

# MARRIAGE

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Definition and universality; Laws of marriage (endogamy, exogamy, hypergamy, hypogamy, incest taboo); Type of marriage (monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, group marriage). Functions of marriage; Marriage regulations (preferential, prescriptive and proscriptive); Marriage payments (bride wealth and dowry).

## Definition And Universality:

- Anthropologists have been trying to provide a universal definition for the institution of marriage. Early definition emphasizes on the various criteria that are required to constitute a marriage.
- 1. **Edward Westermarck (1921):** "Marriage is a relation of one or more men to one or more women that is recognized by custom or law, and involves certain rights and duties both in the case of the parties entering the union and in the case of the children born of it."
- 2. Bronislaw Malinowski (1930): "Marriage is a contract for the production and maintenance of children."
- 3. **George P. Murdock (1949):** "Marriage is a social group consisting of a man and a woman, and their children, who form a single household, interact and communicate with each other in their respective social roles, and create a common culture."
- 4. **Claude Levi-Strauss (1969):** "Marriage is the exchange of women between groups, creating alliances and social networks."
- 5. **Kathleen Gough (1971):** "Marriage is a relationship established between a woman and one or more other persons, which provides that a child born to the woman under circumstances not prohibited by the rules of the relationship, is accorded full birth-status rights common to normal members of his society or social stratum."
- 6. **E.E. Evans-Pritchard (1951):** "Marriage among the Nuer is the legal union of a man and a woman for establishing the legal fatherhood of a woman's children".
- 7. **Notes and Queries on Anthropology (1951):** "Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are recognized as legitimate offspring of both partners."
- 8. **Prince Peter (1963):** "Marriage is a complex social institution which entails a legal, economic, and sexual union of a man and a woman, and involves certain mutual rights and obligations."

9. Seligman explained marriage as, "a union between a man and a woman such that the children born to the woman are recognized as legitimate offspring of both the parents".
- These definitions underscore the varied understandings of marriage, emphasizing its roles in social structure, legal recognition, economic cooperation, and kinship.
  - According to Westermarck "Marriage is a ritually recognized union between a man and women, that the spouses live together, and that couple have recognized mutual sexual rights." This definition cannot be a universal definition i.e. it cannot be applied to all the societies because there are some societies like Nayers where the couple do not live under the same roof.
  - According to Murdock, "Marriage is a universal institution that involves residential cohabitation, economic cooperation and formation of the nuclear family". Even this definition cannot be applied universally as in cases like Nayers of Kerala, couples do not live under same roof, there is no life long economic cooperation between couple and most important is the absence of the nuclear family structure.
  - Seligman explained marriage as, "a union between a man and a woman such that the children born to the woman are recognized as legitimate offspring of both the parents". It is not a satisfactory definition as according to this polygamy and polyandry (as in Khasa and Todas) cannot be recognized as marriages.
  - Woman marriage existing in Nuer of Africa studied by Evans Pritchard. Here women marriages take place between the same sexes. In this type of marriage system, a woman who lost her husband without a male child assumes the role of her late husband and marries another woman. She procures the services of a male kinsman or a friend to beget children through the woman she married.
  - The children born are treated as the children begotten by the widow's deceased husband.
  - Kathleen Gough defines marriages as a "relationship established between a woman and one or more other persons, which provides that a child born to the woman under the circumstances not prohibited by the rules of relationship is accorded full birth status rights, common to normal members of his society or the social stratum".
  - This definition does not cover some of the societies like the Azande of Sudan which allow a form of marriage based on homosexuality.
  - William N Stephen defines marriage as a "socially legitimate sexual union, begun with public pronouncement, undertaken with the idea of permanence, assumed with more or less explicit marriage contract which spells out reciprocal economic obligation between the spouses and future children".
  - This definition also lacks universal appeal as it ignores many social customs found in the world. For eg. Marriages sometimes do not begin with public pronouncement. Marriage at many place is not permanent- Nayers
  - By this discussion it is very clear that a universal definition to the institution of marriage cannot be successfully provided. The problem is further aggravated also because there are

some societies, where the sexual rights, economic responsibilities and the socialization of the children are not derived from the relationship resulting from marriage but are part of the rights and duties of groups other than of husband and wife.

## Laws of marriage:

1. **Endogamy:** Endogamy or endogamous marriage refers to the marriage within one's own group such as within one's own caste, sub-caste, varna and tribe. Lewis defines endogamy as "The rule that requires a person to marry within a specific social group of which he is a member". There are several types of endogamous marriage such as caste endogamy, sub-caste endogamy, varna endogamy and tribal endogamy.
  - (a) **Caste endogamy:** Caste endogamy is a type of endogamous marriage in which marriage takes place within one's own caste. In a caste based society endogamy is strictly followed. Members of each caste marry within its own caste group.
  - (b) **Sub-caste endogamy:** It is another type of endogamous marriage. In a caste based society each caste is divided into many sub-castes. Like caste, each sub-caste is also an endogamous unit. In sub-caste endogamy marriage takes place within one's sub-caste only.
  - (c) **Varna endogamy:** Varna endogamy is another type of endogamous marriage. In the traditional Indian Society we found the existence of four varnas such as Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Shudra. In varna endogamy the choice of mate is restricted to one's own varna only.
  - (d) **Tribal endogamy:** Tribe is a territorial group. Tribal endogamy is a type of endogamous marriage in which the choice of mate is restricted to one's own tribal group. Like a caste, a tribe is also an endogamous unit.
- Endogamy is followed in order to maintain the purity of the group or to prevent intermixture of biological traits. Factors, such as the policy of separation, virtual geographic separation of people, the desire to keep wealth within the group, religious, racial and cultural differences, sense of superiority or inferiority, etc., are said to be the causes of endogamy.
- Endogamy as a rule of marriage has its own advantages. It contributes to the group unity and solidarity. It keeps women happier within their group. It helps to preserve the property within the group. It also safeguards the purity of the group. Finally, it helps to keep under secret the strength and weakness and also the professional secrets of-the group.
- Endogamy has its, disadvantages,
  - (i) By dividing the society into small endogamous units, it strikes at national unity,
  - (ii) By limiting the choice of life-partners, it often gives scope for evil practices such as polygyny, dowry system, bride price, etc.

(iii) It may also make its followers to develop hatred and contempt for other groups, (iv) It is also said that close-in-breeding caused by endogamy may affect the biological potentiality of the offspring.

2. **Exogamy:** It is just opposite to the endogamy or endogamous marriage system. It refers to a system of marriage in which an individual has to marry outside one's own group such as gotra, pravara, sapinda or village. This is a sound marriage system which leads to the creation of healthy and intelligent children. However, there are several forms of exogamy such as:

(a) **Gotra exogamy:** Gotra refers to a clan. Members of a particular gotra or clan are supposed to have close blood relations among themselves. Hence according to gotra exogamy one has to marry outside one's own gotra.

(b) **Pravara exogamy:** Pravara means siblings. People originating from a common saint are said to belong to a particular Pravara. According to Pravara exogamy one has to marry outside one's own pravara. Marriage within pravara is forbidden.

(c) **Sapinda exogamy:** Sapinda means-lineage. People belonging to five generations on the father's side and three or seven generations from the mother side are known as sapindas. They were believed to belong to a particular pinda. Hence according to sapinda exogamy, marriage within one's own sapinda is forbidden. They are supposed to marry outside one's own sapinda.

(d) **Village exogamy:** According to this principle marriage within one's own village is forbidden each and every society prescribes certain rules relating to marriage.

In every society, there are both endo and exo groups. The Todas in India for example, have a society which is divided into 2 endogamous moieties each with separate economic and ritual functions. Each of these endogamous moieties has a number of clans which are exogamous. A woman should marry a man from another clan in the same moiety. It has often been theorized that exogamy developed as an extension of incest taboo, covering various relatives. It is however more than a mere extension of incest taboo and it has its own advantages.

- Exogamy results in bringing more families together. Moreover, it brings some kind of group survival.
- Early anthropologists suggested that our ancestors discovered the advantage of intermarriage as a means of creating bonds of friendship. French anthropologist Claude Lévi Strauss elaborated on this idea. He saw exogamy as a form of intergroup social exchange in which "wife giving" and "wife-taking" (or, as happens in communities with female-headed households, husband-giving and husband-taking) created social networks and alliances between distinct communities. By widening the human network, a larger number of people could pool natural resources and cultural information, including technology and other useful knowledge.

- Building on the theory advanced by Lévi-Strauss, other anthropologists have proposed that exogamy is an important means of creating and maintaining political alliances and promoting trade between groups, thereby ensuring mutual protection and access to needed goods and resources not otherwise available. Forging wider kinship networks, exogamy also functions to integrate distinctive groups and thus potentially reduces violent conflict.
  - According to Herbert Risley the desire to have variety in life has influenced people to seek ties with strangers and this has led to exogamy.
  - According to Audrey Richards, there was a constant scarcity of food in the communities of the hunters gatherers, a situation that has compelled them into practice of female infanticide. This practice led to scarcity of women, which in turn led to a practice of getting women from outside the bands through bride capture.
  - Westermarck has provided yet another interpretation for exogamy. He says familiarity brings contempt.
3. **Hypergamy:** Hypergamy is a system of marriage where a man gets his daughter married to a person of the same or higher social and economic status. This type of system is found in the stratified societies like Hindus, wherein it is practiced to retain the social status and prestige of the group. In Hindu society this is known as Anuloma.
4. **Hypogamy:** Hypogamy is just the opposite of Hypergamy. Here, a man gets his daughter married to a man of either the same or lower social and economic status than his. In Hindu society this is known as Pratiloma.
- Under the kind of social structure that caste has given rise to in India, there are certain restrictions in the form of limits beyond which a man and a woman cannot go in the choice of a spouse; of course, he or she must invariably marry outside of his or her own gotra. Just as in modern times, if a millionaire daughter, who chooses to marry a pauper who will accept no doles from his father-in-law, would lose her economic status, likewise, under the caste system, if a high caste woman marries a low caste man she loses caste status which is indicative of a degree of ritual purity. Up to marriage a daughter shares her father's caste status and after marriage her husband's. but a man himself does not lose caste status by marrying a low-caste woman, though his offspring would suffer from a partial lowering from their father's caste status. Therefore, to prevent a woman from losing caste and becoming ritually impure, Manu and other ancient law-givers prescribes hypergamous marriage under which a man can marry from his own caste or from those below, but a woman can marry only in her caste or above.
  - Hypogamy is marriage of a woman to a man from a lower caste which is not permitted in Hindu society.
  - Thus for men, the following marriages are permissible:

1. Brahmin- Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra
2. Kshatriya-Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra
3. Vaishya- Vaishya, Shudra
4. Shudra- Shudra

- Likewise, for women:

1. Shudra- Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra
2. Vaishya- Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya
3. Kshatriya- Brahmin, Kshatriya

#### 4. **Brahmin- Brahmin**

- The social consequences of such a practice are not only obvious but have also been borne out by historical facts. Thus, in the later decades of the last century, Brahmin girls either had to pay huge dowries or choose between polygyny and spinsterhood. Among the Kulin Brahmins of Bengal, young men took to marrying several wives and would visit them at their parents' houses; otherwise, in the absence of financial solvency, which would solve the problem, spinsterhood was the only other alternative.
- Hence, Brahmins have traditionally despised female children and a daughter has become a synonym for curse and the cause of her parents' discomfort and humiliation..
- 5. **Incest taboo:** Incest taboo is the prohibition of sexual contact between certain close relatives. But, what is defined as "close" is not the same in all cultures. Moreover, such definitions may be subject to change over time. While the scope and details of the taboo vary across cultures and time, almost all societies past and present strongly forbid sexual relations at least between parents and children and nearly always between siblings. In some societies the taboo extends to other close relatives, such as cousins, and even some relatives linked through marriage.
- Anthropologists have long been fascinated by the incest taboo and have proposed many explanations for its cross-cultural existence and variation. Among the Yanomami of Venezuela and Brazil (Chagnon 1997), boys anticipate eventual marriage to a cross cousin by calling her "wife." They call their male cross cousins "brother-in-law." Yanomami girls call their male cross cousins "husband" and their female cross cousins "sister-in-law." Among the Yanomami, as in many societies with unilineal descent, sex with cross cousins is proper but sex with parallel cousins is considered incestuous. A custom that is much rarer than cross-cousin marriage also illustrates that people define their kin, and thus incest, differently in different societies.
- When unilineal descent is very strongly developed, the parent who does not belong to one's own descent group isn't considered a relative. Thus, with strict patrilineality, the mother is not a relative but a kind of in-law who has married a member of ego's group-ego's father. With strict matrilineality, the father isn't a relative, because he belongs to a different descent group.
- Several explanations have been suggested for why the familial incest taboo is universal.



