

**BSW-122**  
**Society, Social Institutions and**  
**Social Problems**

**Block**

**3**

**SOCIAL INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE**

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**UNIT 1**

**Marriage and Family: Choosing of Life Partner**

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**UNIT 2**

**Marriage in India**

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**UNIT 3**

**Society, Culture, Religion and Family Values**

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**Unit 4**

**Marital Life and Role Expectations**

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## **BLOCK INTRODUCTION**

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Block 3 of the course on Society, Social, Social Institutions and Social Problems is on 'Social Institution of Marriage'. In all there are four units. Unit 1 deals with 'Marriage and Family: Choosing of Life Partner'. In this unit, we have dealt with certain very important concepts. Besides describing what is 'marriage', care is also taken to describe the functions and purpose of marriage, historical development of marriage, family and type of family patterns as well as the concept of choosing a partner. Unit 2 is on 'Marriage in India'. In this unit, the concept and views on marriage have been explained. Apart from this explaining changing patterns in family life, emphasis is also given to aspects of value formation in family life as well as influence of socio-cultural and religious dimension in the formation of values. Unit 4 is on 'Marital Life and Role Expectations'. Important issues like role expectations in marital life, role conflicts and role changes in different phases of marriage have been described in this unit.

Taken together, all the four units are unique in their own way and provide you adequate information on crucial issues involved in marital life.



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# UNIT 1 MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: CHOOSING LIFE PARTNER

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*\*Mary Mathew*

## Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Meaning of Marriage
- 1.3 The Functions and Purposes of Marriage
- 1.4 The Historical Development of Marriage
- 1.5 The Family
- 1.6 Types of Family Pattern
- 1.7 Choosing a Partner
- 1.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.9 Key Words
- 1.10 Suggested Readings
- 1.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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The purpose of the unit is to develop a deeper understanding of marriage and family. After studying the unit, you will be able to:

- Define marriage and family;
- Compare different types of relationship in family life;
- Explain the functions and purpose of marriage;
- Identify interest in acquiring more knowledge about marriage and family; and
- Apply this knowledge in your own life situations.

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

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The family forms an essential part of human evolution, without which human existence would have been impossible. The human infant may be perhaps the most helpless creature at the time of birth. It needs a long period of protection by and association with parents. This itself points to the need and main purpose of a family.

The basic course has already explained the need and importance of Family Life Education. This unit explains the concept of marriage and the purpose and functions of marriage and family. A deeper

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understanding of the commitment involved in family life would help one to think more seriously about marriage and family.

This Unit has tried to highlight the points to be remembered in choosing a life partner. Who is to select the partner and how to select the partner are some usual questions that any young people may ask. The answers to these questions are discussed on the basis of social expectations and the social and psychological factors involved in the choice.

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## **1.2 MEANING OF MARRIAGE**

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Marriage is a common term that we come across in our daily life. Have you ever thought of it seriously? What is the meaning of marriage? Is it a mere relationship between a man and woman to live together and have children? Is it a man-made institution? When did such an institution come into existence? It will be really interesting to ponder over the answers to the above questions – much more so about the meaning, scope, purpose and history of marriage.

The term ‘marriage’ has different meanings and connotations for different people. To some, marriage is a relationship between men and women for the propagation of the human species. Some people take it as a license for sex. Yet another group considers marriage as a means for companionship. Marriage comprises all these views and much more. It is a very complex institution which can not be defined in a sentence or two. Many sociologists and philosophers have given differing views about the meaning and scope of marriage.

Marriage is not an integral part of human nature, but it is a man-made custom or institution which was present even in prehistoric times. It is not a natural relationship but a conscious commitment between a man and a woman. With the advancement of civilization marriage became a social function with religious and legal sanction.

As stated earlier, marriage has different meanings and connotations. Let us look at some of them.

### **Marriage as a Relationship**

Marriage is one of the deepest and most fulfilling of human relationships. It has existed in varying forms throughout the history of man, responding to the fundamental needs and social aspirations of each generation.

### **Marriage as an Institution**

Marriage is a union of man and woman their bodies, minds and souls, emotions and desires. The essence of this union is love. Marriage is considered to be a primary relationship, because it is a personal relationship between the partners. Lin Yutan gives a beautiful explanation of marriage. He says “woman is water and man is clay and the clay holds the water and gives it substance in which water moves and lives and has its full being”.

