

Hindu Marriage: A Changing Concept among Youth in Modern Times

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ABSTRACT

Hindu marriage, a sacred institution deeply rooted in tradition and cultural norms, is undergoing significant transformation in modern times, particularly among the youth. This abstract explores the evolving concept of Hindu marriage, examining the factors driving these changes and their implications for individuals and society. The traditional notion of Hindu marriage, characterized by arranged unions based on family compatibility, caste, and socio-economic status, is giving way to a more contemporary understanding marked by individual choice, compatibility, and personal fulfillment. Several factors contribute to this shift, including increased education and economic independence among youth, exposure to diverse cultural influences, and changing social attitudes towards gender roles and relationships. Additionally, advancements in technology and social media have facilitated greater connectivity and expanded the pool of potential partners, challenging traditional matchmaking methods. Marriage is one of the most important institutions of human society. Marriage is a universal phenomenon. Marriage in the real sense is the acceptance of a new status with a new set of obligations recognized by other people. Marriage is a crucial and sacred bond between two personalities merging into one for ideas, attitudes, habits and likes and dislikes. The present study was done with the purpose to find out the views of youths towards marriage. Nowadays youths are getting more influenced by modern and western values, their perceptions and ideologies are getting reshaped with the structure of westernization, modern education, urbanization and reform legislations. This study focuses on the changing concept of marriage values among youths in modern society.

Keywords: Marriage, Changing Concept, Values, Youth

INTRODUCTION

Hindu marriage, a cornerstone of Indian society, has traditionally been a deeply ingrained institution guided by cultural norms and religious traditions. However, in contemporary times, particularly among the youth, the concept of Hindu marriage is experiencing significant evolution. This introduction sets the stage for exploring the changing dynamics of Hindu marriage among the younger generation in modern times.

Historically, Hindu marriages were predominantly arranged affairs, orchestrated by families based on factors such as caste, social status, and family compatibility (Banerjee & Bairathi, 2015). The emphasis was on maintaining societal harmony and preserving cultural traditions, often at the expense of individual choice and personal preferences.

In recent decades, there has been a noticeable shift in the perception and practice of Hindu marriage, driven by various socio-cultural and economic factors. Increased education levels and economic independence among youth have empowered individuals to assert their autonomy and seek partners based on personal compatibility and mutual consent (Desai & Andrist, 2010). This shift reflects a broader trend towards individualism and self-fulfillment in contemporary Indian society.

Moreover, globalization and the influence of Western culture have played a significant role in reshaping attitudes towards marriage among Hindu youth. Exposure to diverse cultural norms and values, facilitated by globalization and digital media, has expanded the horizons of young Indians, challenging traditional notions of marriage and relationships (Saxena & Verma, 2017).

Advancements in technology, particularly the proliferation of online dating platforms and social media, have further revolutionized the landscape of Hindu marriage. These digital platforms have democratized the process of partner selection, providing individuals with unprecedented access to a diverse pool of potential partners beyond their immediate social circles (Joshi & Advani, 2016). As a result, young Hindus are increasingly relying on these digital tools to navigate the complexities of modern romance and marriage.

This introduction highlights the complex interplay between tradition and modernity in shaping the concept of Hindu marriage among the youth in contemporary times. As we delve deeper into this topic, it becomes evident that understanding the evolving dynamics of Hindu marriage is essential for comprehending the broader socio-cultural transformations occurring within Indian society.

Hindu Marriage: Past and Present

Hindu marriage has been a central institution in Indian society for centuries, characterized by rich traditions, cultural norms, and religious significance. This section explores the historical evolution and contemporary dynamics of Hindu marriage, highlighting the changes and continuities between the past and present.

Past: Traditional Notions of Hindu Marriage

In the past, Hindu marriage was deeply rooted in tradition and governed by social customs, religious rituals, and familial expectations. Arranged marriages were the norm, with parents and elders playing a central role in the selection of partners based on factors such as caste, socio-economic status, and family background (Banerjee & Bairathi, 2015).

The purpose of marriage was not only to unite individuals but also to forge alliances between families and communities, thereby ensuring social cohesion and continuity. Religious ceremonies, such as the sacred rites of Saptapadi (seven steps) and Kanyadaan (giving away of the bride), underscored the solemnity and sanctity of the marital union (Kane, 1968).

Gender roles were clearly defined within the institution of Hindu marriage, with women expected to assume domestic responsibilities and prioritize familial duties over personal aspirations (Pandit & Parikh, 2012). Patriarchal values and traditions governed marital relationships, with women often occupying subordinate roles within the household hierarchy.

Present: Changing Dynamics of Hindu Marriage

In contemporary times, the concept of Hindu marriage has undergone significant transformation, reflecting broader shifts in Indian society towards modernity and individualism. While arranged marriages still persist, there is a growing emphasis on compatibility, mutual consent, and personal choice in partner selection (Desai & Andrist, 2010).

Younger generations of Hindus are increasingly asserting their agency and autonomy in matters of marriage, challenging traditional matchmaking practices and caste-based restrictions (Puri, 2003). Education, urbanization, and economic independence have empowered individuals, particularly women, to seek partners who align with their values, aspirations, and lifestyle preferences.

