth century has brought profound changes in marriage values emphasizing, personality compatibility and emotional satisfaction. Under these circumstances whole institution of marriage has undergone a change. To Hindus, Dr. Kapadia (1972 : 169) writes : "Marriage was a social duty towards the family and community, and there was little idea of individual interest".

Where as according to contemporary western point of view, "Marriage is a social contract which is essential for the fulfilment of personal needs and happiness".

Whatever views are accepted, for understanding changing attitude towards marriage, it is essential to know the change in the attitude towards some of the important issues related to marriage like, type of marriage, age at

marriage, expectations regarding prospective spouses, dowry, religiosity, preparations before marriage, endogamy etc.

Sociologists and Anthropologists classify marriage on the basis of parties entering into marriage such as

- 1) Group Marriage
- 2) Polyandry
- 3) Polygamy and
- 4) Monogamy

However, in modern times, one more classification can be drawn on the basis of type of marriage settlement, i.e. (1) Arranged Marriage (2) Love Marriage.

Arranged Marriage :

It is an age old method of settlement of marriage which had its roots in child marriage. Here parents of a bridegroom or bride arrange it after having discussed the matter with the opposite party. Here parents are considered as whole and sole and the competent authority to arrange the marriage of their wards, taking into consideration his likes or dislikes, temperament etc. In this type of marriage, the bride or the groom had no voice. But surprisingly such marriages are successful in India.

Love Marriage :

The number of love marriages, that are taking place, is increasing. Due to the spread of education, means of transportation, economic independence of woman and increasing age at marriage, traditional segregation of male and female is not exclusively possible. On the contrary, their chances of coming together have increased, which has given rise to individual to select his or her own partner of his or her choice. Free and liberal attitude has helped to get acquainted with opposite sex which ultimately turns into love and courtship culminating finally into marriage. (It is generally understood that, sexual attraction between the parties is the basis of such marriage. But it is not so,) experts like Terman (1939) after having studied 792 couples concluded that :

"In marital happiness the sex factor is relatively unimportant, compared with other factors like personal temperament, family background, age, education, occupation, parental approval etc."

Now a days, marital alliances are taking different forms. Commercial services are widely available. "Marriage Counsel Bureaus" or "Post-Introduction Marriage Centres" or "Bridegroom Information Centres", etc. are coming up in the cities like Poona and Bombay. Some of the social service

Institutions arrange some sort of 'Meet togethers' for prospective grooms and brides. The present researcher had the opportunity to be present at such 'Meet togethers'. Its procedure was simple. A group of prospective brides and grooms was formed. An individual had to introduce himself, followed by stating his expectations regarding his or her would be life partner. The self-introduction went on in the following style :

"I am Dr.Ranade. I am M.D. I am Chitpawan, resident of Poona and belong to Atri gotra. I would prefer a Chitpawan girl with medical qualifications".

"I am Mr.Patil. I am B.E.Mech. drawing Rs.1,900/- a month. I would prefer a Maratha girl with minimum S.S.C." and so on.

Here, the researcher could observe, everybody, may be a girl or a boy, may be highly educated, even one who had been abroad, was insisting upon his or her own caste. Then and there itself the present researcher could realize that higher education has not led to any change as far as endogamous nature of caste is concerned. If this is the case with the people in the city like Poona, then what would be the case with the people in the mofussil areas? The researcher, thus undertook a study with a view to analyse the changes that are taking place in the issues

related to marriage like caste, religiosity, socio-economic level of family, type of marriage preferred, expectations regarding dowry and physical features of prospective spouses etc. in the rural setting.

A Resume of earlier literature :

A number of studies have been carried out in this sphere. However, earlier studies have contributed to the study of woman's attitude towards marriage in the changing pattern of society and have shown that they have considerably changed, especially with regard to marriage and family (Hate 1930, 1946 & 1969). Merchant's study which he carried out during 1930-33 on young boys, young girls and middle aged persons with regard to the marriage and family, clearly indicate that even at that time the "Personal conception of Marriage" was gaining ground among the young girls replacing the conception that marriage was a sacrament.

Hate's study of the educated women in the Bombay city (1930) and Desai's (1945) study of "Women in Modern Gujrathi life" also, reveal the weakening of the old pillars of Hindu Society; sacramental marriage, and the strengthening of the concept of contractual marriage. Kapadia's studies of 1954, 1955, 1958 also reveal the same trend.

In a study of university students undertaken in 1957-58, it was observed that almost all of them considered marriage as a personal affair between the two individuals, and their voice should prevail (Shah 1962 : 132).

In a study of Japanese youth carried out almost at the same, it was found that 75 percent of the university girls in Japan considered "love match" to be an ideal method in the choice of a husband or wife (Baber 1958 : 64).

Mathew in her study (1966) of the college students towards marriage also found that 64 percent of the girl students preferred marriage arranged by the parents with the whole hearted approval of the boy and the girl.

Krishnamurthy in his study (1970) found that 82 percent of the students pursuing higher education in Andhra University wanted their own involvement along with the parents in the process of mate selection.

Promilla Kapur (1973) found that the highest increase had been among those women who preferred arranged marriage with the whole hearted consent of the prospective marriage partners. Educated working women not only disapproved of purely arranged marriage but a majority of them also preferred love marriage.

From the above resume of literature, it appears that, researchers have mainly concentrated on women from urban setting. These studies focussed some particular aspects like, concept of marriage, age at marriage, types of marriage, inter-caste, inter-religious and even inter-provincial marriages.

Probably the present research work is one of the first of its kind, studying unmarried graduates in the rural setting, with regard to changing attitude towards marriage, especially, caste, occupation, religion, socio-economic level of family, education, hobbies, religious beliefs in marriage, physical characteristics of prospective spouses, dowry and so on. The study endeavours to assess the extent to which unmarried graduates in the rural setting, are able to think about their own marriages and find out solutions in relieving the strains and stresses caused by the traditional rural set-up.

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