### **The Biological Aspect of Marriage**

The animal mates, but man marries. Looking from the biological point of view, we can say that mating is a biological matter, while marriage is a social affair. The sex instinct is one of the basic instincts for reproduction. In the case of man, however, from the beginning of society, this instinct has been subjected to distinct regulations and control. Marriage may be defined as the mechanism of regulation and control of biological reproduction.

In the animal kingdom there are no definite rules for mating because they have no society and social norms. But in human society there are various kinds of social controls, religious limitations and even laws of marriage. For human beings, the sex relations are allowed within certain permitted limits. Marriage is a holy sanctifying, life long, comprehensive, loving union of a man and a woman, leading to the procreation of children.

### **The Social Aspects of Marriage**

We have seen that there are certain biological aspects of human marriage, while there are more social aspects in it. These social aspects are most important in human society. The basic factor in marriage is love. True love between the man and woman in marriage is a complete giving of one to another. There should be a union of the souls and minds. There should be a union of emotions and wills. All these imply complete, exclusive and lifelong giving of one's self to the other.

### **The Psychological Aspect of Marriage**

Marriage is an integral part of human existence. In marriage man's basic longing for communication and completeness finds its natural culmination. Human beings find their fulfillment as men and women. Marriage is the means by which two persons seeking a more perfect life give themselves totally to each other.

### **The Legal Aspect of Marriage**

The union between man and woman must be legitimate. So, marriage should get legal, social and civil acceptance. Legal sanction of marriage is based on prevailing social norms and customs. It varies from one society to another. The marriage can be legally contracted only by those who are able to perform the basic act of marriage. The legal minimum age for marriage in India is 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys.

#### **Check Your Progress I**

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.  
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is the meaning of marriage?

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## **1.3 THE FUNCTIONS AND PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE**

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Have you ever thought of the question why a person should get married? The first answer that comes to your mind may be for the propagation of the human species. Let us try to find the answer.

### **Marriage for Union and Procreation**

What is the purpose of marriage? If it is only for procreation, marriage is not a must. Of course, one of the important purposes of marriage is union and procreation. The union in marriage is a medium of physical, psychological and spiritual communication of love and commitment of self.

### **Marriage for Sex**

The natural end of sexual relationship is conception of children. Hence the procreation of children is an essential purpose of marriage. An equally important purpose is the union itself, the mutual love, pleasure and happiness of the husband and wife. Marriage, therefore, fosters mutual love and attachment. It provides for the legitimate expression of sexual satisfaction.

### **Marriage for Companionship and Friendship**

The most important need of the human being is the intimacy in living with and making a commitment to another human being. What is friendship? According to Jenet Kid, "Friendship is having a privileged position in someone else's life and giving them a privileged position in our own. It is sharing ourselves with those we like".

Friendship is the cornerstone of marriage which lasts even when the sexual desire is over. It remains even after the children are grown up and settled. It only deepens with years. This is what is meant by companionship or friendship. It enriches man and woman by increasing unselfishness and by deepening his/her capacity for love, and sacrifice. Hence marriage is love, it is sex, it is family, but ultimately and essentially it is companionship or friendship.

### **Marriage for Socialization**

Marriage is a means through which the socialization and growth of a person reach its fulfillment. It provides numerous opportunities to bring about security, co-operation and love. Another purpose of marriage is to create a family to provide the natural environment in which a person can realize himself/herself and reach out to others in an attitude of dedication and service. It gives society a firm base, and children a stable environment to grow.

### **Marriage for Matured Relationship**

Still another purpose of marriage is attainment of maturity through the establishment of relationships in marriage. Rearing and educating the children also is a purpose of marriage. The parent-child relationship is an intimate relationship.

### **Some Practical Purposes or Utilitarian Aspects of Marriage**

1. It ensures security to women who have to undergo long periods of pregnancy.
2. It provides security to the offspring.
3. It ensures the health life which gives stability to society.
4. It makes society more cohesive through relationships.
5. It simplifies blood relationships.

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| <b>Check Your Progress II</b> |
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**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the main functions of marriage?

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## 1.4 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MARRIAGE

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It is interesting to study the historical development of marriage. When did it commence? How did it attain its present structure and status? It is not easy to get the facts about marriage in the prehistoric era. We have to depend upon the studies of anthropologists and other available details of folklore and traditions.

