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Transformation of Marriage Institutions among Urban Youth: A Sociological Analysis in Patna

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Abstract: *This study explores the changing dynamics of marriage among the youth in urban Patna focusing on how modern trends are influencing their choices and beliefs regarding marriage. The study examines how forms of marriage such as love marriage, arranged marriage, inter-caste marriage and late marriage are evolving at present. The research investigates how traditional values continue to play a role in partner selection. The findings show a shift from family-controlled arranged marriages to self-choice and love-based marriages. The study highlights how Hindu marriage practices are changing as youth balance traditional values with modern aspirations.*

Key words: *Changing Marriage Practices , Urban Youth Modernization , Mate Selection , Gender Roles.*

Introduction- Marriage as a fundamental social institution has long been a cornerstone of Indian society shaping familial structures, cultural values and social norms. Marriage as an institution is very old and very well accepted by society. Marriage in India is considered to be a sacred institution and according to Hindu beliefs, marriages are made in heaven. But in the present world the meaning of marriage and relationships have changed drastically.

Marriage is a socially approved and legally sanctioned union, usually between a man and woman that is regulated by laws, rules, customs, beliefs and attitudes that prescribe the rights and duties of the partners and accords status to their offspring, if any. Marriage is an important and universal social institution. It is also a set of cultural mechanisms which ensure the continuation of the family.

Edward Westermarck in his "History of Human Marriage" defines marriage as "the more or less durable connection between male and female lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of offspring."

Functions of Marriage-

1. Regulation of sexual behaviour
2. Legalization of sexual relations
3. Social and religious legitimacy
4. Foundation of family and legal

Marriage in India- In India, marriage is a diverse institution defined by varying religious and legal frameworks. For Hindus, it is historically a samskara (sacred ritual) and religious sacrament aimed at fulfilling spiritual duties (Dharma) and social obligations, though modern laws like the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 have introduced contractual elements like legal consent. In Islam, marriage (Nikah) is primarily a civil contract based on a proposal and acceptance (Ijab and Qubool) in the presence of witnesses. Christians view it as a voluntary, monogamous union often solemnized by a priest under the Christian Marriage Act.

Hindu Marriage- In the Hindu social heritage, marriage has never been looked at from the materialistic point of view. Marriage among the Hindus is a sacrament. The Hindu Marriage though it has undergone vast changes has not totally lost its sanctity.

According to P. H. Prabhu, "Hindu marriage is a Sanskara, and the relations between the marrying parties are of sacramental character and not a contractual nature."

Characteristics of Hindu Marriage

1. Fulfilment of religious rites
2. Stable relation
3. The only sanskar for woman
4. Completion of Dharma
5. Basis of Moksha
6. Fulfilment of Purushartha

Aims of Hindu Marriage- 1. Dharma, 2. Praja (Progeny), 3. Rati (Kama or Pleasure)

Recent changes in Hindu marriage

1. Changes in religious sacramental nature
2. Concept of Rina has lost relevance
3. Rising importance of individualism
4. Reduction in right associated with Hindu marriage



5. Changing gender norms in Hindu marriage
6. Emergence of new trends: Love, inter-caste and widow remarriage
7. Rising age at marriage
8. Influence of technology and matrimonial platforms
9. Decline of dowry in educated urban circles
10. Rise of nuclear family and post marital independence

Factors affecting Hindu marriage

1. Influence of industrialisation
2. Impact of urbanization
3. Role of education
4. Influence of legislations

Does the Hindu marriage continue to be sacred?- Hindu marriage has long been regarded as a sacred sacrament (Sanskara) rather than a mere contract. Classical sociologists have studied this sacred dimension. M.N. Srinivas, in his book “Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India” (1952) highlighted how Hindu marriage is embedded in ritual and caste hierarchy, where notions of purity, pollution and family honour dominate. Similarly, Louis Dumont in “Homo Hierarchicus” (1966), describes Hindu marriage as a manifestation of the hierarchical social order, where endogamy and ritual purity uphold the sacredness of the institution. According to him, marriage is not just about private life but about maintaining the broader social structure.

