

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q3(a)

Why is the study of marriage important in Sociology? Analyse the implications of changing marriage patterns for Indian society

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 marks · Perspectives on the study of Indian society

Perspectives on the study of Indian society: Indology (G.S. Ghurye); Structural functionalism (M.N. Srinivas); Marxist sociology (A.R. Desai).

Core demand of the question

- **Explain why marriage is a core sociological institution:** alliance, descent, property, sexuality, status
- **Then analyse changing Indian patterns:** age, choice, endogamy, divorce, live-in, migration, same-sex claims, and law
- Show implications for caste, gender, demography and household

Revision summary

Marriage regulates sexuality, filiation, property and group closure, which is why sociology treats it as central.

Ambedkar and ethnographers of Indian kinship made endogamy and alliance core tools.

Age at marriage, arranged love, migration and law are changing the field unevenly.

Caste endogamy remains strong; inter-marriage is politically explosive.

Implications run through gender bargaining, fertility and household authority.

Introduction

Marriage is not only a wedding. In sociology it is the **institution that regulates sexuality, filiation, property and group boundaries**. **Levi-Strauss** treated alliance as the exchange that makes society. **Ambedkar** treated endogamous marriage as the lock of caste. Indian ethnography-**Karve, Dumont, Uberoi**-made marriage the door to kinship regions. If marriage changes, caste, household and inequality change with it. That is why the study is important, and why new patterns have large implications.

Body

Why sociology studies marriage

Marriage links the domestic group to the political economy. It organises **legitimacy of children**, claims on land and surname, care of the aged, and the unpaid labour of women. It is a market of honour: hypergamy, dowry and kanyadan idioms rank families. It is a demographic engine: age at marriage shapes fertility. It is a legal status: personal laws, the **Special Marriage Act**, and criminal law on bigamy and cruelty sit here. Without marriage, accounts of caste, class and religion miss their reproduction.

Functionalists saw it as meeting needs of personality and socialisation (Murdock's nuclear unit). Conflict and feminist theories see it as a site of **patriarchy and property**. Both are

usable in India if neither is treated as the whole story.

Changing patterns

Age at marriage has risen with schooling, especially for girls in many states, though child marriage persists in belts of Rajasthan, Bihar and elsewhere. Companionacy and 'arranged love' mixes have grown in urban middle classes; caste **endogamy** remains high. Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages exist and attract violence and social boycott. Dowry has not died with education; it has inflated in some status groups. Divorce and separation are more thinkable, still stigmatised. Migration produces delayed co-residence and translocal conjugality. Live-in relations and the **Navtej Johar** (2018) reading of **Section 377** changed the public status of same-sex intimacy, while **marriage equality** remains legally unsettled after later litigation. NRI and app-mediated matches extend the field without dropping filters of caste and language.

Hindu Succession reform, the **Domestic Violence Act**, and optional civil marriage slightly shift bargaining inside the couple. Personal law plurality means Muslim, Christian and customary marriages change on different clocks.

Implications

For **caste**, stable endogamy means caste continues even when occupation opens. For **gender**, later marriage and schooling can raise women's voice; dowry, honour and unpaid care can still intensify. For **demography**, later and fewer marriages interact with falling fertility and with a marriage squeeze in some sex-ratio-distorted regions. For the **household**, conjugality gains against the joint karta in some classes, while wedding expenditure and kin ritual expand as status theatre. For **politics**, love jihad discourses, anti-conversion marriage laws in some states, and khap intervention show the state and community fighting over the same institution.

Kinship studies also show that marriage is the hinge of **alliance versus descent** debates. If North Indian village exogamy and gotra rules loosen only at the edges, the North remains an alliance-avoiding, descent-heavy field. If Dravidian cross-cousin practice declines with schooling, South Indian kinship is changing its reproduction rule, not only its wedding film style. **Uberoi** and family sociologists would add that the state now marries people through registration, NRI law, and welfare lists, so marriage is also a **citizenship event**.

Changing patterns therefore do not mean the death of arranged caste marriage. They mean a **differentiated field**: a metropolitan edge of choice and delay, and a large core of endogamous arrangement, with conflict at the boundary.

Flow diagram

Marriage institution -> Caste endogamy
Marriage institution -> Gender and property
Marriage institution -> Demography
Education law migration -> Marriage institution
Education law migration -> New patterns of choice and delay

Conclusion

Marriage is sociologically important because it reproduces groups, property and gender. Indian patterns are shifting in age, media and law, but endogamy and honour still organise most matches. The implication is a split modernity: more individual bargaining inside a caste marriage market, not a general free market of individuals.

Facts & figures

Special Marriage Act 1954

Civil marriage across religion; a legal alternative to community personal law.

Navtej Johar 2018

Read down **Section 377**; decriminalised consensual same-sex intimacy, not the same as marital status.

Hindu Succession 2005

Coparcenary for daughters alters what marriage and natal family mean for property.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/sociology-gs-2/2024/why-is-the-study-of-marriage-important-in-sociology-analyse-the-implications-of-changing-marriage-patterns-for-indian-society/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com