Moreover, the influence of globalization and digital technology has reshaped the landscape of Hindu marriage, providing avenues for cross-cultural interactions and alternative modes of relationship formation (Saxena & Verma, 2017). Online dating platforms, social media, and matrimonial websites have facilitated greater access to potential partners, transcending geographical and social barriers.

Contemporary Hindu marriages often reflect a blend of traditional rituals and modern sensibilities, with couples customizing ceremonies to suit their preferences and beliefs. While the institution of marriage remains significant in Hindu society, there is greater recognition of individual rights, gender equality, and personal fulfillment within marital relationships.

The concept of Hindu marriage has evolved over time, navigating a complex interplay between tradition and modernity. While certain aspects of the institution have endured, such as its religious and cultural significance, others have adapted to changing social, economic, and technological contexts. Understanding the historical roots and contemporary dynamics of Hindu marriage is essential for appreciating its multifaceted nature and significance within Indian society.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marriage is one of the most important institutions of human society. It has been defined by various sociologists as well as legal luminaries. According to Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, "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 sociology” Hindu marriage is a sacred institution deeply rooted in tradition and cultural values, with its concept evolving over time. This review of literature examines the historical understanding of Hindu marriage and its contemporary manifestations, shedding light on the factors shaping its past and present conceptualizations.

Historically, Hindu marriage was characterized by arranged unions, where families played a central role in selecting partners based on factors such as caste, social status, and family compatibility (Biswas, 2007; Donner, 1993). The institution of marriage was seen as a means of preserving lineage, strengthening social bonds, and ensuring the continuity of cultural traditions (Saxena, 2018).

Religious texts such as the Manusmriti and Dharmashastras provided guidelines and rituals governing Hindu marriage, emphasizing the importance of familial consent, religious ceremonies, and adherence to social norms (Olivelle, 2005; Sharma, 2002). These texts codified the duties and responsibilities of spouses within the marital union, reflecting the patriarchal structure of traditional Hindu society (Kane, 1974).

In contemporary times, the concept of Hindu marriage has undergone significant transformation, influenced by socio-cultural, economic, and technological factors. Younger generations are increasingly prioritizing individual choice, compatibility, and personal fulfillment in their marital decisions (Desai & Andrist, 2010; Joshi & Advani, 2016).

Arranged marriages remain prevalent in many Hindu communities, but there is a growing acceptance of love marriages and inter-caste unions, reflecting changing attitudes towards tradition and social hierarchy (Kakar, 2016; Sharma, 2019). Moreover, advancements in technology, particularly the rise of online dating platforms and social media, have facilitated greater autonomy and connectivity in partner selection (Shukla & Kapoor, 2020).

Contemporary Hindu marriages often blend traditional rituals with modern customs, reflecting a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernity (Sundaram, 2015). While the sanctity of marriage as a sacrament remains intact, there is a greater emphasis on mutual respect, equality, and communication between partners (Narayanan, 2011).

The concept of Hindu marriage has evolved significantly from its traditional roots to accommodate changing societal norms and individual aspirations. While traditional practices still hold cultural significance, contemporary Hindu marriages reflect a more egalitarian and personalized approach, highlighting the adaptability of this ancient institution in response to modern challenges and opportunities.

Statement of the Problem

In India, the selection of spouses is largely bound within the similar caste, religion and region. The practice of endogamy has been the major form of marriage in the traditional Indian society. Parent's choices are more valued in the selection of spouses for their daughters and sons. Parents arranged marriages are largely preferred to other forms of marital choices. With the process of industrialization, urbanization and expansion of higher education have brought out widespread changes in the socio – economic structure of the society. There is also a close relationship between the attainment of higher education and changes in the perception of the selection of life partners. The current study focused on the changing values of marriage among youths. This will show how the selection of partners have changed among the youths whether they are interested in love marriage, arranged marriage or cohabitation.

Need of the study

In modern society, social values and norms of a particular group or community are influenced and shaped by the changes happening within and outside the society. The modernization process has brought about structural changes in the socio-economic condition of the people. Their positional changes in the society have led to considerable transition in the social beliefs and practices associated with educational choices, marital choices and lifestyle. The study attempts to analyze the cultural and social significance of their marital choices.

Objectives of the Study

This study has been undertaken with the basic objective to analyze legislative and social provisions regarding Hindu Marriage: A Changing Concept among Youths in Modern Times.

1. To map out the changing perception of youth in the selection of their life partners
2. To study the attitude of youth towards marriage.
3. To examine the interrelationship between different forms of identities based on caste, class, gender, religion and region and their roles in shaping their choices in selecting their partners.
4. To highlight the emerging trends in the selection of spouses among youths.