Even though the religious books mention marriage, we cannot conclude that marriage came into existence with the beginning of human life on earth. In the pre-historic ages people lived like animals and there were no social norms and rules to guide them. But gradually due to his superiority over the animals, man began to formulate some social patterns of behaviour.

In the early stages of human life, sexual life and procreation was a natural process. The earth was not owned by anybody. Nobody bothered to own the land. But gradually man began to cultivate the land and came to know about the productivity of the soil. This knowledge motivated him to own the land. This also led to many disputes and fights for the ownership of land. Finally, they reached an agreement with regard to some type of control or laws about the ownership of land. This is evident from social contract theory.

The desire of man to own the land, which is productive, led him to the idea of owning anything that is productive. Knowing that the woman can procreate children, men tried to own more women and thereby get more and more children. This also ended the conflicts and fights. Gradually restrictions and regulations came in procuring women. This finally culminated in the form of a social institution of marriage with all its laws and regulations and customs.

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## 1.5 THE FAMILY

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Just like marriage, family is also a very familiar term. We all come from families. We see families around us. Family is an integral part of our life. Can we answer these questions: What is a family? What is the need for a family? Who constitutes the family? Is it a mere union of parents and children? What is the relationship between the members in a family? Is the family a human invention or a natural evolution? Is it found among animals also? What are the forms of family in different ages and different cultures?

## **The Need for a Family**

The family was a necessary precondition for human evolution, for without its human existence would not have been possible. The human infant is born helpless. It has a potential for physical and mental development. But it requires years to achieve its maturity. In the case of animals, their young ones are able to take care of themselves shortly after birth. But for human beings the long period of pregnancy and the prolonged helplessness in infancy and childhood, needs a long association of parents. This has resulted in the formation of a family.

## **The Evolution of the Family**

The family as a group of parents and offspring existed even before the appearance of man upon this planet. Family like association is seen among birds and higher mammals. The chimpanzee is a highly social creature which lives in family groups. The family life of apes and human beings can be compared. There is a selection of a mate, interaction between male and female, levels of control among father, mother and children and a child is taken care of primarily by mother.

There is a great deal of difference between the family life of apes, mammals and birds and that of man. In the former case, the nature of family life throughout the world is the same in any given species. But in the case of man, family behaviour varies greatly from one society to another. In the animal family, the behaviour of the members is motivated by instinct, whereas in the human family it is motivated by culture. The animal family is largely biological in nature, while in the human family its structure and functions are shaped by culture.

According to many sociologists, man in course of his evolution might have developed one or another family form as determined by situational and historical factors. In short, we can say that geographic environment, economic conditions and culture rather than biological factors were the determinants of human family patterns. In man, the family is not only a biological group it is first and foremost a social institution.

## **The Definition of Family**

We have seen that the structure and function of the family varies from place to place. So, it is difficult to give a definition of the term 'family'. However, the definition of the family must include that which is common to the great variety of human groups to which the term 'family' has been applied. There are certain characteristics that are common to the human family in all times and in all places that differentiate the family from other social groups. According to Ernest W Burgess and Harvey. J. Lock, these characteristics are:

1. The family is composed of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption. The bond between husband and wife is that of marriage, and the relationship between parents and children is generally that of blood and sometimes that of adoption.
2. The members of the family typically live together under one roof and constitute a single household. Sometimes, as in the past, the household is large consisting of three or four or even five generations. Today the household is small, consisting of the husband and wife with or without one or two children.

3. The family is a unity of interacting and intercommunicating persons. They play the roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister. These roles are defined by the community.
4. The family maintains a common culture derived mainly from the general culture. Usually, this culture is the outcome of the merging of the two cultures of the husband and wife.

On the basis of the above characteristics the family may be defined “as a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption, constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social roles as husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister and creating and maintaining a common culture”.

A family is a community of people living together in an environment which is a centre of healing, a place where one can live, where one can admit one’s frustrations, stupidities and anger to people who do not retaliate. It is in the school of everyday family life, with all masks dropped and hypocrisies exposed, that man, woman and child acquire the potential to know what it is to be truly human, and fully human people have tried alternative arrangements for a family. But none of them are as efficient as a family. Children thrive best when they have a father and mother to love and protect them in a home. The parents also need the life long commitment in which love is proved.