1. **Childhood-Familiarity Theory (By Edward Westermarck):** The childhood-familiarity theory, suggested by Edward Westermarck, was given a wide hearing in the early 1920s. Westermarck argued that people who have been closely associated with each other since earliest childhood, such as siblings, are not sexually attracted to each other and would therefore avoid marriage with each other. This theory was rejected upon the subsequent discovery that some children were sexually interested in their parents and siblings. More recent studies have suggested, however, that there might be something to Westermarck's theory. Even if it is likely that familiarity in childhood normally leads to sexual disinterest, we must ask why societies need to prohibit marriages that would voluntarily be avoided because of disinterest. And if familiarity breeds disinterest, what are we to make of couples who remain actively interested in each other sexually after years of marriage.
2. **Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory (by Sigmund Freud):** Sigmund Freud proposed that the incest taboo is a reaction against unconscious, unacceptable desires. He suggested that the son is attracted to his mother (as the daughter is to her father) and as a result feels jealousy and hostility toward his father. But the son knows that these feelings cannot continue, for they might lead the father to retaliate against him; therefore, they must be renounced or repressed. Usually the unacceptable feelings are repressed and retreat into the unconscious. But the desire to possess the mother continues to exist in the unconscious, and, according to Freud, horror at the thought of incest is a reaction to, or a defense against, the forbidden unconscious impulse. Freud's theory may account for the aversion felt toward parent-child incest, but it does not explain why society needs an explicit taboo, particularly on brother-sister incest.
3. **Family-Disruption Theory (by Malinowski):** Sexual competition among family members would create so much rivalry and tension that the family could not function as an effective unit. Because the family must function effectively for society to survive, society has to curtail competition within the family. The familial incest taboo is thus imposed to keep the family intact. But while this theory might explain why father-daughter and mother-son incest would need to be prohibited, why couldn't societies have a rule that brothers and sisters could marry when they were adults? Hypothetically, brother-sister incest would not disrupt the authority of the parents if the children were allowed to marry when mature. And brother-sister marriages did exist in ancient Egypt (Cleopatra married her brothers). The family-disruption theory, then, does not explain the origin of the incest taboo.
4. **Cooperation Theory (by Tylor, Levi-Strauss):** The cooperation theory was proposed by the early anthropologist Edward B. Tylor and further elaborated by Leslie A. White and Claude Lévi-Strauss. It emphasizes the value of the incest taboo in promoting cooperation among family groups and thus helping communities to survive. As Tylor saw it, certain operations necessary for the welfare of the community can be accomplished only by large numbers of people working together. To break down suspicion and hostility between

family groups and make such cooperation possible, early humans developed the incest taboo to ensure that individuals would marry members of other families. The ties created by intermarriage would serve to hold the community together. Thus, Tylor explained the incest taboo as an answer to the choice "between marrying out and being killed out." Even if marriage outside the family promoted cooperation with other groups, why would it be necessary to prohibit all marriages within the family? Couldn't families have required some of their members to marry outside the family if they thought it necessary for survival, but permitted incestuous marriages when such alliances were not needed? Although the incest taboo might enhance cooperation between families, other customs can also promote alliances. The need for cooperation does not adequately explain why the incest taboo exists in all societies. In particular, the cooperation theory does not explain the sexual aspect of the incest taboo. Premarital and extramarital sex is common and tolerated in many societies. Incestuous sex could likewise theoretically be allowed, as long as children were required to marry outside the family.

5. **Inbreeding Theory:** One of the oldest explanations for the incest taboo is inbreeding theory. It focuses on the potentially damaging consequences of inbreeding or marrying within the family. People within the same family are likely to carry the same harmful recessive genes. Inbreeding, then, will tend to produce offspring who are more likely to die early of genetic disorders than are the offspring of unrelated spouses. Recent evidence suggests that inbreeding also tends to increase the likelihood of diseases that affect people later in life, such as heart disease and diabetes. Genetic mutations occur frequently. Although many pose no harm to the individuals who carry a single recessive gene, matings between two people who carry the same gene often produce offspring with a harmful or lethal condition. Close blood relatives are much more likely than unrelated individuals to carry the same harmful recessive gene. If close relatives mate, their offspring have a higher probability than the offspring of non-relatives of inheriting the harmful trait.
  - Although most scholars acknowledge the harmful effects of inbreeding, some question whether people in former days would deliberately have invented or borrowed the incest taboo because they knew that inbreeding was biologically harmful. William Durham's cross-cultural survey suggests that they did. Ethnographers do not always report the perceived consequences of incest, but Durham found that biological harm to offspring was mentioned in 50 percent of ethnographic reports.
  - For example, Raymond Firth reporting on the Tikopia, who live on an island in the South Pacific, wrote: The idea is firmly held that unions of close kin bear with them their own doom, their mara. The idea (mara] essentially concerns barrenness. The peculiar barrenness of an incestuous union consists not in the absence of children, but in their illness or death, or some other mishap. The idea that the offspring of a marriage between near kin are weak and likely to die young is stoutly held by these natives and examples are adduced to prove it.



- Durham concluded that if the harm of inbreeding was widely recognized, people may have deliberately invented or borrowed the incest taboo.

## Types of Marriages

### Monogamy:

- It is a form of marriage when a single man marries a single woman or vice-versa and they settle down from a family. "Mono" means single and "Gamous" means marriage. Anthropologists who took an evolutionary approach to the study of culture once believed that monogamy like monotheism is a sign of progress and civilization. Whether a society permits one marriage partner or a number partners is in no way related to that society's level of development. Monogamy occurs worldwide. Economic and population factors in society tend to limit the number of spouses. In most of the cases, only the most powerful and wealthy man can afford to have more than one wife. In some cases there simply are not enough women to allow for two or more wives to every man.
- Similarly, prescribed or preferential forms of marriage forms of mating limit the number of possible marital linkages, for example Khasi, Santhal and Khadars. There are instances of high bride prices and dowry which limits the number of spouses or forces only monogamy.
- Monogamy is a response to a balanced sex ratio. As it also favors almost everyone a chance to have at least one spouse and also it provides effective sexual gratification for women and men. It also facilitates relatively easy rules of inheritance, succession and membership in kin groups. Monogamy helps to maintain effective child rearing procedure and augment close emotional ties between parents and children. This form of marriage is vibrant in Indian Hindu Society.

### Monogamy can be further understood as:

1. **Serial Monogamy:** It is a sub-form of monogamy where a man gets married to another woman after the death of the first wife or after divorce. The form of monogamy characterizing the western society is termed serial monogamy. This consists of a pattern of marriage, divorce and another marriage. Thus, although an individual is married to only one person at a time, over a number of years he or she may have had a number of spouses. It is prevalent in parts of the world (including Europe and North America), where divorce rates are high and people who have been divorced remarry.
2. **Non - Serial Monogamy:** It is a sub-form of monogamy where a man gets married to a woman and stays with each other till he or she dies. There is no provision for second marriage.

**Polygamy:**

- Polygamy is marriage to more than one person and it is fairly widespread all over the world. Even in tribal India polygamy is widespread. Polygamy is of two types- Polygyny and Polyandry.
- Polygyny- is the marriage of a man to several women. It is found in Baigas, Nagas, Gonds etc.

**Why Polygyny?**

- One theory is that polygyny will be permitted in societies that have a long post-partum sex taboo. In these societies, a couple must abstain from intercourse until their child is at least a year old. By observing long post-partum sex taboo, and thereby ensuring that her children are widely spaced, a woman can nurse each child longer. If a child gets protein from mother's milk during its first few years, the likelihood of contracting Kwashiorkor may be greatly reduced.
- Another explanation of polygyny is that it is a response to an excess of women over men. Such an imbalanced sex ratio may occur because of the prevalence of warfare in a society. Because men generally die in warfare polygyny might be a way for providing spouses for surplus women.
- Polygyny is particularly common in traditional food producing societies that support themselves by herding grazing animals or growing crops and where women do the bulk of cultivation. Under these conditions, women are valued both as workers and as child bearers. Because the labour of wives in polygynous households generates wealth and little support is required from husbands, the wives have a strong bargaining position within the household. Often, they have considerable freedom of movement and some economic independence from the sale of crafts or crops. Wealth-generating polygyny is found in its fullest elaboration in parts of sub-Saharan Africa and south-western Asia, though it is known elsewhere as well.
- By contrast, in societies where men are more heavily involved in productive work, generally only a small minority of marriages are polygynous. Under these circumstances women are more dependent on men for support, so they are valued as child bearers more than for the work they do. This is commonly the case in pastoral nomadic societies where men are the primary owners and tenders of livestock. This makes women especially vulnerable if they prove incapable of bearing children, which is one reason a man may seek another wife.
- Another reason for a man to take on secondary wives is to demonstrate his high position in society. But where men do most of the productive work, they must work extremely hard to support more than one wife, and few actually do so. Usually, it is the exceptional hunter or male shaman ("medicine man") in a food-foraging society or a particularly wealthy man in a horticultural, agricultural, or pastoral society who is most apt to practice polygyny. When he does, it is usually of the sororal type, with the co-wives being sisters. Having lived their

lives together before marriage, the sisters continue to do so with their husband, instead of occupying separate dwellings of their own.

