

# Frameworks of Marriage and Fertility (Theoretical Aspects)

Posha Parveen

Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, U. P, India

**Abstract:** *It is an established fact that processes like marriage and fertility are inter-related. It is very tough to isolate the phenomenon of child bearing by women and their marriage timing especially when we look it through Indian context. Nearly in all of the notable Indian states, the rate of fertility among both the sexes is coming down, some states of India have formerly completed the achievement of the transition process by attaining the fertility at replacement level or they are at the last stage of attaining it.*

**Keywords:** Marriage, contexts, theoretical, age, development, Female sterilization

## 1. Introduction

The major question concerned to the social scientists is that whether the marriages are getting late or people in the developed economies are completely ignoring them. The abundant theories have been put regarding the fact like when it is suitable age for an individual to get married, the other fact included is to whom one should marry. Various schools of thought has put forth the logical theoretical explanation to give reasonable answers to such questions. To come on the very short conclusion regarding the question of marriage, after analyzing the detailed theories put forth regarding the answer of these questions related to marriage, it is better to initiate our point with the economic arguments of Gary Becker. Becker (1973) exchanged that on the solid foundation of 'female independence hypothesis' is laid on the mutual dependency of both the marriage partners which emanate from the division of labour between the two marriage partners. Becker further says that the impulse for males to pursue expertise the market work and females to concentrate on domiciliary exercises makes the marital relation durable and adorable because both the partners engage in their respective roles accordingly and make this marriage union beneficial for both. Nevertheless with the improvement in economic conditions and with the development of certain resources, female members of the society have been actively engaged in certain important roles alongside with their male counterparts. The participation of more women members to get educated and acquire knowledge and get involved in various job professions has made them little dependent on men and they love to remain independent which has modified the traditional family structure. When women have become less dependent on men, her material gains from the marriage has decreased to a great extent, resulting in marriage becoming less useful for such women. Another social thinker (Oppenheimer, 1998) argues that when a woman is becoming less dependent on men, she definitely chooses to delay her marriage and remain independent until she finds her perfect match for performing marriage. Raymo (2005) has put forward another point that the imbalance in marriage because of the mismatch of marriage partners id another vital cause for such economically independent women to delay marriages or not to marry to at all. These women generally look for a

partner who is higher than them in terms of socio-economic position and this phenomenon is generally called as female status hypergamy. With this process in which education or economically independent women look for such a partners that are a perfect match for them and are independent of their families and elders has resulted in the delayed age for marriages and or no marriage. The common thing coming out of all the theories related to the marriage system is that these all focus on the same common point and that is gender view point and more importantly they throw light on the fact that with the advancement of education among women and their independence has led in delayed marriages or in certain cases to non-marriages.

## 1.4 The Indian Context

From the ancient times, the marriage system in Indian system is heavily concentrated on religion and spiritualization. These two terms in the marriage system here has left a very narrow space for the fulfillment of one's own ambitions, desires and passion. Marriage here was regarded as a divine service towards ones clan and towards his society and there was no acceptance of individual's own personal values, passions, interests and ambitions. Hindu's mainly consider marriage as a spiritual observance. Marriage is considered more as a spiritual observance and a sacred religious duty in comparison to personal and individual enjoyment (Goyal, 1988).

Age at the time of marriage is steadily going up in India since the past few decades. This change can be attributed either to certain laws and regulations which were formulated from time to time to enforce the minimum age at which marriage should be consumed between the partners or it has increased also due to the personal circumstances concerning the opposite sex partners. This increase in the age of marriage is found both at mean, median and at intermediate age levels for both the male groups which have been born since 1916 and for female groups whose birth has been taking place since 1921 (Goyal, 1988). A survey conducted by National female health survey in 2005-06 reported that the median age for female of age group 20-49 years, at the time of their first marriage is 17.2 years and also it observed that the median age at the time of marriage of the same age group of men was 23 years. As we have come across the fact that the

age at the time of first marriage is going up steadily, ample regional contradictions and rural-urban variations in the ages at the marriage time undoubtedly recommends that there is still a huge space and scope for the throughout and a deep study of the marriage system, marriage patterns and the changes it has underwent since ancient times in the Indian context. Also the rapid changes in the fertility rates in some Indian states especially during the last three decades too attracts our attention for an outstanding and deep study and understanding the changes taking place in marriage systems in India.