### **The Indian Family**

The family system all over the world are changing today and family relations are becoming weaker and weaker day by day. The influence of the family over the children is weakening due to the great social, political and economic changes. In the midst of these changes, India still has a time-tested heritage of stable family structure. It is still the basic unit of our society and the medium of cultural transmission. The family still holds its solidarity and plays an important role in the formation of values in our society.

In spite of the solidarity in the Indian families, a salient social transformation is taking place in the Indian families also. With the empowerment of women and the women getting more and more educated, the traditional family patterns are gradually disappearing. Modernization has its roots in westernization and it has questioned the traditional family values and structures. Parental influence is also weakening day by day. The religious and moral values present in the family are giving way to secular and pragmatic values.

### **Check Your Progress III**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is the need for a family in the growth and development of a person?

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## 1.6 TYPES OF FAMILY PATTERN

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The three chief historical stages in the evolution of the family are:

- i) the large patriarchal family characteristic of ancient society;
- ii) the small patriarchal family which had its origin in the medieval period; and
- iii) the modern democratic or nuclear family which is the product of the industrial revolution and the economic and social changes that followed.

The large patriarchal family was prevalent in China, India and Japan. Here the senior male member was the head of the family. He lived with his children and grandchildren which came up to four or five generations. The patriarch, the head of the family, had supreme authority over all other members of the family. This type of family was a result of the agricultural and pastoral mode of existence.

The small patriarchal family was the second stage in the evolution of the family structure. It consisted of husband and wife and children and one or two grandparents and one or two unmarried brothers and sisters of the husband and wife. This type of family was mostly seen in urban areas where the members used to work in industries. Here also the senior male member had the supreme authority over the whole family.

The democratic or nuclear family consists of only the husband and wife and the children. This type of family system is more prevalent in modern society. Here the husband and wife share more responsibility and are more free. They can take their own decisions. Children can also join in the decision making consistent with the advancement in age.

### **Functions of the Family**

The family is the basic unit of society. Today's family faces lot of problems due to the social changes. In spite of the problems in the family, it continues to exist because it meets the needs of children, adults and society at large. The family:

- provides for the reproduction of the race;
- passes on the cultural heritage of the group;
- provides physical security, protection and the material opportunities for living and growth;

- meets the deep emotional needs of both children and adults and provides for their social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development;
- develops in its members socially desirable character traits and acceptable moral standards;
- develops an orderly system of living among its members with provision for eating, sleeping, school, work, etc., and
- develops sound relationships among members of the family and between them and their neighbours.

The family thus meets the basic physiological and psychological needs of its members.

**The Social Role of the Family**

Apart from the above functions the family has a social role also. The family, being the basic unit of society, has a vital and organic link with society. It is from the family that the citizens come and it is within the family that they find the first school of social virtues. The family is the bridge between the child and society. In the family, the child learns mutual respect, concern for others, generous service, deep solidarity, personal responsibility etc. These are the basic steps of social life. The family is thus the most effective means of humanizing and personalizing society. The family is the custodian and transmitter of values.

Society should also respect and foster the family. The family is the very first cell in the social structure and the very first social union, which is indispensable. The so-called developed countries have now realized the fact that their broken families are heading towards a great social disaster so they are exhorting the parents to strengthen the family ties. “Marriage and family are a union for which there is no substitute. Nothing can take their place. You can even say: as the families are, so will mankind be”.

**Check Your Progress IV**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Briefly explain the functions of the family.

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## 1.7 CHOOSING A PARTNER

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Now that you have learned so much about marriage and family, you will be in a position to answer the question “How will you choose your partner for life”? Marriage is a life-long commitment and relationship and hence the selection of a partner is very important. The choice of an ideal partner is one of the basic requirements for a successful marriage.

Suppose you are going for a journey. You would like to have a companion who is agreeable to you in all respects. So, what about your companion, who is to travel with you through your whole life, till death? Marriage is one of the three great events in life along with birth and death. Birth just happens and death is beyond our control. Marriage is however something which can be decided. We can decide whom to marry and when to marry.

There is a common saying among the Arabs “If you want to select a horse, select from among hundred horses. If it is a friend it should be one among thousand. But if it is a wife, it should be from thousands”. This implies the importance of choosing a partner in marriage. It should not be a casual or careless selection. It should be a long thought out process.