- The custom of men marrying later than women promotes polygyny. Among the Kanuri people of Bornu, Nigeria, men got married between the ages of 18 and 30; women, between 12 and 14 (Cohen 1967). The age difference between spouses meant that there were more widows than widowers. Most of the widows remarried, some in polygynous unions. Among the Kanuri of Bornu and in other polygynous societies, widows made up a large number of the women involved in plural marriages (Hart, Pilling, and Goodale 1988).
- In many societies, including the Kanuri, the number of wives is an indicator of a man's household productivity, prestige, and social position. The more wives, the more workers. Increased productivity means more wealth. This wealth in turn attracts additional wives to the household. Wealth and wives bring greater prestige to the household and its head.
- If a plural marriage is to work, there needs to be some agreement among the existing spouses when another one is to be added, especially if they are to share the same household. In certain societies, The first wife requests a second wife to help with household chores. The second wife's status is lower than that of the first; they are senior and junior wives. The senior wife sometimes chooses the junior one from among her close kinswomen. Among the Betsileo of Madagascar, the different wives always lived in different villages. Aman's first and senior wife, called "Big Wife," lived in the village where he cultivated his best rice field and spent most of his time. High-status men with several rice fields and multiple wives had households near each field. They spent most of their time with the senior wife but visited the others throughout the year.
- Plural wives can play important political roles in nonindustrial states. The king of the Merina, a society with more than one million people in the highlands of Madagascar, had palaces for each of his 12 wives in different provinces. He stayed with them when he traveled through the kingdom. They were his local agents, overseeing and reporting on provincial matters. The king of Buganda, the major precolonial state of Uganda, took hundreds of wives, representing all the clans in his nation. Everyone in the kingdom became the king's in-law, and all the clans had a chance to provide the next ruler. This was a way of giving the common people a stake in the government.

#### **Polyandry:**

- Polyandry is the marriage of one woman to many men. Polyandry is comparatively restricted in its distribution. It is found among the Todas, the Kota, the Khasa and Ladakhi Bota. When the husbands are brothers it is called fraternal polyandry; if they are not brothers it is called non-fraternal polyandry. Some Tibetans, Todas of Nilgiri and Sinhalese of Sri Lanka have practiced fraternal polyandry. Among Tibetans who practice fraternal polyandry, biological paternity seems to be of no particular concern; there is no attempt to link children biologically to a particular brother, and all children are treated the same.

- One possible explanation of polyandry is shortage of women. The Toda practiced female infanticide; the Marquesan of Polynesia too practiced female infanticide due to food shortages and hence polyandry is prevalent among them.
- Another possible explanation of polyandry is that it is an adaptive response to severely limited resources like land. Melvyn Goldstein studied Tibetans who live in the North-west corner of Nepal, above 12000 ft. Cultivable land is extremely scarce there. The people say they practice fraternal polyandry in order to prevent division of family's farm and animals. Although not recognized by Tibetans, polyandry also minimizes population growth. 30% of women don't marry and hence do not reproduce. Thus it minimizes the mouth to feed.

### **Polyandry in India**

- Earliest example in India is Draupadi of Mahabharata. Polyandry is mainly prevalent in Kinnaur region of Himachal Pradesh and also in Khasa of Uttarakhand. They claim themselves to be descendants of Pandavas and hence practice polyandry.
- Toda of Nilgiri hills practice Polyandry. A Toda woman when married was automatically married to her husband's brother. When the wife became pregnant one husband would ceremonially give a bow and arrow to the wife, and would be the father of that child. When the next child arrives, another husband would perform the ceremony and become father.

### **Group Marriages:**

- In this type of marriage a group of men marry a group of women at a time. Every woman is the wife of every man belonging to the particular groups. Sociologists, like Dr. Rivers, call it a kind of sexual communism. This type of marriage is found among some tribes of New Guinea and Africa. Group marriages implies a strong commitment to be faithful- by only having sex within the group and staying together long term. Family members may be open to taking on new partners, but only final members of the family agree to accept a new person as a partner.
- Among ancient Hawaiians-the relationship of Punaluan involved the fact that brothers along with their wives were inclined to possess each other in common.

### **Marriage regulations:**

- Marriage in every society is regulated by a set of rules. These rules render marriage a different phenomenon in every society for they influence the nature, structure and functions of marriage to a considerable extent.
- There are 3 types of marriage regulations:
  1. Proscriptive Rules- which directs whom a person should not marry- Incest Taboo
- Proscriptive rules in every society are manifest in the form of incest taboos. Even when love, sex and economics are contributing factors, regulations specify whom one may or

may not marry. Perhaps the most rigid regulation, found in all cultures is the Incest Taboo, which prohibits sexual intercourse or marriage between certain categories of kin.

- The most universal aspect of the incest taboo is the prohibition of sexual intercourse or marriage between mother and son, father and daughter, and brother and sister. A few societies in the past, however did permit incest, mostly within the royal and aristocratic families, though generally it was forbidden to the rest of population. Best known example of allowed incest involves Cleopatra of Egypt who was married to 2 of her younger brothers at different times. The reason seems to have been partly religious- a member of the family of the pharaoh, who was considered a god, could not marry ordinary human- and partly economic, for marriage within family kept royal property undivided. But no culture today permits incest in nuclear family.
- 2. Prescriptive Rules- which directs whom a person can marry- Endogamy and Exogamy.
- 3. Preferential Rules- they define whom an individual can prefer to marry.
  - Under this rule a person is expected to prefer certain categories of relatives over others for marriage. The best examples of preferential marriages are the cousin marriages, levirate and sororate.

#### 1. **Cousin Marriages:**

There are 2 types of Cousin marriages a) Cross Cousin b) Parallel Cousin

Cross cousins are children of siblings of opposite sex; that is, a person's cross cousins are father's sister's children and mother's brother's children. Parallel cousins are children of sibling's same sex; a person's parallel cousins are father's brother's children and mother's sister's children.

##### **a) Cross Cousin:**

It is a kind of marriage which means marriage of a man with either his mother's brother's daughter or his father's sister's daughter. This is a popular and orthodox type of marriage among the tribal communities of India. But marriage with a mother's brother's daughter is more common. This type of marriage is found to be prevalent among most of the tribes of North-East India such as the Garos, Khasis, Kukis, Karbis, Nagas, Gonds, Oraons, Baigas and some other tribes of the rest of India practice this type of marriage. Virtually all the tribes of North and Central Melanesia practice cross- cousin marriage. It is also practiced in Ceylon (Sri Lanka), Australia, Polynesia, South and East Africa, Siberia etc.

**There are two types of cross-cousin marriages:** (a) Symmetrical and (b) Asymmetrical.

When both the mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's daughter are acceptable as a mate, it is called a Symmetrical cross-cousin marriage. It is also termed as bilateral cross-cousin marriage. In Assam symmetrical cross-cousin marriages are prevalent. Similarly, the Dravidians practice symmetrical cross-cousin marriage.

- Asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage is the one according to which, marriage is preferred with either mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter and not with both. That is if one marries mother's brother's daughter, he cannot marry father's sister's

daughter and vice versa. Marriage with a mother's brother's daughter is called Matrilateral cross-cousin marriage and that with father's sister's daughter is termed as patrilineal cross-cousin marriage. The Trobriand Islanders of Melanesia permit marriage only with the father's sister's daughter. The Murngin (Yolngu) of Australia and the Miwok of California practice asymmetrical cross-cousin marriage.

- Cross-cousin marriages are often devised as a balance against the high bride price, the bargaining of price is often minimized among the familiar kin. Moreover, the amount lost in paying bride-price for getting a bride is regained in due course when a girl from his family has to be given in marriage to the same family. The simple implication here is that the bride-price paid for the marriage would be returned to his family when a daughter would marry her mother's brother's son.
- Parallel Cousin Marriages: It means the marriage of man with either his father's brother's daughter or mother's sister's daughter. It is prevalent among the Semitic Arabs and also found amongst the Muslim of India. It is also practiced by the Riangs of Tripura. It has been said that marriages with close relatives lead to fewer issues. Again, among the Bedouins of Arab, this type of marriage is very popular. The Bedouins are a nomadic people. Such marriages help to keep their males within the band and so manpower is protected for fighting and other purposes of defense.
- Usually in a community, where cross-cousin marriage is allowed, parallel-cousin marriage is forbidden. A man maintains a formal as well as respectful relationship with his female parallel-cousin. Joking relationship prevails only among the cross-cousin. Significance of joking relationship lies in the possibility of marriage, whereas respectful relationship indicates rigidity of the incest taboo. In most of the societies of the world parallel-cousin marriage is prohibited.

2. **Levirate (Latin-Levir means husband's brother):** When a widow marries her brother-in-law (deceased husband's brother) this system of remarriage is known as Levirate. This is practiced by the natives of Australia, the Biblical Hebrews, the Incas, the Muslims of India, the Kukis, the Lushais, the Nagas, the Karbis, the Vedas etc. In patrilineal societies, after the death of a man, his heir is his brother who not only succeeds to his status and responsibilities, also inherits all the possessions of the deceased brother, including his wife or wives. Levirate consists of two types, Junior Levirate and Senior Levirate.

**Junior Levirate:** When the younger brother marries the wife of his deceased elder brother, it is known as junior levirate. This is found to have been practiced by Australians; the Biblical Hebrews, the Incas, the Muslims of India, the Kukis, the Lushais, the Nagas, the Karbis and the Veddass etc.

**Senior Levirate:** When marriage takes place between the widow and elder brother of the deceased husband, it is called Senior Levirate. The Bhumij of Orissa, the Hos, the Panions (south India), the Kirghiz, the Turks, the Mongoloids etc. practice this system of marriage. The custom of Levirate is regarded more as a duty than as a right. The nearest relative is



obliged to care for the widow left with children, land and herd. In some societies the children of the new couple are regarded socially as the children of the dead man.

3. **Sororate:** (Latin, soror means sister): In sororate a bereaved husband marries his deceased wife's sister. That is, a girl marries her deceased sister's husband. In some cases, it is mandatory and in others, it is performed on a permissive basis. Like Levirate, Sororate is also of two types: (i) Senior sororate and (ii) Junior sororate.

**Senior sororate:** When the bereaved husband marries his deceased wife's elder sister, it is called Senior Sororate and it is very limited in its distribution.

**Junior sororate:** When the bereaved husband marries his deceased wife's younger sister, the system of marriage is called the Junior Sororate, which is prevalent in many parts of the world. Hindus, Muslims, and many tribes of India are found to practice sororate. It is practiced by virtually every tribe of North America outside the Pueblo area and is found widely distributed throughout the world.

Levirate and Sororate serve useful social functions. They provide the widow with most reliable social and economic support from their near relatives. Levirate ensures the continuity of line if a man dies childless. Sororate ensure that a man who has handed over the bride price shall have a privilege he is entitled to, like the services of a wife.

Levirate and Sororate reestablish the bond of kinship that is threatened by the death of one of the spouses. Levirate also serves another very important function of the retention of rights and obligation within the group.



## Functions of marriage:

1. **Biological Functions:** One of the most important functions of marriage is reproduction. Marriage forms a permanent mating pair. These pairs establish exclusive sexual rights over one another. It is through marriage that society organizes sexual activities. In other words, the institution of marriages regulates and socially validates relative long term legitimate sexual relations between males and females. It is through reproduction that the society is perpetuated and this is the reason why marriage serves the biological function. Marriage helps cultural groups to have a measure of control over population growth by providing prescribed rules about when it is appropriate to have children. Regulating sexual behavior helps to reduce sexual competition and negative effects associated with sexual competition. This does not mean that there are no socially approved sexual unions that take place outside of marriage. Early anthropological studies documented that the Toda living in the Nilgiri Mountains of Southern India allowed married women to have intercourse with male priests with the husband's approval. In the Philippines, Kalinda institutionalized mistresses. If a man's wife was unable to have children, he could take a mistress in order to have children. Usually his wife would help him choose a mistress.