To understand the demography pattern in India, marriage timing has always held an important place. Good number of marriages in Indian females has been taken place usually at the initiation of their reproductive age. Policies regarding the raising age of marriage among females has been seen as the vital policy interventions “beyond family planning” which are affecting the fertility ratios quite considerably. These policies started by Indian Govt. since the last three decades has affected the fertility rates among the married couples, the birth rates have fallen considerably and population has remained static or increasing very slowly. Till this date, there has been numerous studies and research works with their focus on the issue of ‘age at marriage ‘in India. Most remarkable names among them include Agarwal (1962, 1972), Basavarajappa et al. ., (1967) and Malaker (1972, 1973 and 1975). Regrettably, almost whole of these research works have been hindered by many variations taking place in Indian marriages rituals, dearth of available data regarding Indian marriage system, misreporting of age at marriage times, and the other new developments in Indian marriage system.

Religion, caste system, geographical region plays a vital role in determining the type of marriage customs in India. In India, marriage is generally divided into two time periods, one is the actual marriage ceremony with various types of celebrations that follows it and other include the phenomenon of cohabitation, both are detached from each other by a certain time interval. This time period which separates the two processes is usually taken into consideration according to the age of bride at the time of the marriage. Researchers have necessary need of actual information related to the age of bride at first marriage i. e., effective age at the time of first cohabitation to study the effect of the time of marriage and age on fertility. It includes the description of theoretical problems occurring in the marriage institutions and post-marriage relations. One of the major issues concerning the research on marriage in Indian context is misreporting about age at marriage, which makes the research about it a bit complicated. This misreporting about age can also attributed to one of the legislations about age at marriage which puts it at 18 years in case of women and 21 years at men. Population study is usually based on decennial census data for gaining information about the age at marriage, but this data is not reliable and is afflicted with the issue of disagreement on its authenticity. But what is understood by majority of social thinkers today is that age at marriage among both the sexes is rising. Other studies about processes like period marriage rate and the age at

the time of marriage are not sufficient to understand the impact and nature of recent variations that are taking shape in the marriage patterns among Indian people. The authentic date is believed to be obtained regarding the changes and variations effecting Indian marriages is by the analysis of such processes by sample data observation.

Some other purposes of conducting research on marriage patterns in Indian context can be to get the idea about as how the philosophical models of Indian marriage can assist us in understanding the pattern of marriage systems in India. We all are fully aware of the fact that from last few decades’ women folk in India are actively engaged in acquainting themselves with modern education and engaging themselves in useful employment. Nonetheless, the frequency of marriages among female folk has not declined or got down. The number of marriage breakups has too gone down. Hence it can be rightly said that in case of India the philosophical theories of marriage don’t provide any evidence about recent variations in marriage. Moreover, certain anomalies that occur in marriage systems of India, certain recent variations and shifts from the traditional marriage models can attract the attention of social scientists and thinkers. A visible illustration of anomalies prevailing in India is the Kerala state which has the highest literacy rate in India, but the participation of the female members in occupations and jobs is very little. Although, marriage age in Kerala is higher than the other states, females here generally get married at higher age period. Keeping in the mind that the number of women seeking jobs here is very much higher than the available jobs, it is the socio-cultural elements and beliefs that outline the fields and areas in which these women should seek the jobs. The more number of durations in which women should engage themselves in seeking education and knowledge, is even at present times justified as being significant and beneficial for the family as an educated mother can harbor her children most efficiently and will be able to provide them good health facilities, sanitation and good education, still we also know that education cannot fetch a lucrative job every time. Contrary to the case of men, full time home stay or remaining idle or without a job is not seen as abnormal for highly educated women, in such a state which has the highest literacy rate in the country (Eapen, 2004). In the situations like this, if we experienced any variation or change occurring in the age at marriage among women, it requires a healthy investigation and new researches should be conducted to find out the factors responsible for such changes and variations and it should not be kept confined to the already available traditional theoretical models. The phenomenon of female sterilization has played a major role and has contributed heavily towards this downward trend in the fertility rates of Indian populations. It is now the time to look and study the factors other than those of family planning to understand the issue of this downward trend in the fertility rates in India. Marriage and marriage patterns, the age at marriage are some of the vital issues which must be studied and taken into consideration for getting an idea about the reasons of the fertility decline in India.

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