Very few people are inclined to analyse the factors that are to be looked into in selecting a partner. There is a common belief that marriages are made in heaven or it is fate, luck or providence. But this issue of choice of spouse is not something to be completely left to fate or luck. A scientific approach is necessary in the selection. There are certain determinants for mate selection.

The patterns of arrangement for the selection of the mate differ from culture to culture. In certain cultures, marriage is primarily a social and economic arrangement between two families. Here the choice of the mate is still the responsibility of the parents. Parents select the bride or bridegroom for their children. The young couple have little choice in this matter. They may not have the opportunity to become acquainted before the wedding. This type of marriage is known as arranged marriage.

Arranged marriages are now giving way to selection by the young people themselves. Both procedures have their advantages and disadvantages. Mate selection, when arranged by parents, stressed social and economic considerations. They minimized or even ignored the sentiments of love and interpersonal relations of the young people. The youngsters make the choice on the basis of compatibility and personal attraction. They may not conform to parental standards like caste, religion, economic security etc.

The best pattern is to let the young people find out their own mates with the guidance and consent of the parents. This pattern is known as guided choice. Anyway, parents should guide their children without showing too much worry or haste. Allow the young people to decide on their partners as far as they can.



But in every case, their elders should be the controlling factor. At the same time, parents should not give the impression that they have a readymade decision in their minds. Youngsters on their part should rely on their parents, recognizing their experience and their sincere desire for the good of their children.

As said earlier, marriage is a life-long relationship and commitment. There are certain qualities or social expectations that are commonly appreciated in a partner. There should be compatibility between the partners in maturity, health, behaviour patterns or character, caste and religion, economic status, education and intelligence, attitudes, and values or the basic orientation to life etc. Let us consider them one by one.

### **Maturity**

Under 'maturity' come physical maturity, emotional maturity and social and intellectual maturity. Maturity is a term which comprises many things. When we say that the partner should have the maturity for a married life, it means the ability to take up the full responsibility of a family.

Age is one important factor that comes under physical maturity. According to the Indian Marriage Act, the minimum age for marriage for woman is 18 and for man is 21. But from practical experience it is seen that the ideal age for woman is 21 to 24 and for man is 25 to 30. By that time, they are physically mature and emotionally stable. If the man or woman lacks physical maturity, he/she may find it difficult to make marital adjustments and to take up the responsibility as husband and wife and as parents.

What should be the age difference between the partners? Who should be older? The social expectation is that the man should be older and there should not be much difference of age between the partners. But for so many practical reasons, it may not be possible to strictly adhere to this. Still, it is always good to stick on to these expectations to avoid further complications later on. One of the reasons for marital breakdown is the great or wide disparity of age between husband and wife.

### **Emotional Maturity**

It consists of the ability to control one's emotions and passions. Emotional maturity helps to develop self-restraint and the attitude of self-sacrifice. These are the essential requisites for a happy married life. Emotional maturity can be tested only at the times of crisis. He will adapt his course of action, overcome obstacles and accept the inevitable with grace and calmness. To an immature person, any frustration may bring about temper tantrums.

An emotionally matured person is able to avoid frequent bad mood and has the ability to establish and maintain personal relationships. He is able to endure normal discomforts and disappointments and to overcome suspicion and jealousy. In short, he has the ability to give and receive that is ability to love.

Empathy is another characteristic of an emotionally matured persons. It is ability to perceive the feelings of others. It involves the willingness to

recognize the needs of others and to assume the responsibility of meeting them. Getting married means taking up a responsibility for a life time. The partners have to meet each other's needs, bring up children, support the family financially and look after the members of the family. Lifelong commitment is one feature of the responsibility of marriage. It is related to the stability that comes with maturity.

A clear sign of emotional maturity is the ability to reflect before speaking and the readiness to talk with others. This is highly essential in husband/wife relationship.

An emotionally mature person has, first of all, insight and foresight in his thinking. He can evaluate himself as well as the world around him in a realistic manner. He can also face the facts of life realistically and anticipate the results of his action. He develops a sense of independence. He is able to make his own judgments and decisions.

The maturity which marriage requires is not the achievement of one day. Emotional maturity can be achieved only by the satisfaction of the various needs of the child at each stage of development. Proper disciplining of emotions is necessary during the childhood for attaining emotional maturity, which results in self-confidence, self-control and affectional maturity.