2. **Economic functions:** As long as division of labor by sex exists every society has to have some mechanism by which men and women share the produce of the labor. Marriage is one way to solve this problem. It solves how to share the work efforts and how to implement an organized division of labor at individual and personal level. Marriage of men and women creates a family in which men and women share their labors to satisfy the economic needs of the family members. Both male and female remain engaged in economic activities through the institution of marriage for the economic upliftment of the family.
3. **Social functions:** Through marriage new Kinsmen are acquired because the spouse's relative is added to one's own group of Kin. The institution of marriage also enables the society to assign to the parents their responsibility of socializing the child by transforming social customs and social regulations.
4. **Educational Functions:** The institution of marriage educates the young to be responsible future parents to pass the culture from one generation to another Thus marriage performs the most sacred biological function that-gives rise to the family system. Apart from this it performs a number of social, cultural, educational and economic functions.

### Marriage payments:

1. **Bride Price:** It is a gift of money or goods from the groom or his kin to the bride's kin. The gift usually grants the groom the right to marry the bride and the right to her children. Of all the forms of economic transaction involved in marriage, bride price is the most common. In one cross-cultural sample, 44% of the societies with economic transactions at marriage practiced bride-price; in almost all of those societies the bride price was substantial. Bride price occurs all over the world but is especially common in Africa and Oceania. Payment can be made in different currencies; livestock and food are two of the more common. With the increased importance of commercial exchange, money has increasingly become part of the bride price payments. Among the Nandi, the bride price consists of about five to seven cattle, one or two sheep and goats, cowrie shells, and money equivalent to the value of one cow. Even in unusual cases, a female-female "husband" must pay a bride price to arrange the marriage and be considered the "father". The Subanun of the Philippines have an expensive bride price- several times the annual income of the groom plus three to five years of bride service. Among the Manus of the Admiralty Islands off New Guinea, a groom requires an economic backer, usually an older brother or an uncle, if he is to marry. Cross-cultural societies with bride prices are likely to practice horticulture and lack social stratification. Bride price is also likely where women contribute a great deal to primary subsistence activities and where they contribute more than men in all kinds of economic activities.

2. **Bride Service:** It is the next most common type of economic transaction at marriage. It requires the groom to work for the bride's family, sometimes before the marriage begins, sometimes after. Bride service varies in duration. In some societies it lasts for a few months and in some for years. Among the North Alaskan Eskimos, for example, the boy works for his in-laws after marriage is arranged. In some societies bride service is a substitute for bride price. An individual might give bride service if he is unable to pay bride price.
3. **Exchange of Females (Sister Exchange):** The societies may also exchange females. For example, Tiv of Nigeria and Yanomami of Brazil follow this practice. This is practiced generally in horticulturalists, egalitarian and in which women contribute more to economic activities.
4. **Gift Exchange:** It involves the exchange of gifts of about equal value by the two kin groups to be linked by marriage, which occurs somewhat more often than exchange of females. For example, among the Andaman Islanders, as soon as a boy and girl indicate their intention to marry, their respective sets of parents cease all communication and begin sending gifts of food and other objects to each other through a third party. This arrangement continues until the marriage is completed and the two groups are united.
5. **Dowry:** A Substantial transfer of goods or money from the bride's family to the bride at the time of her wedding is known as a dowry. A family has to have wealth to give dowry, but because the goods go to the new household, no wealth comes back to the family that gave the dowry. Payment of dowries was common in medieval and Renaissance Europe, where the size of the dowry often determined the desirability of the daughter. The custom is still practiced in parts of eastern Europe and in sections of southern Italy and France, where land is often the major item the bride's family provides. Parts of India also practice dowry. In contrast to societies with bride price, societies with dowries tend to be those in which women contribute relatively little to primary subsistence activities, there is high degree to social stratification, and a man is not allowed to be married to more than one woman simultaneously. Why does dowry tend to occur in these types of societies? One theory suggests that the dowry is intended to guarantee future support for a woman and her children, even though she will not do much subsistence work. Another theory is that the dowry is intended to attract the best bridegroom for a daughter in monogamous societies with a high degree of social inequality. The dowry strategy is presumed to increase the likelihood that the daughter and her children will do well reproductively.
6. **Indirect Dowry:** The dowry is provided by the bride's family to the bride, the groom, or the couple. But sometimes the payments to the bride originate from the groom's family. Because the goods are sometimes first given to the bride's father, who passes most if not all of them to her, this kind of transaction is called indirect dowry. For example, among the Basseri of southern Iran, the groom's father assumes the expense of setting up the couple's new household. He gives cash to the bride's father, who uses at least some of the money to buy his daughter household utensils, blankets, and rugs.

**Ways of Acquiring Mate in Tribal Societies:** The tribes in India have a variety of ways of acquiring mates. Since the tribals consider their marriage, more or less, as a social and civil contract. The tribal marriages do not have absolute things like religious rituals and rites.

1. **Probationary Marriage:** In this type of marriage, a tribal youth lives in the house of his potential mate for weeks or months together. Thereafter, if both the boy and the girl like each other, they may enter into wedlock or in case of dislike they may be separated. If marriage is not solemnized, the boy will have to pay compensation to the girls' parents. It is called a probationary marriage because the boy stays in his father-in-law's house as a probationer. The Kuki tribe of Arunachal Pradesh are said to follow this type of marriage.
2. **Marriage by capture:** This is a popular type of marriage among several Indian tribes. It can be both ceremonial and forceful or physical. The boy and the girl like each other but due to restriction from the parent and the community and inability to pay bride-price, the capture takes place. Sometimes the physical captures are pre-arranged and often take place in fairs, festivals, markets, and sometimes in ceremonial captures the boy simply smears vermilion on the girl's forehead (as in Birhor). This type of marriage is practiced among the Kondha, Juang, Bhuinya, Kharia, Birhor, etc. The Nagas take recourse to physical capture during raids from one village to another.
3. **Marriage by trial:** This is a peculiar type of tribal marriage practiced among the Bhils. In this type of marriage, the courage and bravery of the young man is appreciated and recognized in assigned competition. If a boy comes out successful in his endeavor, he is free to choose any girl from the group for marriage.
4. **Marriage by Purchase:** The man pays the price for the bride in the form of bride-price to the girl's parents before he has her as his wife. The price paid may be in the form of cash or kind. This type of marriage is widely prevalent among a number of tribes all over India. The price is paid by the groom's father to the girl's father according to the traditional custom. This type of marriage is found among the Kondh, Juang, Ho and Munda. The Rengma Nagas also practice this way of acquiring mates.
5. **Marriage by Service:** Some tribals have evolved the solution of higher bride price which the economically weaker tribal youths cannot afford to. If the bridegroom is unable to pay the bride price, he has to serve in his father-in-law's house as a servant and marry the girl after the lapse of a specific period. During the period the boy works in the house of the would-be father-in-law without any payment and equalizes the bride price by providing his free services. Gond and Baiga practice this type of marriage.

6. **Marriage by exchange:** If a son and daughter of marriageable age are available in two families they may exchange the daughters and do not pay any bride price for obtaining the bride. In tribal India Kondh, Saora, Juang, Bhuiyan, Santal, etc. practice this type of marriage.
7. **Marriage by Elopement:** Among many Indian tribes the unmarried boys and girls stay in dormitories and are often involved in sexual relationships by coming in contact with each other. If the parents do not give consent, to the love of the boy and the girl for marriage, then they flee away to some other place without any information to the parents. Such delinquent couples may, later on, be received back by their parents. In this type of marriage, bride price is so easily avoided. Juang, Santal, Bhuinya, Kondha and Saora practice this type of marriage.
8. **Marriage by Intrusion:** This is the reverse way of marriage by capture, wherein a girl desirous of marrying a particular tribal male expresses her willingness and goes to his house to stay. She forcibly thrusts herself onto him and stays with him, despite the non-acceptance of the male and his family. In the process she is subjected to humiliating treatment and refusal of food and often physical torture. But in spite of such humiliation, disrespect or torture if she sticks to the marriage and stays there she is accepted and the marriage is performed. The Juang, Kondh, Bhuiyan practice this type of marriage. But such marriages are widely reported from the Birhor and Ho tribes of Chotanagpur region.
9. **Inheritance of Widow:** Widow Marriage is widely prevalent among the Indian tribes. From the point of view of tradition, custom or personal choice, the youngsters do not usually prefer to marry a widow. In the practice of sorority there is no option. Otherwise the widows are preferred by the widowers. No bride price is paid in the widow marriage. As a customary practice, the Sema Nagas as a matter of obligation often marry his father's widow, other than his own mother. This type of marriage is held so as to inherit the family property from the widows, because the widows are the legal heirs of their dead husband's property. The practice of the inheritance of widows is also reported among the Santal, Bhuinyan, Juang and Kondh.
10. **Divorce:** Divorce or the dissolution of marriage is practiced in the tribal communities. But one cannot divorce the other whimsically or at will . Some rules and regulations persist in this regard. Murdock has mentioned a number of recognized grounds for divorce, such as incompatibility, adultery, diseases, barrenness or sterility, impotency, sexual unwillingness, laziness, economic incapacity, quarrelsome, mistreatment, etc. Since the Indian tribes do not consider marriage as a religious sacrament, the process and procedure of divorce is rather simple. In most of the cases of marital disaster the separation occurs with the mutual consent of both the parties. As a matter of customary practice, the divorce cases are generally decided by the tribal council and performed in a public place in the presence of elderly villagers.



- The tribal communities allow both the husband and wife the right to divorce the other spouse on certain grounds. Among the tribals, the husband is divorced, generally on the grounds of disease, drunkenness, impotency, extra-marital sexual relationship with other women etc. Generally, a wife is divorced on the plea that she has become insane, a thief or a witch or a runaway. However, there are no common grounds of divorce among all the tribes in India.
- However, if his wife deserts him or is caught in adultery, she has to arrange for the return of the bride price her husband paid to her. Second marriage between those once divorced is possible." Mutual consent is essential for divorce and the divorced couples cannot remarry. Wide variations are also marked in the grounds of divorce. Whereas the Gond allows divorce freely on grounds of marital infidelity, carelessness in household work, barrenness and quarrelsome disposition, the Khasi permits divorce for reasons of adultery, barrenness and incompatibility of temperament. The Kharia tribe allows divorce for reasons of marital infidelity, sterility of the wife, Laziness, wife's refusal to live with the husband, and theft. Both the parties are allowed to divorce.

## Live in Relationships:

- From an anthropological perspective, the institution of marriage has been understood as a socially recognized and regulated partnership, traditionally focused on reproduction, economic cooperation, social stability, and the establishment of kinship ties. However, marriage as an institution has evolved, reflecting broader social, economic, and cultural changes. The emergence of "live-in relationships" can be seen as part of this ongoing evolution, where traditional norms are being reexamined and redefined.

### Situating Live-In Relationships within the Institution of Marriage:

1. **Changing Social Norms and Flexibility:** Anthropologically, live-in relationships can be viewed as a response to changing social norms and the increasing flexibility of social institutions. As societies become more individualistic and urbanized, there is a growing emphasis on personal autonomy, freedom of choice, and non-traditional family structures. Live-in relationships reflect these values, allowing individuals to cohabit without the formal or legal commitments traditionally associated with marriage. Example: In many Western societies, as well as in some urban areas of non-Western countries, live-in relationships are increasingly common and socially accepted. They represent a shift from rigid, institutionalized marriage norms towards more fluid and individualized partnership arrangements.
2. **Cultural Adaptation and Social Experimentation:** Live-in relationships can be seen as a form of cultural adaptation or social experimentation. In this view, they serve as a means for individuals and societies to explore new forms of partnership, cohabitation, and family



organization, without the immediate obligations of marriage. This can include testing compatibility, sharing economic resources, or redefining gender roles within a relationship. Example: Anthropologists might study live-in relationships as a way to understand how modern societies are adapting to changes in gender roles, economic pressures, and social expectations. These relationships may challenge traditional assumptions about marriage, such as the necessity of legal recognition or religious sanction.

