

## **CHAPTER - V**

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### **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

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The present chapter is devoted to summarize the major findings noted in earlier chapters.

The present study deals with the intercaste marriages; it attempts to highlight the social background of marital partners and marriage related experiences which they encountered.

Marriage is a complex of regulations and customs which defines the rights and responsibilities of husband and wife, which respect to each other, their offsprings, relatives and entire community. The important features of the institution of marriage are as under :

- 1) Marriage is a socially sanctioned union.
- 2) It is a relatively permanent sexual union.
- 3) It is a pattern of recognized usages governing establishment and continuance of the family.
- 4) It refers to the complex of regulations and customs, which defines the rights and responsibilities of husband and wife.
- 5) It is a social arrangement by which a child is given a legitimate position in the society.
- 6) It connects together a wider range of kinspeople.

The two basic forms of marriage are 'monogamy' and 'polygamy'. Polygamy is a term covering both 'polygamy' (the

institution of marriage that permits a man to have two or more wives at the same time ) and ' polyandry ' ( the institution that permits a woman to have more than one husband at the same time.

The institution of marriage performs many functions in the human society. The main function of marriage is sexual gratification. Begetting of children is considered another function of marriage. The three basic functions reproduction, socialization and social control are found universally within marriage.

The institution of marriage was well established in the Rigveda. Not only was marriage well established in the Vedic age, but it was also regarded as a social and religious duty and necessity. During the Rigvedic period monogamy was the marriage de rigueur, the polygamy was fast coming into prevalence. By the beginning of the Brahmanical period, polygamy became widely prevalent. The ancient Hindu law - givers refer to the eight forms of marriage, Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, Asura, Gandhawa, Rakshasa, Paisacha.

Hindu marriage is considered as a sacrament. The aims of Hindu marriage are dharma, praja and rati. There are certain rites which must be performed for marriage to be complete. The main rites are : Homa, Panigrahana, and Saptapadi.

The Hindus have both endogamous and exogamous rules limiting the selection of a mate. The exogamy of the Hindus has two aspects,

The first, sapinda exogamy, prohibits marriage between persons related to each other within certain generations on the father's and the mother's side. The other, gotra, the rule of gotra exogamy is given in the Grahsutras and its first appearance is consequently postulated in the period of Brahmanas.

Marriage institution in India has been fundamentally informed by Hindu ethos ordaining rigid social stratification through caste endogamy and ascriptive values. However Indian society is witnessing rapid social changes. Social reforms, legislation, industrialization, urbanization, spread of education, modern values like democracy, equality, freedom etc. have attacked the traditional social structure based on caste and as a result, in the contemporary India, one notices weakening of the barriers between the castes which is indicated by the instances of intercaste marriages and the changing attitude of the today's youth towards the intercaste marriages.

The Second Chapter has dealt with the review of literature. A brief review of available and accessible empirical studies on intercaste marriages is attempted in this chapter. The studies carried out by scholars like Kannan, Deshpande, Das,

Chatterjee, Ross, Chakrabarti, Ramu, Awasthi, Reddy and Rajanna, Chaudhary, Anant have been reviewed. The review of literature indicated that, there is a need to carry out empirical studies of intercaste marriages. It is one of the least attended areas of empirical research.

The Third Chapter deals with the methodological aspects of the study. The objectives of the present study were as follows:

- 1) To study the socio-personal background of the respondents.
- 2) To study the factors/circumstances leading to intercaste marriages.
- 3) To study the problems faced by the marital (intercaste) partners after selection of their mate but before their marriage.
- 4) To study the problems being faced by married (intercaste) couples and their family members.

The study was confined to the 23 couples who had contracted intercaste marriages. All the respondent couples were from Kolhapur District of Maharashtra State. Keeping in view the objectives of the study, interview schedule was prepared for collecting the relevant data. Each spouse was interviewed separately. The data for the present study were collected during October 1993 and April 1994. Thus the present study is based on the interview data obtained from 23 couples from Kolhapur District (Maharashtra) who had contracted intercaste marriages.

(In The Fourth Chapter, in order to understand the phenomenon of intercaste marriage, an attempt is made to analyse the data in terms of socio-prsonal background of the respondents who had accepted partners outside their caste, the situations/circumstances which have been directly or indirectly responsible for providing an opportunity to come together and finally get married and marriage related experinces of these respondent couples.)

The data revealed that 13 different castes are represented in the sample and that the members of different castes have deviated from the traditional norm of endogamy irrespective of their traditional high or low ritual status. Maratha males and Brahmin females were numerically dominant among respondents who came out for intercaste marriages. Among the ritually low castes, Mahar males had taken lead. A close observation of the caste combinations revealed that Maratha males have shown an inclination to marry with females belonging to ritually higher or medium castes (Brahmin, Sonar, and Vani) and the instances of those married with members of castes having low ritual status such as Mahars, Mangs, Chambhar, are absent. However, Maratha males have contracted marriages with females from castes such as Shimpi, Khatik, Bhangi. As regards the females, though Brahmin females have shown a tendency to marry with Maratha males, they have contracted marriages with males belonging to castes having ritually low status such as Dhanagar, Mang, Mahar and Chambhar. An examination of data of the present study revealed that, there were 9 ' Anuloma ' where as 14 ' Pratiloma'

marriages. This implies that the patriarchal norm regulating women's social and sexual behaviour is becoming more and weaker.