However with modernisation and urbanisation the sacredness of Hindu marriage is being redefined. In contemporary urban India they shift from collectivist values to individual choice has introduced a more companionate model of marriage. A.M. Shah, in his essay collection “The Family in India: Critical Essays” (1998), noted the rising acceptance of love marriages and the weakening of joint family influence in urban areas. Moreover, Leela Dube, in “Women and Kinship: Comparative Perspectives of Gender in South and South-East Asia” (1997), discussed how female education and employment are challenging patriarchal structures within Hindu marriages. Empirical data supports this sociological transition. The National Family Health Survey-5 (2019-21) shows a significant rise in the age of marriage, particularly among urban women. The India Human Development Survey (2015) reports a rise in inter-caste and inter-religious marriages in urban areas, challenging caste endogamy, while increasing divorce rates among the urban middle class (National Judicial Data Grid, 2021) reflect changing perceptions of marriage.

Thus Hindu marriage continues to hold sacred value particularly in rural and traditional settings. However this sacredness is increasingly being questioned, negotiated and redefined in urban contexts. The institution of Hindu marriage is undergoing transformation- moving from a purely ritualistic practice to one that balances sacred traditions with modern values of freedom, equality and personal choice.

LITERATURE REVIEW-

1. Praveen, Siddhanta & Chaudhuri (2025) - "Determinants of the Spousal Age Gap in India" (based on NSSO 61st & 68th rounds) This national-level research explores how educational levels, income, and urbanization affect spousal age differences. It shows that in urban settings-including places like Patna-the age gap narrows as women's education increases, until a saturation point.

2. Pandey, A. (2021) – “Changing Values and Marriage: A Study of Youth in Eastern India”- Covering parts of Bihar and Jharkhand, this study finds that family reputation, caste prestige, and economic considerations still dominate marriage decisions, but educated youth are increasingly pushing for compatibility and consent-based unions.

3. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5)- Bihar State Data (2019-21)- The report shows a rise in the median age at first marriage, from 15.1 to 17.4 years for women and from 20.1 to 21.9 years for men. However, female educational attainment remains low, with 55 percent literacy and only 28.8 percent of women completing ten or more years of schooling.

OBJECTIVES-

1. To examine the changing preference of youth in urban Patna towards love and arranged marriages. To analyze how education and economic background influence partner selection among urban youth.
3. To explore the attitudes of urban Patna's youth towards inter-caste marriages.
4. To study the impact of dating apps on the shift from traditional matchmaking to self-choice marriages.



5. To investigate how peer influence and social circles affect the marriage choices of young people in urban Patna.

HYPOTHESIS-

H1: A majority of urban youth in Patna prefer love marriages over arranged marriages.

H2: Education and economic stability significantly influences the preference for partner selection among the youth in Patna.

H3: There is growing acceptance of inter-caste marriages among the youth in Patna.

H4: Most youth in Patna agree that women should marry late to focus on education or career.

H5: Peer influence and media exposure significantly impact the marriage perceptions and future marital choices of youth in Patna.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY-

Sampling Method: Convenience sampling method

Universe: All youth aged 18-35 living in urban Patna

Sample Size: 100

Sources of Data Collection method:

Primary Sources: Questionnaire, Interview, Interview Schedule, Observation

Secondary Sources: Research papers, Academic books, Government reports, Journals, News articles, Web articles

LIMITATIONS-

1. Religious Representation Limitation: The study focused only on Hindu participants. So, it does not represent the views of other religious groups.

2. Small Sample Size: Only 100 participants were included. This small number may affect how much the results can be generalized to the larger population.

3. Possibility of Response Bias: Some respondents might not have shared their honest opinions due to hesitation or social pressures related to marriage topics.

RESEARCH DESIGN- Exploratory Research Design

DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA INTERPRETATION:

Area of Research: Magadh Mahila College, Patna College, B. N. College, Patna Science College (Colleges of Patna University), areas of Exhibition Road and Gandhi Maidan.

Problem Statement: To explore the changing dynamics of marriage practices among the youth in urban Patna.