3. **Reproductive and Kinship Implications:** Traditionally, marriage has been closely tied to reproduction and the establishment of kinship ties. Live-in relationships, however, can complicate these associations. While some live-in relationships may result in children and long-term commitments, others may remain childless or temporary, challenging the conventional link between marriage and reproduction. This shift may also affect kinship patterns, as legal and social recognition of parentage and inheritance may differ. Example: In some societies, children born from live-in relationships may face different social and legal statuses compared to those born within marriage, highlighting the changing dynamics of kinship and family structure in contemporary contexts.
4. **Economic and Legal Considerations:** From an economic and legal perspective, live-in relationships often lack the formalized economic and legal protections that marriage provides. This can create complexities in terms of property rights, inheritance, and financial support. However, as live-in relationships become more common, some societies are adapting their legal frameworks to offer similar protections to those in marriage, thereby blurring the distinctions between the two institutions. Example: In some countries, courts have started recognizing live-in relationships in terms of legal rights and obligations, such as alimony or property division, reflecting a shift towards treating these relationships with similar seriousness as marriage.
5. **Cultural Variation and Globalization:** The acceptance and prevalence of live-in relationships vary widely across cultures. In some societies, they may still be stigmatized or seen as an affront to traditional values, while in others, they are increasingly normalized. Globalization and cross-cultural exchanges have played a role in spreading the concept of live-in relationships, especially in societies where traditional marriage remains the dominant norm. Example: In India, live-in relationships are becoming more common in urban areas, particularly among younger generations, even as they remain controversial in more traditional or rural settings. Anthropologists might study how global influences and local cultural contexts interact to shape attitudes towards such relationships.

#### **Conclusion:**

- Anthropologically, live-in relationships can be seen as an alternative or complementary form of partnership that reflects broader changes in societal norms, economic conditions, and cultural values. While they challenge traditional notions of marriage, they also offer new ways of understanding partnership, family, and kinship in contemporary societies. As

live-in relationships continue to evolve, they may increasingly blur the lines between traditional marriage and other forms of cohabitation, reflecting the dynamic and adaptive nature of social institutions.

### **In the context of India:**

- Live-in relationships represent a significant shift from traditional marital norms, reflecting broader social, economic, and cultural changes within the country. Anthropologically, this shift can be situated within the ongoing evolution of social institutions in response to modernization, urbanization, and changing values.

### **Situating Live-In Relationships within the Institution of Marriage in India:**

1. **Modernization and Urbanization:** Live-in relationships in India are primarily an urban phenomenon, reflecting the influence of modernization and globalization. As India urbanizes, younger generations are increasingly exposed to global cultural norms that emphasize individual choice, personal freedom, and non-traditional living arrangements. Live-in relationships allow couples to explore compatibility and intimacy without the immediate pressures of marriage, which is traditionally seen as a lifelong commitment involving families and social obligations. Example: In cities like Mumbai, Delhi, and Bangalore, live-in relationships are becoming more common, particularly among young professionals who prioritize career and personal growth over early marriage. This trend is often seen as part of the broader liberalization of social norms in urban India.
2. **Changing Gender Roles and Empowerment:** The rise of live-in relationships in India can also be viewed through the lens of changing gender roles and women's empowerment. As women gain greater access to education and employment, they are increasingly seeking relationships that offer equality and mutual respect. Live-in relationships provide a space where traditional gender expectations can be renegotiated, and women can assert greater autonomy in their personal lives. Example: In many cases, live-in relationships in India are seen as a way for women to avoid the traditional expectations of early marriage and household duties, allowing them to focus on their careers and personal aspirations.
3. **Cultural Resistance and Acceptance:** While live-in relationships are gaining acceptance in urban areas, they continue to face significant resistance in more traditional and rural parts of India. The cultural importance of marriage as a sacred and socially binding institution remains strong, and live-in relationships are often viewed as a challenge to these deeply held values. However, as legal recognition of live-in relationships increases, there is a gradual shift towards greater acceptance, particularly among younger generations. Example: Indian courts have begun to recognize live-in relationships in various legal contexts, such as granting maintenance rights to women in such relationships, signaling a shift in societal and legal attitudes. However, social stigma and family opposition remain significant barriers in many parts of the country.
4. **Legal and Social Implications:** The legal system in India has started to address the complexities surrounding live-in relationships, particularly regarding rights to

maintenance, inheritance, and property. These legal developments indicate a gradual incorporation of live-in relationships into the broader social framework, albeit with ongoing debates about their place within the traditional family structure. Example: The Supreme Court of India has ruled that a live-in relationship between two consenting adults is not illegal and that women in such relationships can claim maintenance under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. This legal recognition reflects a broader trend towards protecting individuals' rights within non-traditional relationships.

5. **Generational and Societal Change:** Live-in relationships in India are often seen as indicative of a generational shift, with younger Indians increasingly questioning and redefining traditional social norms. This shift reflects broader changes in attitudes towards marriage, relationships, and individual autonomy in the context of rapid social and economic transformation. Example: Younger generations in India, particularly in metropolitan areas, are more open to the idea of live-in relationships as a legitimate form of partnership. This contrasts with older generations, who often view marriage as the only acceptable form of long-term commitment.

#### **Conclusion:**

- In India, live-in relationships represent a significant cultural shift, challenging traditional notions of marriage and family. Anthropologically, these relationships can be seen as part of the broader process of social change, driven by modernization, urbanization, and changing gender roles. While they face resistance from more traditional sectors of society, live-in relationships are increasingly being recognized legally and socially, particularly in urban areas. As India continues to evolve, live-in relationships may become a more accepted and integrated part of the social fabric, reflecting the dynamic and adaptive nature of cultural practices in the country.

#### **Why are Live In relationships Preferred Over Marriage?**

- There are several reasons why many young people today prefer live-in relationships over marriage, particularly in urban and modernizing contexts. These reasons reflect broader social, economic, and cultural changes:
1. **Desire for Independence and Personal Freedom:** Many young people value their independence and personal freedom, and live-in relationships allow them to maintain these while being in a committed relationship. Marriage is often seen as involving more social and familial obligations, which can feel restrictive. Example: In a live-in relationship, individuals can make personal decisions more freely, such as pursuing career opportunities or education, without the pressures that sometimes come with marriage.
  2. **Testing Compatibility:** Live-in relationships provide an opportunity for couples to test their compatibility before making the legal and social commitment of marriage. It allows them to understand each other's habits, lifestyles, and expectations in a real-world setting. Example: Couples may choose to live together to see how they manage daily life, share

responsibilities, and resolve conflicts, which can inform their decision about whether or not to marry in the future.

3. **Avoidance of Legal and Social Complications:** Marriage can involve complex legal and social obligations, including financial responsibilities, legal documentation, and potential complications in case of divorce. Live-in relationships offer a simpler alternative without the legal bindings of marriage. Example: Young couples may prefer live-in relationships to avoid the legal and financial implications of marriage and divorce, especially if they are unsure about making a lifelong commitment.
4. **Changing Attitudes Toward Marriage:** Social attitudes towards marriage are changing, with many young people questioning traditional norms and viewing marriage as just one of many options for a committed relationship. Live-in relationships are seen as a viable alternative that aligns with more modern and progressive values. Example: As society becomes more accepting of different forms of relationships, live-in arrangements are increasingly seen as a legitimate and respected choice.
5. **Focus on Career and Personal Growth:** Many young people prioritize their careers, education, and personal growth during their 20s and 30s. Live-in relationships offer the companionship and support of a relationship without the additional pressures that marriage might bring. Example: Young professionals may choose to live together while focusing on their careers, seeing marriage as something to consider later once they are more established.
6. **Economic Considerations:** Marriage often involves significant expenses, such as wedding costs and setting up a new household. Live-in relationships can be a more financially practical option, allowing couples to share living costs without the added financial burden of a wedding and related expenses. Example: In cities where the cost of living is high, cohabitation without marriage can be a financially smart decision, allowing couples to save money while still enjoying the benefits of living together.
7. **Avoiding Social and Familial Pressure:** Some young people prefer live-in relationships to avoid the social and familial pressures that often accompany marriage, such as expectations around starting a family or conforming to traditional roles. Example: In some cultures, marriage comes with immediate expectations of having children or taking on traditional gender roles, which some young people may wish to avoid by choosing a live-in relationship instead.
8. **Cultural Influence and Globalization:** Exposure to global cultures and lifestyles through media, travel, and the internet has introduced young people to alternative relationship models, such as live-in relationships, which are more common in many Western societies. Example: The influence of global culture has made live-in relationships more acceptable and appealing to young people who are exposed to diverse ways of living.
9. **Fear of Commitment:** Some young people may fear the lifelong commitment that marriage entails, especially if they have seen negative examples of marriage in their own families or social circles. Live-in relationships offer a way to be in a committed relationship

without the perceived permanence of marriage. Example: Individuals who have witnessed divorces or unhappy marriages may be hesitant to marry and instead opt for a live-in relationship as a less risky form of commitment.

10. **Legal and Social Recognition:** In some regions, live-in relationships are gaining legal recognition, including rights related to inheritance, custody, and maintenance. This recognition makes live-in relationships more appealing as they offer some of the benefits of marriage without its full legal commitments. Example: Courts in some countries, including India, have recognized the rights of partners in live-in relationships, making this option more secure and attractive.

#### **Conclusion:**

- Young people's preference for live-in relationships over marriage reflects broader shifts in values, priorities, and social norms. As society evolves, live-in relationships offer a flexible, modern alternative that aligns with contemporary lifestyles and the desire for autonomy, while still allowing for meaningful and committed relationships.

## **Differences between traditional and modern marriage**

- Anthropological studies highlight significant differences between traditional and modern marriage practices in India, reflecting broader social, economic, and cultural changes. The following are the key differences-

### **1. Nature of Marriage Arrangements:**

- **Traditional Marriage:** Marriages were typically arranged by families, with significant input from elders, and based on factors such as caste, community, economic status, and horoscope compatibility. The focus was on aligning families and fulfilling social obligations.
- **Modern Marriage:** There is a growing trend towards love marriages, where individuals choose their partners based on personal compatibility, shared values, and mutual attraction. Even in arranged marriages, the prospective bride and groom often have more say in the decision-making process.

### **2. Role of Family and Community:**

- **Traditional Marriage:** The family and community played a central role in marriage, with extended families often involved in the selection of partners and the planning of ceremonies. Marriage was seen as a union of two families rather than just two individuals.
- **Modern Marriage:** While family approval remains important, particularly in more conservative settings, there is an increasing emphasis on the preferences and autonomy of the individuals getting married. The role of the community has diminished, especially in urban and cosmopolitan areas.



### 3. Age at Marriage:

- **Traditional Marriage:** Marriages often took place at a young age, sometimes even before legal adulthood, with early marriage seen as a way to ensure social stability and fulfill familial duties.
- **Modern Marriage:** The average age at marriage has increased, with many individuals delaying marriage until after they have completed their education, established careers, or achieved personal goals. This trend reflects changing priorities and the influence of urbanization and education.