An incidence of intercaste marriage was witnessed when an over whelming majority of the respondent males and females had crossed the legally permissible age for marriages. Thus, it can be said that the intercaste marriages generally take place at the intercaste marriages generally take place at the fairly advanced age. The higher education seems to be a factor in marital decision making in favour of contracting intercaste marriages and ignoring the caste differences. The educational attainments of males were slightly higher than the females. The data revealed that, majority of the respondents were employed when they contracted intercaste marriages. The study also supported the general observation that economic independence at the time of marriage is a conducive factor for taking a decision in favour of intercaste marriage, especially when the couple is likely to lose the social and economic support base of their natal families. The fairly advanced age, higher education and economic independence have tended to be a set of attributes needed for incidence of intercaste marriages.)

Another important finding of the present study is that, the phenomenon of intercaste marriages is not confined only to urban areas. The fact that, many of the couples of the present study are from the rural areas and they are still living in rural areas suggests

that the traditional caste-ridden social structure of rural India is slowly becoming flexible and permissible to absorb the members violating an important norm such as caste endogamy. There were 9 couples involving both the partners from rural areas whereas only 3 couples involving both the partners from urban areas and out of the rest, there were 10 couples involving rural husband and urban wife and only one couple involving urban husband rural wife. Thus the data of the present study brought out very clearly that intercaste marriages are taking place in rural areas also.

The educational background of the respondent's parents was high with 71.74 per cent having been literate and the rest being illiterate. The data suggests that having literate parents is a conducive factor for the instances of intercaste marriages to take place. Majority of the couples had no family history of having earlier incidence of intercaste marriage and those who had, had not contributed positively to the smooth occurrence of second instance of intercaste marriage in the same family.

(The present study brought out very clearly that the incidence of premarital love is a predominant factor eventually leading to intercaste marriages. Out of 23 cases, 22 couples had pre-marital love which led them to contract intercaste marriages.)



What are the factors/circumstance or fields of first contact which indirectly promote intercaste marriages ? Residential propinquity, common work place, social visits, studying together, teacher student relationship, casual contacts due to office work, role played by common friends these were the factors/circumstances which gave an opportunity to initially come together and develop intimate relationship, so intimate which led the respondents to tie themselves together even by violating the marital norm of caste endogamy.

The extent of societal acceptance of the intercaste marriages can be understood from the study of reaction of the natal families. The reaction of the parents reflects to a certain extent the reaction of the society and therefore the approval or disapproval of the society can be better understood in the background of the reaction of the parents. When enquired about the problems faced by the respondent couples after their decision to contract intercaste marriage but before actual marriage, an over whelming majority of the respondents reported that they did not disclose their decision to marry with the person outside their caste till the marriage actually took place. Therefore, they added, there was no question of parental disapproval of such marriages, before actual marriage. Only 3 couples (both the males and females i.e. 6 respondents) disclosed their decision before marriage.

The three couples who disclosed their decision to marry with a person outside the caste invited strong opposition from natal families. This clearly suggests that, though intercaste marriages are taking place, societal attitude towards such marriages is not still positive. Societal acceptance / rejection of such marriages can be inferred from the fact that, as many as 20 couples did not disclose their decision to marry outside the caste to their parents. Why they did so ? The answer is very simple. They anticipated possible disapproval/resistance to such marriages from their parents. This coupled with the actual experiences of those who disclosed their decision to marry outside the caste to their parents, strongly suggests that intercaste marriages are not still well-coming by the society.

As already noted, 20 couples did not disclose their decision to marry outside the caste to their parents. After marriage, they have stayed away from the parental family for the period ranging from 15 days to 30 days. Mean while, they arranged to send messages to their natal families informing about their marriage. When the couples returned to the husband's natal family, after initial reluctance, parents had reportedly accommodated them in the family. The 3 cases who experienced parental disapproval before marriage, were accepted in the natal families after few months. (All the 23 couples reported that, by now they have been keeping contacts with their natal families. For these marriages to take place, social support mainly came from

respondents' friends and in few cases, from distant relatives. This suggests that, societal attitude towards intercaste marriages is becoming more and more permissive.

Although a number of intercaste marriages is increasing day-by-day, it is yet to become an institutionalized form of marriage in Hindu society. Though, the post-independent changing socio-cultural environment is in favour of intercaste marriage, it will take its own time to become perfectly institutionalized in the society.

Barring two, all other couples reported that they have no difficulties due to intercaste marriage and that they are satisfied in their marital life. They do not feel that their decision to contract intercaste marriage was any way wrong. The respondents were not worried about the marriages of their children and told that they will give full freedom to them select their life partners. They also reported that the number of intercaste marriages is increasing day by day.

There are many factors responsible for the promotion of intercaste marriages. The efforts made by the social reformers to eradicate caste system, various laws enacted during British India and Independent India, spread of modern education, especially women's education, the forces like industrialization and urbanization—all have contributed to the weakening of the caste barriers and have promoted intercaste marriages.

It may be that, the urban-industrial setting is highly conducive for intercaste marriages. However, (the present study brought out very clearly that the phenomenon of intercaste marriages is not confined to only urban-industrial centres; suggesting that the caste ridden rural social structure is undergoing transformation. The increasing incidence of intercaste marriages in rural areas indicates changes in norms and values relating to the institution of marriage.) This implies that the urban-industrial setting is not a necessary condition for the intercaste marriages to take place.

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