A Review on Marriage in the Modern Indian Society

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Abstract: "Marriages are made in heaven" is a popular saying in Indian Culture. In India, marriages are the colourful celebration of blend of culture, tradition and love. In the contemporary Indian society, marriages have been experiencing tremendous changes and are known for their grandeur, vibrant colours and elaborate ceremonies.

Index-Terms: Contemporary marriage system – modern society – love marriages – arranged marriages – destination marriages – Hindu Marriage Act – Special Marriage Act – Prohibition Child Marriage Act – Sustainable celebrations

I. INTRODUCTION

It's a well-known fact that marriage is a global institution that spans cultures and geographies, but Indian marriages are distinct and alluring phenomena. With rich history, diverse cultures and complex social dynamics, marriages in India are vibrant and intricate part of the country's social fabric.

The Latin word "matrimonium" is the root word for "marriage" that has evolved from the old English word "mariage". The Latin term "matrimonium" meaning "union of two people" is a combination of "mater" (mother) and "monium" (duty or service).

II. HISTORY OF MARRIAGES IN INDIA

In ancient India, the term "vivaha" or "paanigrahanam" was the concept of marriage in the Rigveda, one of the oldest Hindu scriptures, dating back to around 1500 BCE. Around 200 CE, the ancient Hindu lawgiver, Manu, wrote about marriage in his book "Manusmriti" In that book, Manu described eight forms of marriage. But only five are approved which includes "Brahma" (union of two souls), "Daiva" (union by divine will), and "Gandharva" (union of mutual love).

In the medieval period, Islamic marriage, 'nikah' became prevalent with the arrival of Islam in India. The Muslim law and customs related to marriage (co-existed with the existing Hindu and other regional traditions) have been introduced by the Muslim rulers and scholars.

During the British Colonial era in India, the standardized marriage laws, such as the Hindu Marriage Act (1955) and the Special Marriage Act (1954) are enacted by the Indian government. These laws are enacted to recognize marriage as a legal contract between two individuals, regardless of their religion or caste.

Today the term 'marriage' is widely used including arranged marriages, love marriages, interfaith marriages, and same-sex marriages (which are not yet legally recognized but are gaining social acceptance).

In olden days, marriage was a social prescription but now it has become choice-based on the needs of each person. To satisfy our physical needs, emotional needs, psychological needs, social and economic needs, we get married. But the present system, there is no compulsory.

III.   MARRIAGES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIA

TYPES OF MARRIAGES

The different types of Indian marriages include:

- Arranged Marriages: Parents choose partners for their children, based on factors like caste, social status, and kinship. Now-a-days, matrimonial sites play a vital role in arranged marriages. Though there are pros and cons in this type of marriage, arranged marriages are still prevalent in India.

  In some families, forced marriages under the name of arranged marriages are practiced due to poverty.

- Love Marriages: Individuals choose their own partners, often defying traditional norms. Now-a-days, these marriages are becoming increasingly accepted, especially in urban areas.

- Mixed Marriages: Union between two persons from different religious / castes background.

- Same-Sex Marriages: Now-a-days, these marriages are gaining acceptance as this was made legal in 2018.These marriages are based on the mutual trust and friendship.

- Live-In Relationships: Couples live together in a conjugal relationship without formal marriage. Most of the IT professionals prefer to be live-in-relationship. A judgement has been given recently by the Supreme Court where a man and a woman can live like a husband and wife without the concept of marriage.

- NRI Marriages: One or both of couples are a non-resident Indian.

IV.   REGIONAL VARIATIONS

India with diverse cultures and religions, the wedding customs differ across regions in aspects like rituals, traditions, wedding attire and food:

- North Indian Marriages: These marriages are known for their lavish events with elaborate rituals. These marriages manifest the rich cultural heritage of states like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi.
- South Indian Marriages: These marriages are simple and graceful with emphasis on tradition accompanied by loud classical music, showcasing the culture of states like Tamilnadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Kerala
- East Indian Marriages: These include the wedding rites of West Bengal, Orissa, Assam and other northeastern states of India.
- West Indian Marriages: These weddings include the weddings of Gujarati, Maharashtrian and Marwari making it special with their traditional rites.

V. RITUALS AND CEREMONIES

Indian marriages are known for their elaborate, tremendous, symbolic rituals and ceremonies, including:

- Engagement Ceremony – This occasion is one of the pre-wedding event, which involves the exchange of rings between the bride and groom, symbolizing their formal commitment.
- Mehndi Ceremony – This ritual is usually held at the bride's home, a day or two days before the wedding, which represents beauty, propitious and love in Indian culture.
- Sangeet Ceremony – This ceremony is an exemplary platform for the families of the bride and groom to socialize and jubilate with the feeling of closeness.
- Wedding Ceremony – This ritual marks the beginning of their new chapter as life partners.
- Reception Ceremony – This creates a vibrant atmosphere and venue decorated with flowers, colorful fabrics and ornate decorations, creating a festive ambiance.

As these ceremonies are the memorable moments in the couple's journey, it is often captured through photography and videography. These special memories serve as relished reminders of the events. These ceremonies are involved with music, dance, creating an atmosphere of joy and merriment.

VI. CHALLENGES AND CONTROVERSIES

As marriages are life-long relationship, the challenges and controversies in the Indian marriages are:
Dowry System
Caste System
Domestic Violence
Inter-caste and Inter-religion Marriages
Same-Sex Marriage Legalization
Divorce
Unequal gender roles
Lavish expenditures

VII.   FACTORS LINKED TO MARITAL SUCCESS

AGE: The government of India has raised the minimum legal age for marriage registration for girls to 21. Also, getting married in late 20s and early 30s are with a lower risk of divorce.
EDUCATION AND INCOME: Pursuing higher education and financial independence lead to successful marriage life.
EMOTIONAL MATURITY: Ability to manage emotions
RELATIONSHIP QUALITY: Due to effective communication, life partners exhibit mutual respect
GENDER EQUALITY: Shared goals, rights and opportunities between couples
MARITAL COUNSELLORS: Plays an important role in marital crisis

VIII.   CONCLUSION

In the modern Indian society, the marriage as a social institution is not compulsory and it is not a contract. Many do not marry at all. The purposes of marriage are to establish a family, to regulate sexual life and to provide economic co-operation. Now-a-days, Inter-caste and Inter-religion marriages are prevalent in India as the concept of marriage is influenced by factors like urbanization, industrialization, secularization, present education system, western culture and marriage legislations. The girls of present period are equally getting educated and earning and they need not to live under men or depend on men.

Marriages in India are a beautiful blend of tradition, culture, and love. The concept of marriage was once considered to be one-time event in one's life but that concept has been witnessing tremendous changes. The Hindu Marriage Act, The Special Marriage Act, The Child Marriage Act have played crucial role in the nature of marriage system.

While challenges persist, the institution of marriage remains a vital part of Indian Society, evolving with the times. As India progresses, its marital landscape will continue to mirror the country's diversity, complexity and beauty by corporating traditional and modern practices. Technology is also playing a pivotal role in contemporary marriages in India through matrimonial websites and apps.

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