### 4. Concept of Partnership:

- **Traditional Marriage:** The concept of marriage was often tied to rigid gender roles, where men were typically seen as providers and women as homemakers and caregivers. The relationship was structured around duty and adherence to social norms.
- **Modern Marriage:** There is a growing emphasis on partnership and equality, with both spouses often sharing responsibilities, including financial, household, and childcare duties. Marriages are increasingly seen as partnerships based on mutual respect and shared decision-making.

### 5. Cultural and Religious Rituals:

- **Traditional Marriage:** Marriages were steeped in elaborate rituals and ceremonies, often lasting several days and involving extensive participation from extended families and communities. These rituals were deeply rooted in religious and cultural traditions.
- **Modern Marriage:** While many couples still observe traditional rituals, there is a trend towards simplifying ceremonies, with some couples opting for court marriages or smaller, more personalized ceremonies. Additionally, there is a growing acceptance of interfaith and intercultural marriages, which may blend or modify traditional practices.

### 6. Marital Expectations and Longevity:

- **Traditional Marriage:** Marriage was considered a lifelong commitment, with divorce being rare and often socially stigmatized. The expectation was that couples would stay together regardless of personal happiness or compatibility.
- **Modern Marriage:** There is a greater emphasis on personal fulfillment and happiness within marriage. While divorce still carries some stigma, especially in rural areas, it has become more common and socially acceptable in urban contexts. Couples are more likely to seek separation if they feel the marriage is not meeting their emotional or personal needs.



#### 7. Role of Gender:

- **Traditional Marriage:** Gender roles were clearly defined, with men typically holding authority in the household and women expected to be obedient, manage the home, and bear children. Patriarchal norms dominated the structure of marriage.
- **Modern Marriage:** Gender roles are increasingly fluid, with more emphasis on equality and shared responsibilities. Women are more likely to pursue careers and demand an equal say in household decisions, while men are increasingly involved in domestic duties.

#### 8. Social and Economic Considerations:

- **Traditional Marriage:** Marriages were often arranged to consolidate economic resources, land, and social status. Dowries were a common practice, and the economic implications of marriage were significant.
- **Modern Marriage:** While economic considerations still play a role, especially in arranged marriages, there is a growing emphasis on emotional compatibility and mutual interests. The practice of dowry is increasingly criticized and, in some areas, is in decline, though it persists in others.

#### 9. Role of Religion:

- **Traditional Marriage:** Religion played a central role in marriage, with rituals and practices deeply embedded in religious traditions and community expectations. Marriage was often seen as a sacred duty.
- **Modern Marriage:** While religion still plays a significant role for many, particularly in rural areas, there is an increasing number of secular or interfaith marriages. Some couples choose to have minimal religious involvement or opt for civil ceremonies instead.

#### 10. Inter-Caste and Interfaith Marriages:

- **Traditional Marriage:** Marriages were usually within the same caste, sub-caste, or religious community, with strict adherence to social norms. Inter-caste or interfaith marriages were rare and often met with strong opposition.
- **Modern Marriage:** There is a growing acceptance of inter-caste and interfaith marriages, particularly in urban areas. Younger generations are more likely to prioritize personal compatibility over traditional caste or religious boundaries, although such marriages can still face resistance in more conservative settings.

#### Conclusion:

- The shift from traditional to modern marriage practices in India reflects broader societal changes, including increased education, urbanization, and the influence of global cultural trends. While traditional marriages continue to thrive, particularly in rural areas, modern marriages emphasize personal choice, equality, and flexibility. Anthropologically, this evolution showcases the dynamic nature of marriage as an institution, adapting to the changing values and needs of society.

## Divorce in India

- Divorce, from an anthropological perspective, is a socially recognized dissolution of marriage, marking the end of a marital relationship and the associated social, economic, and cultural ties. In Indian society, the concept of divorce is complex and varies significantly across different communities, castes, religions, and regions. Understanding divorce through an anthropological lens involves exploring its historical context, cultural variations, social implications, and the changing attitudes towards it in contemporary India.

### 1. Historical and Cultural Context:

- **Traditional View:** Historically, marriage in Indian society has been considered a sacred and lifelong bond, deeply rooted in religious and cultural beliefs. In many communities, especially those influenced by Hinduism, marriage was seen as a sacrament (sanskara), and divorce was heavily stigmatized or outright forbidden.
- **Role of Religion:** Religious texts and customs played a significant role in shaping attitudes towards divorce. For example, Hindu scriptures traditionally discouraged divorce, viewing marriage as a spiritual and social duty. In contrast, Islamic law (Sharia) permitted divorce, but with specific conditions and procedures such as \*talaq\* (divorce initiated by the husband) and \*khula\* (divorce initiated by the wife).

### 2. Cultural Variations:

- **Caste and Community Differences:** Attitudes towards divorce vary significantly across different castes and communities in India. In some high-caste and orthodox Hindu families, divorce has been particularly stigmatized, with divorced individuals facing social ostracism. In contrast, some tribal communities and lower castes may have more flexible attitudes towards divorce, viewing it as a practical solution to marital discord.
- **Regional Differences:** In certain regions, such as the more urbanized and economically developed parts of India, divorce is becoming more common and socially acceptable. Conversely, in rural areas and regions with strong patriarchal traditions, divorce remains rare and carries significant social stigma.

### 3. Social and Economic Implications:

- **Patriarchy and Gender Dynamics:** Divorce in India is often influenced by patriarchal norms and gender dynamics. Traditionally, women have been economically dependent on men, and divorce could leave them in a vulnerable position, with limited access to financial resources, social support, and even custody of children. This economic dependence has historically discouraged women from seeking divorce, even in cases of abuse or neglect.
- **Social Stigma:** Divorce continues to carry social stigma, particularly for women, who may be blamed for the failure of the marriage. Divorced women may face difficulties in

remarrying, securing employment, or being accepted within their families and communities.

- **Impact on Children:** In an anthropological context, divorce also affects the socialization and well-being of children. Children of divorced parents may face social challenges, such as adjusting to single-parent households, and may encounter social stigma in communities where divorce is frowned upon.

#### 4. Legal Framework and Modernization:

- **Legal Recognition:** The legal framework for divorce in India is complex and varies across religious communities. The Hindu Marriage Act (1955), the Muslim Personal Law, the Indian Divorce Act (1869) for Christians, and the Special Marriage Act (1954) for interfaith marriages provide different grounds and procedures for divorce.
- **Role of Modernization:** As India modernizes, attitudes towards divorce are gradually changing, particularly in urban areas. Increased education, economic independence (especially for women), and exposure to global cultural norms have contributed to a more pragmatic view of marriage and divorce. The rise in love marriages and the emphasis on personal happiness and compatibility have also led to a higher acceptance of divorce as a viable option for those in unhappy marriages.

#### 5. Changing Attitudes and Trends:

- **Increasing Divorce Rates:** While still relatively low compared to Western countries, divorce rates in India are on the rise, particularly in urban centers. This increase reflects changing social norms, greater legal accessibility, and growing awareness of individual rights.
- **Empowerment and Autonomy:** Anthropologically, the increase in divorce rates can be seen as a sign of empowerment, particularly for women. As women gain more autonomy and economic independence, they are more likely to leave unsatisfactory or abusive marriages. The growing awareness of legal rights and the availability of legal aid have also made it easier for individuals to seek divorce.
- **Impact of Media and Globalization:** Media portrayals and the influence of globalization have played a role in changing perceptions of divorce. Indian films, television, and digital media have increasingly depicted divorce in a more neutral or positive light, reflecting broader societal shifts.

#### 6. Anthropological Interpretation:

- **Social Adaptation:** From an anthropological perspective, the increasing acceptance of divorce in India can be seen as an adaptive response to changing social and economic conditions. As the traditional joint family system gives way to nuclear families, and as

individualism becomes more prominent, divorce is becoming more socially and legally acceptable.

- **Cultural Resilience and Change:** While divorce represents a significant shift in the traditional institution of marriage, it also illustrates the resilience and adaptability of Indian culture. Even as some aspects of marriage and family life change, the core values of family and social responsibility continue to evolve within the context of modernity.

#### **Conclusion:**

- In Indian society, the concept of divorce is shaped by a complex interplay of cultural, religious, social, and legal factors. While traditionally stigmatized and discouraged, divorce is becoming more accepted, particularly in urban areas, as part of broader social changes driven by modernization, education, and shifting gender dynamics. From an anthropological perspective, the evolving attitudes towards divorce reflect the adaptability of Indian society in balancing traditional values with contemporary realities. As India continues to modernize, the institution of marriage and the concept of divorce will likely continue to transform, reflecting the dynamic nature of cultural practices and social norms.

#### **Why Divorce rates increasing in India?**

- The increase in divorce rates in India can be attributed to a combination of social, economic, cultural, and legal factors. These changes reflect the broader transformations occurring within Indian society as it modernizes and urbanizes. The following are the key reasons why divorce is increasing in India:

##### **1. Changing Social Norms and Attitudes:**

- **Modernization and Urbanization:** As Indian society becomes more urbanized and exposed to global influences, traditional social norms surrounding marriage are evolving. There is a growing acceptance of individualism, personal freedom, and the idea that marriage should be based on mutual happiness and compatibility, rather than just social obligation.
- **Reduced Stigma:** The social stigma associated with divorce, while still significant in some areas, is gradually diminishing, especially in urban centers. Younger generations, in particular, are more open to the idea of divorce if the marriage is not fulfilling.

##### **2. Increased Education and Awareness:**

- **Educational Attainment:** Higher levels of education, particularly among women, have led to greater awareness of individual rights and a stronger desire for personal autonomy. Educated individuals are more likely to assert their expectations in marriage and to seek divorce if those expectations are not met.

- **Awareness of Legal Rights:** With better access to information, people are more aware of their legal rights, including the right to seek divorce. Legal literacy campaigns and the availability of legal aid have empowered more people to consider divorce as an option.
3. **Economic Independence of Women:**
- **Financial Autonomy:** As more women enter the workforce and gain financial independence, they are less likely to remain in unhappy or abusive marriages for economic reasons. Economic independence provides women with the ability to support themselves and their children, making divorce a more viable option.
  - **Shift in Gender Roles:** The traditional gender roles, where men were the sole breadwinners and women the homemakers, are changing. With this shift, expectations within marriage are also changing, and when these expectations are not met, it can lead to marital discord and, eventually, divorce.
4. **Changing Expectations of Marriage:**
- **Focus on Personal Fulfillment:** There is a growing expectation that marriage should provide emotional and personal fulfillment. When these needs are not met, individuals are more willing to consider divorce. This shift reflects a move away from viewing marriage solely as a social contract or duty.
  - **Romantic Idealism vs. Reality:** The influence of media and popular culture, which often portrays an idealized version of love and marriage, can lead to unrealistic expectations. When reality does not match these expectations, it can result in dissatisfaction and divorce.
5. **Legal Reforms and Accessibility:**
- **Simplification of Divorce Laws:** Legal reforms have made it easier to obtain a divorce in India. For instance, the Hindu Marriage Act and the Special Marriage Act provide various grounds for divorce, including mutual consent, cruelty, desertion, and irretrievable breakdown of marriage. These reforms have made the process less cumbersome and more accessible.
  - **Judicial Support for Women's Rights:** Indian courts have increasingly taken a progressive stance on issues related to marriage and divorce, providing greater protections and rights for women. This includes rulings on alimony, maintenance, and the protection of women from domestic violence, making it easier for women to leave unhappy marriages.
6. **Increased Individualism:**
- **Cultural Shift Towards Individualism:** Indian society is gradually shifting from a collectivist mindset, where family and community were central to decision-making, towards a more individualistic approach. This cultural shift encourages individuals to

prioritize their personal well-being and happiness, which can lead to a higher acceptance of divorce.