What is affectional maturity? It may be an unfamiliar term for you. It is the capacity to relate with people of different groups. The infant is at first interested in himself/herself or his/her mother. This interest is then shifted to playmates of his own sex during school age and to the opposite sex during adolescence. When the person comes to maturity, the affectional maturity is towards his partner. One who is ready for marriage should have this affectional maturity so as to develop a good husband wife relationship. This is basic requirement for marital harmony.

### **Social Maturity**

Social maturity is evident when one can relate oneself to others in a selfless and responsible way. One should not think only in terms of immediate wish fulfillments or satisfaction or personal desires. The main signs of social maturity are respect for others, honesty, frankness, courage and the ability to provide whatever a family needs.

An emotionally mature person need not necessarily be socially mature if he has not experienced a social life. Social maturity comes from the fulfillment of one's quota of premarital living. Every boy and girl should have an experience of social life before marriage. Usually after completing this education, youngsters are employed and they have a 'free' time to assume the responsibilities of life and mingle with people. During this time, they may come across persons of other sex, whom they may choose as their partners in life. This is a time of fantasy. Anyway, this free time before marriage is essential for acquiring social maturity.

After exploring for a partner, they finally settle down, and are ready for marriage. One characteristic of social maturity is one's willingness to



disregard unknown potential marriage partners in their fantasy. They will be ready to commit themselves to build up a relationship with a particular person.

It is also important to be independent for a while. Having just become free from parents, it is too early to take on the bonds of matrimony. Spare time can be used as one may deem fit. Jobs can be changed. Travels can be made according to the availability of money and time. Nobody else's wishes have to be consulted, nor moods catered to.

Since they were more closely supervised than boys during childhood and adolescence, they have yet to achieve a full sense of personal identity. Usually many girls in India, especially in the rural areas, do not get this free time for socialization and acquiring social maturity. This is because they are married immediately after their schooling or graduation. Most of them are not permitted to work outside their homes. This is a real drawback as far as marriage is concerned.

### **Intellectual Maturity**

Intellectual maturity lies in the ability to understand persons, events, situations and problems. It is the capacity to formulate one's ideas, opinions and judgments without depending on others.

For developing intellectual maturity, one must have a certain level of education according to his/her social status. One must be able to give a meaning and purpose to his/her life, if he/she is intellectually mature.

As we grow up, we gradually learn to understand and evaluate ourselves better. We come to know of our own strengths and weaknesses, our abilities and disabilities. We gain insight into our feelings, thinking and behaviour. We also develop foresight. We learn to face realistically the facts of life and to anticipate the results of our action. We learn to foresee the possible consequences of our behaviour. We no longer permit our desires to dominate completely our thinking or action.

Mature thinking and feeling express themselves in mature action and behaviour. We show control and flexibility in our behaviour. We are neither rigid nor compulsive but adapt our actions according to the situation. We can accept authority and discipline as well as responsibility and power. We learn to co-operate with the people and make the necessary adjustments and adaptation in life.

An individual should show these signs of intellectual maturity before he/she plans to marry. It is essential for promotion of desirable personality development and adjustments in marriage. Self realization is essential to understand the behaviour of others. "Know thyself" is an important principle in mental health. For good marital adjustments, knowledge of self is an essential factor.

Only an intellectually matured person can know the limitations of others. A person who aims at an unattainable goal meets with frustrations. Intellectual maturity is essential for having 'frustration tolerance'. The married partners

need high frustration tolerance to face problem situations wisely and to make wise decisions.

Now we have seen how important maturity in selecting a mate is. Only a person having all the above types of maturation will be a good partner in married life. Often it is not easy to evaluate correctly, the herself in the best high, hiding the negative aspects on his/her personality. Therefore in mate selection, it is necessary to go beyond the external appearance and behaviour. You will have to closely observe the behaviour of the person in different situation and circumstances. How a person acts in a crisis or a critical situation will show his/her real self and maturity.

### **Health and Physical Structure**

A happy married life is very closely related to the health of the partners. So this is an important factor to be looked into in selecting a mate. The parents should be healthy to have children of good health. In some western countries, the partners have to produce a medical certificate before marriage. This is ideal, especially to eliminate people with hereditary diseases.

