

## Marriage as Social Institution



Marriage is one of the universal social institutions which admit men and women to family life. It is a stable relationship in which a man and a woman are socially permitted to have children implying the right to sexual relations. Marriage is closely connected with the institution of family. In fact, family and marriage are complementary to each other.

### Definition of Marriage



Gillin and Gillin have said marriage is a socially approved way of establishing family of procreation.

Westermarck has remarked, marriage is rooted in the family rather than the family in the marriage.

According to H.T. Mazumdar, marriage is “a socially sanctioned union of male and female or as a secondary institution devised by society to sanction the union and mating of male and female for purposes of a) establishing a household, b) entering into sex relations c) procreating and d) providing care for the off-springs”.

According to Beals and Hoijer, marriage is a set of cultural patterns to sanction parenthood and to provide a stable background for the care and rearing of the children. It is an important cultural mechanism to ensure the continuation of the social group based on kinship.



## Functions of Marriage

1. Marriage is a powerful instrument in regulating the sex life of man. It prohibits certain types of sex relations also. For example, father and daughter, mother and son, brother and sister etc. This kind of prohibition is called incest taboo.
2. Marriage is a social approval / hall mark for getting involved in sexual relations of procreation and thus leads to the establishment of the family.
3. Marriage creates mutual understanding and cooperation between the husband and wife as a couple to perform the household tasks.
4. Marriage provides economic cooperation.
5. Marriage contributes for emotional and intellectual support.



## Types of Marriage

Marriage is an institution of society which can have very different implications in different culture. Based on the culture and nature of economic activities the marriage type varies.

Monogamy and polygamy are the main forms of marriage found around the world. Monogamy refers to one man marrying one woman at a time. Polygamy is the type in which a man or woman has more than one spouse. There are two main forms found in polygamy. They are (i) Polygyny and (ii) Polyandry.



**Polygyny:** If a man marries two or more wives at a time, it is known as polygyny. For example Eskimos tribes, African Negroes.

Polygyny is of two types namely a) sororal polygyny and b) non-sororal polygyny. In sororal polygyny the wives of the man are sisters. In the case of non-sororal polygyny the man marries many women who are not sisters. The purpose for any kind of polygyny is scarcity of men in the group or childlessness.

**Polyandry:** Polyandry refers to one woman entering into marital relationship with more than one man at a given time. This form of marriage further exists in two categories: a) Fraternal polyandry and (b) Non-fraternal polyandry.

Fraternal polyandry is used to refer to a woman marrying and becoming the wife of all brothers. The children they beget are treated as the off springs of the eldest brother. Whereas in the form of non-fraternal polyandry one woman has many husbands with whom she cohabits in turns but it is not necessary that these husbands be brothers. The cause for polyandry is scarcity of women populations or heavy bride price.

Similarly, rules have been made in all societies to regulate the individuals to select a mate. There are two types of marital regulations found in all society. They are (i) Endogamy and (ii) Exogamy.



**Endogamy:** Hoebel defined endogamy as “the social rule that requires a person to marry within a culturally defined group of which he is a member. It refers to the system of rules which restrict marriage within prescribed limits. In other words, the rule of endogamy makes marriage compulsory within a particular group. In Hindu society, caste is an endogamous group. A Hindu can marry someone

within his or her own caste. There are various endogamous groups of which caste group is the most important. Beside caste endogamy, village endogamy is found in some parts of Asia and America.

