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Q2(c)

Analyse the role of market and modern forces in understanding the changing trends in marriage systems in India

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Systems of Kinship in India

Systems of Kinship in India: Lineage and descent in India; Types of kinship systems; Family and marriage in India; Household dimensions of the family; Patriarchy, entitlements and sexual division of labour.

Core demand of the question

- Analyse the role of market and modern forces in changing marriage systems in India
- Cover endogamy, matchmaking, law, and migration
- Keep a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Matrimonial markets often reinforce caste filters while changing how matches are found.

Dowry and wedding display follow credential and consumption markets.

Law, education and migration widen conjugality and delay marriage.

Endogamy and honour codes still bound the field.

The pattern is recasting, not replacement.

Introduction

Marriage in India is still mostly arranged inside caste and community. Markets and modern forces have changed how matches are made, who pays, and how far a couple may live from kin, without simply replacing the marriage system with free individual choice.

Body

Market forces

- **Matrimonial newspapers, websites, and apps commodify bio-data:** education, income, colour, and gotra become searchable filters that often tighten caste endogamy rather than dissolve it.
- Dowry inflation in several regions follows male credential markets; a salaried groom is priced, which is market logic inside a patriarchal gift.
- Wedding consumption and destination rituals display middle-class status, so marriage is also a consumption market.

Modern legal and social forces

- The **Hindu Marriage Act**, **Special Marriage Act**, and court support for adult choice, as in **Lata Singh**, sit beside family veto.
- Education, delayed age at marriage, and women's employment increase bargaining inside the match, especially in cities.

- Migration and the urban middle class produce 'arranged love' and translocal households, which the **Rudolphs** would read as modernity of tradition.

What has not been marketised away

- **Srinivas**'s endogamy and Dumont's hierarchy still organise the field of eligible spouses.
- Honour violence where choice crosses caste or faith shows the system policing its boundary when the market of dating leaks.
- Change is therefore in technology, timing, and conjugality, more than in the rule of who may marry whom.

Flow diagram

Matrimonial market -> Endogamy filters

Law education migration -> Conjugality and delayed marriage

Endogamy filters -> System recast

Conjugality and delayed marriage -> System recast

Conclusion

Markets and modern forces have recast matchmaking, cost, and residence. They have not made caste marriage a free market of individuals for most Indians.

Facts & figures

Special Marriage Act 1954

Civil marriage outside personal law; still socially costly for many inter-caste couples.

Lata Singh

Supreme Court support for an adult woman's right to marry by choice against family coercion.

Matrimonial market

Print and digital bio-data markets that sort by caste, class and region.

Srinivas

Endogamy as a continuing core of caste despite occupational change.

Rudolphs

Traditional marriage institutions using modern media and law.