DATA INTERPRETATION:

**TABLE NO. 1
PREFERENCE FOR TYPE OF MARRIAGE**

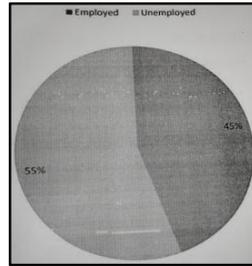
TYPE OF MARRIAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENT	PERCENTAGE
Love Marriage	60	60%
Arranged Marriage	25	25%
Either	10	10%
No Intention to Marry	5	5%
Total	100	100

INTERPRETATION- the data reveals that a significant majority of respondents (60%) prefer love marriage, while only 25% still opt for arranged marriage, a smaller segment (10%) expressed flexibility with either form and 5% conveyed no intention to marry. **This proves Hypothesis 1 as true, that the urban youth of Patna are more inclined towards love marriages.**

**TABLE NO. 2
EDUCATION LEVEL OF RESPONDENTS**

Education Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
School (Up to 12th)	10	10%
Undergraduate	58	58%
Postgraduate	32	32%
Total	100	100

**PIE CHART 1
EMPLOYMENT STATUS**



INTERPRETATION: In the above table, 90% respondents are either undergraduates or postgraduates, indicating that the sample largely consists of highly educated youth. Educational attainment is closely associated with modern and liberal views on marriage, including preference for love marriages, acceptance of inter-caste and inter-faith unions, and prioritizing compatibility over societal norms. On the economic front, only 45% of respondents are employed, their exposure to financial independence and decision-making enhances their autonomy in choosing life partners. Even among the unemployed, the presence of career goals and academic engagement appears to shape progressive attitudes. Together, these two indicators are critical in enabling young individuals to exercise agency in marriage decisions. Also, **Hypothesis 2 is true.**

**TABLE NO. 3
ACCEPTANCE OF INTER-CASTE MARRIAGES**

Acceptance Level	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Not acceptable	8	8%
Slightly acceptable	10	10%
Partially acceptable	12	12%
Acceptable	25	25%
Fully acceptable	45	45%
Total	100	100%

INTERPRETATION- The findings suggest a significant shift in social attitudes: 45% of respondents fully accept inter-caste marriage, and another 25% find it acceptable, totaling over 70% in favor. Only 8% find it unacceptable. This represents a break from the deeply embedded caste consciousness in traditional marriage systems. This data indicates the growing acceptance of inter-caste marriages, and points to the gradual weakening of caste-based barriers in intimate and social decisions. **It also proves Hypothesis 3 true.**

**TABLE NO. 4
OPINIONS ON WHETHER WOMEN IN BIHAR SHOULD DELAY MARRIAGE FOR
EDUCATION/CAREER**

OPINION OF RESPONDENTS	NO. OF RESPONSES	PERCENTAGE
YES	49	49%
NO	5	5%
NOT SURE	46	46%
Total	100	100%

INTERPRETATION: The table shows the opinion of respondents on whether women in Bihar should delay marriage for the sake of education or career. 49% agreed (Yes), 5% disagreed (No), and 46% were not sure. The hypothesis was that most youth in Patna agree that women should marry late to focus on education or career. The hypothesis is proved wrong, as less than half of the respondents support the idea of delaying marriage for education or career. This indicates that while some youth may agree, a significant number are either uncertain or do not agree with the idea. Therefore, **Hypothesis 4 is proved wrong.**

TABLE NO. 5
FACTORS INFLUENCING MARRIAGE VIEWS

INFLUENCING FACTOR	NO.OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Parents	20	20%
Friends/Peers	35	35%
Media/Social Media	25	25%
Education	20	20%
Total	100	100

INTERPRETATION- This table shows that, Friends/Peers (35%) and Media/Social Media (25%) together surpass the influence of Parents (20%). When added to other individual-oriented influences like Education (20%) and, it becomes clear that youth today derive their ideas about marriage from a broad range of social and media channels rather than solely from family traditions. Thus, **Hypothesis 5 is true.**

CONCLUSION- The study concludes that marriage among urban youth in Patna is undergoing a noticeable transition from strictly traditional patterns to more individual-oriented choices. Education, economic independence, urban living, and exposure to media have encouraged delayed marriage, self-choice partnerships, and greater acceptance of inter-caste and inter-faith unions. At the same time, family expectations and cultural norms continue to influence decisions, indicating a coexistence of modern aspirations and traditional values in contemporary marital practices.

SUGGESTIONS-

1. Families should encourage open communication with youth regarding marriage choices and life goals.
2. Educational institutions should promote awareness about equality, consent, and responsible relationships.
3. Parents and society should support delayed marriage, especially for education and career development.
4. Awareness programs can help reduce social stigma around inter-caste and inter-faith marriages.
5. Youth should be guided to make informed marriage decisions while respecting both personal choice and family values.

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