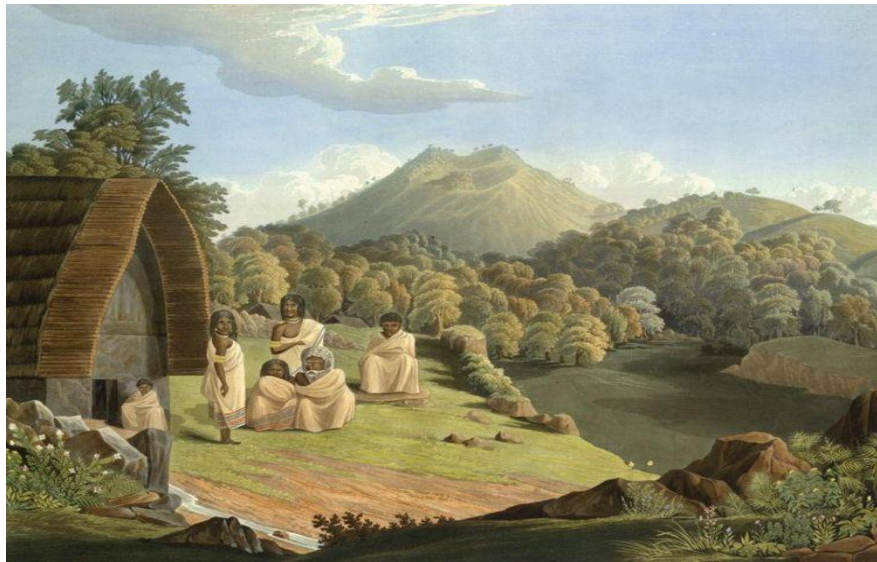


Exogamy is defined as the social rule that requires an individual to marry outside of a culturally defined group of which he is a member. In Hindu society, the marriage between members of same 'gotra' and lineage are prohibited. One must marry outside his own family and kinship group. It is believed that the members have descended from one common ancestor and they are consanguinally related. Almost all the tribes of India practice lineage and clan exogamy. Some tribes like Paroja of Orissa practice village exogamy.



#### Companionate marriage

The term companionate marriage is used to refer the marriage of two persons on the understanding that as long as there are no children they live together. In this form, the marriage may be dissolved simply by mutual consent.

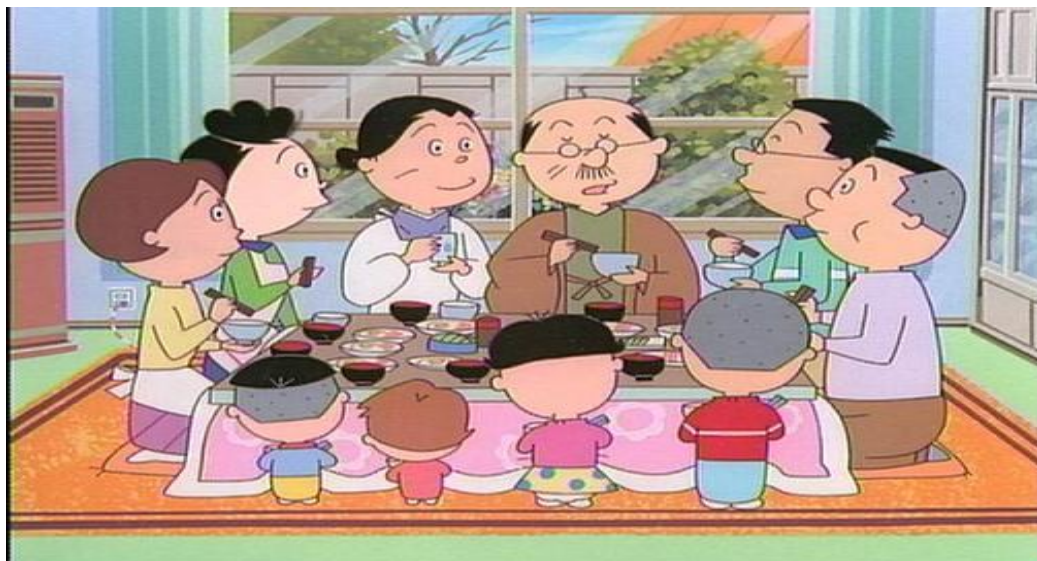


### Tribal marriages

Tribal marriages differ totally from the practices of advanced societies. The tribal societies follow different forms like

- marriage by service,
- marriage by capture,
- marriage by elopement,
- marriage by exchange,
- marriage by purchase,
- marriage by probation,
- marriage by intrusion,
- marriage by trial and
- marriage by mutual consent.

All these marriages are institutionalized and they serve certain important regulative purposes.



In modern marriages people expect more gratification from marriage than they had in the past. It is not enough for the husband to be a decent man providing livelihood for his wife and children but also be an educated person, good home maker and share love with the wife. Similarly the husband expects his wife not only to be a good home-maker but also be educated, share economic burden and share love. Both married partners want their own special interests and activities are continued and respected.

