

3.3.2. Marriage

Marriage is an important social institution. It is a relationship, which is socially approved and sanctioned by custom and law. It is also a set of cultural mechanisms which ensure the continuation of the family. It is more or less a universal social institution in India.

Structural and functional changes in the marriage system

The marriage system had undergone radical changes especially after independence. Even though the basic religious beliefs associated with marriage have not crumbled down, many of the practices, customs, and forms have changed. The recent changes in the marriage system are as follows:

- **Changes in the aim and purpose of marriage:** In traditional societies the primary objective of marriage is 'dharma' or duty; especially among Hindus. But today the modern objective of marriage is more related to 'life-long companionship' between husband and wife.
- **Changes in the form of marriage:** Traditional forms of marriages like polygamy, polygyny are legally prohibited in India. Nowadays, mostly monogamous marriages are practiced.
- **Change in the age of marriage:** According to legal standards, the marriageable age for boy and girl stands at 21 and 18 respectively. Average age of marriage has gone up and pre-puberty marriages have given place to post-puberty marriages.
- **Increase in divorce and desertion rates:** Relaxed legislative provisions for divorce have virtually affected the stability of the marriage, particularly in the urban areas. . It is mainly due to economic prosperity and internet connectivity. Internet has exposed people to the different social trends prevalent across the world and has revolutionized the institution in an otherwise conservative Indian society.
- **Live in relationships:** They are on a steady growth rate in India especially among the youth in metropolitan cities. The institution also has legal recognition as a three judge bench of SC in 2010 observed that a man and a woman living together without marriage cannot be construed as an offence and held that living together is a Right to Life and Liberty (Article 21). SC has also acknowledged that children born out of such relations are legitimate and have property rights of their parents under Section 16 of Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

3.3.3. Family in Indian Society

The family is the basic unit of society. It is the first and the most immediate social environment to which a child is exposed. It is in the family a child learns language, the behavioral Patterns and social norms in his childhood.

In some way or the other the family is a universal group. It exists in tribal, rural and urban communities and among the followers of all religious and cultures. It provides the most enduring relationship in one form or other.

Characteristics of Family

- Family is a basic, definite and enduring group.
- Family is formed by the relatively durable companionship of husband, wife who procreate children.
- Family may be limited to husband, wife or only the father and his children or only the mother and her children.
- Family is generally smaller in size compared to other social groups, organizations and associations.
- Family can also be large in size in which persons belonging to several generations may live together.