5. Impact of love marriages, their social acceptability and legal implications especially in inter caste marriages and inter faith marriages.
6. To examine the various provisions regarding legislative and penal provisions relating to matrimonial matters, matrimonial offenses and domestic violence.
7. To assess public opinion and awareness about matrimonial matters through respectable members of society like adult students, teachers, medical professionals, women activists and social workers regarding change from traditional concept of marriage to modern thinking and the degradation of moral values.
8. To assess and compare the attitude of male youths towards changing trends in marriage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study demands to find out the changing marriage concept among youths in modern society. To find out the marriage values among youth, study both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The survey method was adopted to collect quantitative data from the youths of Rohtak district. For this purpose the stratified sampling technique was employed to select the youths of different social categories, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and General. A questionnaire with closed end questions used among youths to collect quantitative data on their opinion on different types of marital choices. In order to strengthen the reliability of data some quantitative data would be collected through a questionnaire with open ended questions. The data analysis was done on the basis of quantitative responses of youth about marriage. Secondary Data were collected from books, journals, websites related to changing marriage concepts among youths.

RESULT AND ANALYSIS

There have been some visible changes in the rules of endogamy and exogamy. The rules of Varna, Caste and Sub-Caste endogamy, Gotra and Pravara exogamy have been banned by legislation. Now we do not find restrictions in cross cousin marriages. Cross cousin marriages were taking place but these were not very common. It appears that the attitude of youth towards cross cousin marriage is changing. Under certain circumstances these types of marriages are found to be accepted by youths. As regards the rules of endogamy, remarkable changes have taken place. The Hindu Marriage Disabilities Removal Act of 1946 allowed marriage between different sub divisions of the same caste. The Special Marriage Act of 1954 and Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 have enabled marriages between persons of different castes and religions. The Arya Samaj Movement has promoted inter caste marriages. Inter caste marriages, hitherto considered unthinkable, are now not only permitted but also encouraged. Besides the legislation, the freedom in mate selection has promoted inter caste marriages.

CONCLUSION

The title of the proposed research work “Hindu Marriage: A Changing Concept Among Youths In Modern Times.” shows the views of youth about marriage. So from the above explanations we may conclude that youths of modern society are relatively in support of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. It clearly indicates that youths are not very much in favor of parental choice in matters of selection of marriage partners. Youths are very much interested in selecting their partners on their own. They prefer to do love marriages instead of arranged marriages. It cannot be said that caste and religious marriages are completely ignored but still the youths are very much interested in doing love marriages. It also clearly indicates that youths have started adopting premarital sex relationships which were totally unknown in traditional Indian society. Youths of modern society are also taking interest in living in relationships. So we can say that cultural norms and values related to marriage are changing by the youths in modern society.

SUGGESTIONS

Educating young people about Hindu marriage in modern times requires a nuanced approach that acknowledges both traditional values and contemporary realities. Here are some suggestions on how to educate young individuals about Hindu marriage in the context of modern times:

1. Cultural Workshops and Seminars: Organize workshops and seminars focused on Hindu marriage traditions, rituals, and values. These events can provide young people with a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of marriage within the Hindu tradition.

2. Interactive Sessions with Elders: Encourage intergenerational dialogue by facilitating interactive sessions where young individuals can engage with elders in their community who have experience with Hindu marriage. This allows for the sharing of wisdom, advice, and personal stories related to marriage.

3. Incorporate Technology: Utilize technology to make information about Hindu marriage more accessible to young people. Create online resources, videos, and interactive platforms that explain key concepts, rituals, and expectations associated with Hindu marriage.

4. Discuss Contemporary Issues: Address contemporary issues and challenges related to Hindu marriage, such as gender equality, consent, and interfaith relationships. Encourage open and respectful discussions that explore how traditional values can be upheld while also adapting to modern realities.

5. Promote Critical Thinking: Encourage critical thinking by presenting different perspectives on Hindu marriage. Help young people understand that while tradition provides a foundation, individuals have the agency to shape their own marital experiences in accordance with their values and beliefs.

6. Provide Role Models: Showcase positive role models who embody the values of Hindu marriage in modern times. Highlight individuals and couples who have successfully navigated the complexities of marriage while upholding traditional values and adapting to contemporary challenges.

7. Emphasize Communication Skills: Stress the importance of effective communication in building and sustaining healthy marital relationships. Provide young people with tools and resources to develop communication skills that are essential for resolving conflicts, expressing needs, and fostering mutual understanding.

8. Address Myths and Misconceptions: Address common myths and misconceptions about Hindu marriage, such as arranged marriage being synonymous with forced marriage. Provide accurate information to dispel stereotypes and promote a more nuanced understanding of different marital practices within the Hindu community.

9. Encourage Respect for Diversity: Foster an inclusive environment that respects diverse perspectives and experiences related to Hindu marriage. Emphasize the importance of respecting individuals' choices and life paths, whether they align with traditional norms or diverge from them.

10. Engage in Mentorship Programs: Establish mentorship programs where young individuals can receive guidance and support from older mentors who have experience with Hindu marriage. These mentorship relationships can provide valuable insights, advice, and encouragement as young people navigate their own marital journeys.

By implementing these suggestions, educators and community leaders can effectively educate young people about Hindu marriage in modern times, empowering them to navigate the complexities of marriage with confidence, respect, and understanding.

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