- **Decline of the Joint Family System:** The traditional joint family system, where extended families lived together and provided support, is declining, especially in urban areas. As nuclear families become more common, individuals may feel less pressure to stay in a marriage for the sake of family honor or obligations.

## **7. Influence of Media and Globalization:**

- **Global Cultural Influences:** Exposure to global cultures through media, travel, and the internet has introduced Indians to different ways of thinking about marriage and divorce. This exposure has contributed to changing attitudes towards divorce, making it more acceptable to consider ending an unhappy marriage.
- **Media Representation:** Indian films, television, and digital media have increasingly depicted divorce in a more neutral or positive light, helping to reduce the stigma and encouraging people to consider divorce as an option when necessary.

## **8. Increased Awareness of Mental Health:**

- **Mental Health Considerations:** There is a growing awareness of the importance of mental health and the negative impact that an unhappy marriage can have on an individual's well-being. This awareness has led more people to prioritize their mental health and consider divorce as a way to escape toxic or unhealthy relationships.
- **Therapy and Counseling:** The increasing availability of therapy and counseling services has also played a role in helping individuals and couples address marital issues. When counseling does not resolve issues, it can lead to an informed and mutual decision to divorce.

## **Conclusion:**

- The increase in divorce rates in India is a reflection of broader social, economic, and cultural transformations. As Indian society modernizes, there is a growing emphasis on individual rights, personal fulfillment, and equality within marriage. Legal reforms, economic independence, changing gender roles, and increased awareness of mental health have all contributed to making divorce a more acceptable and accessible option for those in unhappy marriages. While divorce is still not as common or socially accepted as in some Western countries, the trend indicates a significant shift in how marriage and personal relationships are understood in contemporary India.



## Grounds for Divorce in India:

- In India, divorce can be sought on several legal grounds, depending on the applicable personal law. The grounds for divorce vary for different religious communities, as India has a system of personal laws that govern marriage and divorce based on religious affiliation. Additionally, the Special Marriage Act provides a uniform framework for divorce in cases of interfaith or civil marriages. Here are the primary grounds for divorce under various laws in India:

### 1. Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (Applicable to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs):

- **Adultery:** Engaging in voluntary sexual intercourse with someone other than the spouse after marriage.
- **Cruelty:** Physical or mental cruelty, which makes it unsafe or intolerable for the spouse to live with the other.
- **Desertion:** Continuous desertion for a period of at least two years before filing the petition.
- **Conversion:** Conversion of one spouse to another religion without the consent of the other.
- **Mental Disorder:** Unsoundness of mind or mental disorder that makes it unreasonable to expect the petitioner to live with the respondent.
- **Leprosy:** The respondent has been suffering from a virulent and incurable form of leprosy.
- **Venereal Disease:** The respondent is suffering from a communicable venereal disease.
- **Renunciation of the World:** If the spouse has renounced the world by entering a religious order.
- **Presumption of Death:** If the spouse has not been heard of as being alive for at least seven years.
- **No Resumption of Cohabitation:** If there has been no resumption of cohabitation between the parties for one year or more after a decree of judicial separation or restitution of conjugal rights.

### 2. Muslim Personal Law (Sharia):

- **Talaq (Divorce by Husband):** The husband can pronounce talaq (divorce), which can be either \*Talaq-ul-Sunnat\* (revocable) or \*Talaq-ul-Biddat\* (irrevocable, now invalidated by the Supreme Court in 2017).
- **Khula (Divorce by Wife):** The wife can seek divorce through \*khula\*, which requires her to return her mahr (dower) or give up some property.
- **Mubarat (Mutual Consent Divorce):** Both husband and wife agree to divorce mutually.
- **Faskh (Judicial Divorce by Wife):** A woman can seek judicial divorce on grounds such as the husband's cruelty, impotence, failure to provide maintenance, or prolonged absence.

### 3. Indian Divorce Act, 1869 (Applicable to Christians):

- **Adultery:** Engaging in voluntary sexual intercourse with someone other than the spouse after marriage.
- **Cruelty:** Conduct that makes it unsafe for the petitioner to live with the respondent.
- **Desertion:** Continuous desertion for at least two years.
- **Conversion:** Conversion to another religion without the consent of the spouse.
- **Incurable Insanity:** The respondent has been of unsound mind for a continuous period of at least two years.
- **Leprosy:** The respondent is suffering from an incurable form of leprosy.
- **Venereal Disease:** The respondent is suffering from a communicable venereal disease.

### 4. Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act, 1936:

- **Adultery:** Voluntary sexual intercourse with someone other than the spouse after marriage.
- **Cruelty:** Cruelty that makes it unsafe or intolerable for the petitioner to live with the respondent.
- **Desertion:** Continuous desertion for a period of at least two years.
- **Unsoundness of Mind:** If the respondent has been of unsound mind for a continuous period of at least two years.
- **Leprosy:** The respondent is suffering from a virulent and incurable form of leprosy.
- **Venereal Disease:** The respondent is suffering from a communicable venereal disease.
- **Non-Consummation of Marriage:** Non-consummation of marriage due to natural causes or the willful refusal of the spouse.
- **Imprisonment:** If the spouse has been sentenced to imprisonment for seven years or more.
- **Presumption of Death:** If the spouse has not been heard of as being alive for at least seven years.

### 5. Special Marriage Act, 1954 (Applicable to Interfaith and Civil Marriages):

- **Adultery:** Engaging in voluntary sexual intercourse with someone other than the spouse after marriage.
- **Cruelty:** Conduct that makes it unsafe for the petitioner to live with the respondent.
- **Desertion:** Continuous desertion for a period of at least two years.
- **Mental Disorder:** Unsoundness of mind or mental disorder that makes it unreasonable to expect the petitioner to live with the respondent.
- **Leprosy:** The respondent is suffering from a virulent and incurable form of leprosy.
- **Venereal Disease:** The respondent is suffering from a communicable venereal disease.
- **Renunciation of the World:** If the spouse has renounced the world by entering a religious order.
- **Presumption of Death:** If the spouse has not been heard of as being alive for at least seven years.

## 6. Grounds for Divorce by Mutual Consent:

- **Mutual Consent:** Under several laws, including the Hindu Marriage Act and the Special Marriage Act, divorce by mutual consent is allowed when both parties agree that they can no longer live together and have been living separately for a specified period (usually one year). This is one of the most straightforward and amicable ways to obtain a divorce.

### Conclusion:

- The grounds for divorce in India vary according to the religious or civil law governing the marriage. However, common grounds include adultery, cruelty, desertion, mental disorder, and incurable diseases. With evolving legal frameworks and societal attitudes, divorce is increasingly seen as a viable option for those in unhappy or harmful marriages.

## Impact of Urbanisation on Marriage

### Continuity and Change: The Institution of Marriage

- Social institutions have been defined as the network of social relationships in society which are relatively permanent, Weber (cf. Martindale, 1962: 55- 8) has defined social institutions as the social relations in a whole network of social actions. The institution exists only so far as people act in certain ways. It is manifest only as a pattern of behavior. Thus social institutions in the Indian cities such as marriage, kinship, family, caste and religion could be conceptualized as the occurrences of complex sets of social interactions. Gandhi (1983: 20) believes that in the traditional city of India ,the institutional complex of marriage, kinship, family, caste is most strategic for analysis and understanding of the socio-cultural life of the city. He says that due to the relative preoccupation of Indian sociologists with the study of India's villages, marriage within urban contact has received scant attention. Marriage as an institution has traditionally been embedded and linked with the institution of caste in India in both rural and urban areas.
- Marriages have been contracted keeping the caste or jati endogamy in mind. Rules of marriage in each caste community in different religions of India follow different rules and regulations. Giri Raj Gupta (1974) examines a number of social dimensions of marriage, such as marriage rituals in the context of intra- family roles and norms implications of caste per for marriage and the family, social exchange among the castes, the 'nata' alliance (remarriage) etc. He examines them in a Rajasthan village.
- In the urban cities, the phenomenon of inter-caste marriages, inter-communal, inter regional, and inter- religious marriages, even though infrequent, must be studied in detail with the help of such methods as extensive depth interviews, caste histories and the social geographies of individuals involved. (Gandhi R. 1983: 21) "just twenty five years ago the instances of inter-caste marriage were very few, and those individuals who dared to marry outside the caste had to undergo truly great hardships. Today the situation is altogether

different not only has the privileges of inter-caste marriage become considerable, but even the difficulties the inter- caste marriage couple have to face, have become comparatively quite mild “ (Kannan, C.T :1974)

- C. T. Kannan’s study of inter-caste and inter-community marriages in Bombay is based on two hundred inter-caste marriages and fifty inter-community marriages in Bombay during 1958-59. The analysis of the couples by the year in which they got married shows a steady increase in the incidence, a majority of 64% being married after 1950. Kannan says that the spread of higher education both among the males and females is one of the reasons for the increase in the incidence of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages amongst the younger generations in the cities. Indeed, one could safely assert that the graph of inter-caste marriages is steadily rising, never becoming a plateau, much less declining. Even in the newspaper columns, the pros and cons of inter-caste marriage are found freely debated particularly by ladies, a subject which was formerly almost a taboo. (Kannan, C. T. 1974).
- Due to modern education full of western thoughts and ideas, emancipation of women and the association of young men and women with various political and social organizations, new ideas which are incompatible with the traditional norms and values are nurtured amongst the youth in cities. As a result their attitudes towards traditional norms changes and new values develop which affects marriage, kinship and family.
- Kannan in his study mentioned earlier found that besides schools and colleges, social organizations such as Jati Seva Dal, Lok Sena, Swastik League, Kshariakya Parisad, etc., have played a great role in influencing the younger generations in selection of their partners. Political organizations have also been responsible in providing suitable claims for some males and females to come together and develop intimacies.
- Most significant aspect of change that they noticed was that the young generation becomes individualistic by such influences and they take their own decision even in the matter of marriage. They become less caste-conscious than their elders and, therefore, in their inter group relations they ignore caste and creed differences. In many cases the objections to such inter-caste marriage by the parents were there but not always due to caste considerations. It is observed that far more important considerations existed behind parental opposition than the caste of their child’s bride/ groom. These were mainly the lack of wealth and status in the partner.
- Where these factors were favourable, the parents had given their consent and cooperation to marriage, ignoring caste differences. Thus, education and socio economic background matters more in cities than caste (Kannan, C. T 1974: 341).
- In a study by B. V. Shah (1964: 84-86) of male students of Baroda University, it was found that a higher proportion of unbetrothed students from urban background (cities, 63 per cent; towns 14 per cent) than from rural background (18 per cent) existed. In case of selection of bride too a higher proportion from the urban background (cities 61 per cent; towns; 47 per cent) favoured at least a matriculate (i.e. high school graduate) than from the rural

background (only 13 per cent). Thus, the non-traditionality as regards bride selection is found largely in urban areas, whereas traditionality is found proportionately greater in rural areas than in urban areas.

- It is also found that a 'new concept of wifeness' (i.e. emphasis on conjugal relationship) has emerged which is associated with urban living in contemporary society in India. (Gandhi, Raj 1983: 21) M. S. Gore (1968: 196) in a study of a community near Delhi found that the urban educated respondents who had changed their occupation felt 'closer to their wife' than their mother. Thus, it is found that in urban society the joint family living in India which traditionally deemphasizes the direct conjugal relationship between man and his wife seems to have changed as nearly three-quarters of the highly urbanized male respondents tend to favour closeness to wife.'
- Gandhi, R. says that these developments as discovered by Gore and others conform to William J. Goode (1963) who hypothesized that there is a logical fit between the urban-industrial society and the 'conjugal family' which is supposed to be the characteristic of the west. Conklin's study (1973) of the emerging conjugal role patterns in the city of Dharwar in South India notes that urbanization and education does result in a significant increase in conjugal role patterns, even within a joint household.
- However, while some sociologists may jump to the conclusion that urbanization and education will lead to 'conjugal family patterns' in India even before industrialization; it is a matter of doubt whether the 'conjugal family pattern' and joint family pattern did not co-exist in urban India since early times (c.f. A M Shah, 1974). The distinction between the two is a false dichotomy of western sociology unnecessarily imposed upon the understanding of Indian urban society.
- Another change observed by sociologists of urban areas is that age at marriage has increased. But the question of self choice or 'arranged marriage' still remains a debatable point. Cormack's claim (1961: 101) that the Indian youth are increasingly allowed the 'right' of decision for their marriage without the 'means' to make it. Therefore, it is quite clear from the available evidence that the situation in urban India is not automatically conducive to increase in the freedom of choice for one's marriage since marriage is still closely tied to family (and hence to parental authority and kin-constraint) and caste (Gandhi, R. 1983).
- Aileen Ross (1961: 253) in her study of the Hindu families in the city of Bangalore found that young people tend to select their spouse themselves and then take the approval from their parents. But Vatuk (1972:73-111) is opposed to this view. She studied two middle class neighborhoods in the North Indian city of Meerut. She found only four cases of so-called "love marriages" (i.e. marriages of personal choice) during her field-work among the mohalla residents. These occurred within the circle of relatives and friends, involving either fellow students in a co-educational college, fellow workers in an office, affinal kins

or residents of the same dwelling. During her study she did not find even a single case of arranged inter-caste marriage.

- Men in these middle class mohallas accepted their inability to arrange inter-caste marriages for their children, however egalitarian they may be. Karve (1965) like Srinivas (1969) and Khare (1970) observed that the role of dowry in marriage arrangements was of significance. She found a tendency to give larger amounts of cash rather than goods amongst the wealthy Banias. Gandhi (1983) believes that what urbanism does is to increase the 'price' of the college educated urban youth of India in the matrimonial market.
- The significance of caste endogamy too remains largely unchanged as 'arranged marriages' are contracted traditionally within one's own caste. Kapadia's study (1968; 119) of family in urban India found that 51 per cent out of 513 university graduates interviewed expressed their willingness to give their children in marriage outside their own caste but only one of them was against the departure from tradition. This change of attitude is reflected in opinion rather than actual practice. Caste considerations are still playing a major role in marriage in reality.
- In a study conducted by Raj Gandhi (1976) of the Bania Sub-caste in the city of Jamnagar found that 67.5 per cent of the kin of the respondents were found to be married into their own Dasa Bania sub-caste. Of the remaining 32.5 per cent, 13.3 per cent had married into a higher Visa sub-caste; the practice of hypergamy, which does not necessarily reflect the breach of caste endogamy. He found only 14 cases (11.6 per cent) of real inter-caste marriages going beyond the sub-caste and caste boundaries. Mandelbaum (1970: 653) gives a general statement which according to Gandhi sums up the developments that have occurred and the continuities that exist in the arena of marriage as a social institution. He says that 'although endogamy remains a major consideration in arranging a marriage, the boundaries of the endogamous group... are typically being enlarged, and marriage patterns may now come from formerly separate jatis (sub-castes) of the same jati cluster... but such unions are still very exceptional even among the urban educated people.'
- Since, the studies on marriage in urban areas are few and far between, it is difficult to generalize. But what stands out clearly is the continuing link it has with caste. There has been an increase in factors like, age at marriage, wider circle of spouse selection within the caste, level of education of bride and so on. Let us now understand the social institution of family in the urban context.

## Miscellaneous Topics:

**Sologamy:** It is the act of marrying oneself, a relatively new and unconventional practice that has emerged in various parts of the world, primarily in the 21st century. While not widespread, sologamy has gained attention in media and popular culture, reflecting changing societal attitudes towards marriage, self-love, and individualism. In anthropology, sologamy



can be analyzed through the lenses of cultural shifts, gender roles, and the evolving meanings of marriage and selfhood.

### 1. Definition and Origins of Sologamy:

- Sologamy refers to the practice of an individual marrying themselves, often through a formal ceremony complete with vows, rings, and sometimes even guests. This act is symbolic rather than legally binding and is often a statement of self-empowerment, self-love, and personal autonomy.
- Origins: The concept of sologamy is relatively modern, with its roots in Western societies where individualism and personal autonomy have become increasingly valued. The first widely publicized instance of sologamy occurred in 1993 when Linda Baker, a dentist from Los Angeles, married herself in a public ceremony. Since then, the practice has gained sporadic popularity, particularly among women in urban, industrialized societies.

### 2. Cultural Context and Societal Implications:

- **Reflection of Individualism and Autonomy:** Sologamy can be seen as a reflection of the growing emphasis on individualism in contemporary society. As people increasingly prioritize personal autonomy and self-fulfillment, traditional social institutions like marriage are being reinterpreted. Sologamy is a manifestation of this shift, where the traditional commitment to another person is replaced by a commitment to oneself. Example: In the United States, where individual rights and personal freedom are highly valued, sologamy has been embraced by some as a way to celebrate self-sufficiency and reject societal pressures to conform to traditional marital expectations.
- **Gender and Feminism:** Sologamy is particularly prevalent among women, many of whom see it as an act of feminist self-empowerment. By marrying themselves, women challenge traditional gender roles that have historically defined a woman's worth by her relationship to a man. Sologamy allows women to assert their value independently of a partner, celebrating their identity and achievements. Example: In 2017, an Italian woman named Laura Mesi made headlines when she married herself in a ceremony complete with a white dress, a wedding cake, and seventy guests. Mesi, a fitness instructor, stated that her sologamy was a celebration of self-love and independence, reflecting the feminist ideals of autonomy and self-respect.
- **Symbolic and Ritualistic Elements:** Sologamy ceremonies often incorporate traditional wedding rituals, such as vows, rings, and public celebrations, but these elements are repurposed to focus on the individual rather than a partnership. The rituals involved in sologamy can be seen as symbolic acts of self-affirmation and self-recognition. Example: Many sologamy participants choose to write personal vows that emphasize their

commitment to self-care, personal growth, and self-respect. These vows serve as a public declaration of their intention to prioritize their own well-being and happiness.

### **3. Anthropological Case Studies and Perspectives:**

**A. Case Study: Sologamy in Japan-**In Japan, a country known for its high levels of social conformity and pressure to marry, sologamy has emerged as a form of resistance to societal expectations. Japanese women, in particular, have embraced sologamy as a way to assert control over their lives and reject the traditional pressures of marriage. Example: In 2014, a Japanese travel agency began offering "solo wedding" packages, allowing women to dress in bridal attire, take wedding photos, and participate in a symbolic ceremony. This service became popular among single women who wanted to experience the joy of a wedding without the need for a partner.

- Anthropological Perspective: Anthropologists studying sologamy in Japan have noted that it reflects a broader trend of young Japanese adults delaying or opting out of marriage due to economic pressures, career ambitions, and a desire for personal freedom. Sologamy, in this context, is a response to the tension between individual desires and societal expectations.

#### **B. Case Study: Sologamy in Western Media:**

- In Western media, sologamy has been portrayed both as a radical act of self-love and as a critique of the institution of marriage. Television shows, books, and online articles have explored the concept of sologamy, often highlighting its symbolic value rather than its practical implications.
- Example: The television show "Sex and the City" featured a storyline where the character Carrie Bradshaw "married" herself, highlighting the importance of self-respect and self-love. This portrayal helped bring the concept of sologamy into mainstream consciousness, particularly among women who identified with Carrie's independent, urban lifestyle.
- Anthropological Perspective: Anthropologists examining sologamy in Western contexts often interpret it as part of a broader trend towards secularization and the personalization of ritual. As traditional religious and social structures lose influence, individuals create new rituals that reflect their personal values and experiences.

### **4. Scholarly Contributions and Critiques:**

**A. Judith Butler on Performativity:** Judith Butler, a prominent gender theorist, has explored the concept of performativity in her work, which can be applied to understanding sologamy. Butler argues that gender and identity are performed through repeated actions and rituals. Sologamy can be seen as a performative act, where the individual publicly enacts their identity and self-worth.

**B. Michel Foucault on Individualization:** Michel Foucault's work on the "care of the self" provides a useful framework for understanding sologamy. Foucault argued that in modern

societies, individuals are increasingly responsible for constructing and managing their identities. Sologamy can be interpreted as an extreme form of this self-care, where the individual takes full responsibility for their happiness and fulfillment.

- C. Critiques of Sologamy:** While sologamy is often celebrated as an empowering act, some critics argue that it reinforces neoliberal ideals of individualism and consumerism. By focusing on self-love and personal fulfillment, sologamy may inadvertently support a culture of narcissism and self-absorption.

Example: Critics have pointed out that the commercialization of sologamy, such as "solo wedding" packages, reflects the commodification of personal rituals. They argue that sologamy may prioritize consumerist values over genuine social connections and community.

### **Conclusion:**

- Sologamy is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that reflects broader cultural shifts in the understanding of marriage, selfhood, and individualism. While it is not yet a widespread practice, sologamy offers a unique lens through which anthropologists can explore changing gender roles, the evolving meanings of marriage, and the ways in which individuals navigate societal expectations.
- Through case studies from Japan, the United States, and other contexts, it is clear that sologamy is both a personal and cultural statement, challenging traditional norms while also raising questions about the implications of extreme individualism. Anthropologists studying sologamy contribute to a deeper understanding of how modern societies are redefining relationships, rituals, and the self in the 21st century.

### **Murstein's Filter Theory:**

- Filter theory is a sociological theory concerning dating and mate selection. Most often, this takes place due to homogamy, as people seek to date and marry only those similar to them (characteristics that are often taken into account are age, race, social status and religion).
- Homogamy is the idea of marriage between spouses who share similar characteristics.
- Heterogamy denotes marriage between spouses of different characteristics.
- The idea of "opposites attract" is heterogamous as well as the idea that one spouse has complementing, not similar characteristics to the other.
- The process of filtering narrows down individuals until there is only one acceptable partner remaining. These filters involve:
  1. Field of Eligibles- Involves possible options. Look at who is out there within the general population.
  2. Proximity Filter- Provides an available group to choose from. Who happens to be close to us in proximity.
  3. Attraction Filter- Judgement based on appearance and individual characteristics.

4. Homogamy Filter- How similar age, race, education, socio-economic class, religion are .
5. Compatibility Filter- Involves attitudes, values, needs, habits, and roles. Similarities to these qualities are judged.
6. Trial Filter- Commitment. Tests compatibility of all previous filters.
7. Decision Filter- Final decision is made here to see if an individual is the right choice.
8. Marriage.