It is advisable not to have marriage relations between person having a close blood relationship. The children born from such couples may have hereditary diseases of both the families. It is also necessary to look out for the RH factor of the blood. If the husband and wife have different RH groups i.e positive and negative, it may affect the children. So, care should be taken to see that the partners has compatible blood groups.

HIV testing also should be done before marriage, wherever scope for doubt exists, to avoid future problems and breakdowns. The presence of a health defect in a person may not prevent one from marrying, but it is necessary that both know about it and are ready to face its consequences together.

Physical structure is another factor in the selection of mate. There should not be much disparity in physical structure (height, weight etc. colour and general appearance). However, physical attraction or physical expectation in the Indian context is that the husband should have a bigger structure than the wife. Regarding general beauty, the usual practice is that woman's beauty is more looked into than a man's. In a man, "manliness" is the usual criteria that is looked for.

Physical appearance and beauty are relative terms and vary according to cultures. This is not a very important factor in selecting a mate. Anyway, beauty should not be the main criteria for selection. There is a Chinese proverb "Marrying a woman only on the basis of her beauty is like buying a building merely by looking at the outside painting". Young people give too much importance to these criteria which is not wise.

### **Behaviour Patterns or Character and Conduct**

If you want to enroll for any course, you need a character or conduct certificate. In order to enter into a profession also, very often you need a conduct certificate, but to get married do you produce any conduct certificate?

Unfortunately, many persons do not give enough importance to this aspect, which is one of the most important criteria for mate selection. Even if your partner has all the other physical qualities, economic and social status and education, if his character is not satisfactory, married life will be a real hell. At the same time even if there is disparity in age, caste, religion, education etc. and the partner has good character the marriage will still work.

Character in married life means good will, sense of humor, the ability to love, honesty, responsibility, concern for others, give and take attitudes, cheerfulness, discipline, faith in God, fidelity openness, values in life, etc. The couple has a long life before them to spend together. Much of their happiness will depend upon their ability to share, to agree and to work together. All this presuppose in them the presence of strong similarities with regard to basic concepts of life. There is no doubt that a certain number of differences can be useful to enrich the partners. But ultimately the person who shows more similarities should be considered as the best make.

According to the perspectives in psychology, a person's character is formed during his/her early years of life. So, his/her family is mainly responsible for character formation. As in the case of maturity, it is very difficult to assess the character of a person with whom we do not have an intimate personal relationship. In choosing a partner this is not always possible. His/her family relationships and the life of the family can be taken as one of the important sources for assessing the character. Persons brought up in unhappy, insecure, and broken families may have many personality disorders and peculiar behaviour patterns.

Some parents consider marriage as a solution for the behaviour problems of their children, especially sons. A drunkard, a drug addict or a criminal may marry a poor girl having low socio-economic status. The poor girl is supposed to 'change the prodigal son'. Usually this ends up with a marital breakdown and lot of misery for the girl. The innocent girl becomes a scapegoat.

### **Caste and Religion**

When the selection of the bride or bridegroom is made by parents they insist on caste and religion. But when the selection comes to youngster, we come across many inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Many of them are successful. These types of marriages are good for social and national integration – and harmony among different castes and religions. But there are many practical problems of adjustments in such marriages. In India marriages are between two families. The families may not accept such marriages and interfere with each one's customs and life-style.

When two persons from two different castes or religions marry, they must be willing to accept and respect each other's faith and values. Usually, the problem comes with the birth of a child. Both the parents will consciously or unconsciously try to practice his/her own customs and values which result in a conflict for the children. If both parents are strictly secular, such problems can be eliminated to some extent.

It is safer to choose a mate from the same caste, religion and culture. Even in the developed countries, where mate selection is done mostly by couples, preferences are for mates from the same race, religion and culture.

### **Social and Economic Status**

The partners should have as far as possible, the same economic and social status. The family should have a stable income to pull on. Today dowry has become a great social problem in India. Men are demanding huge amounts of money from the wife's home. Many bride burnings are due to the problems of dowry. Of course, the girl should have an equal share of her father's wealth. Usually this share is handed over to the boy at the time of marriage. In many cases, the wife has no say about the dowry money, and it is considered as the property of the husband and his family. In many marriages, dowry is the main criteria for selecting the wife. This is very unfortunate.

The partners should have the financial stability to establish and run a family. But the whole financial assistance should not be expected from the wife's family. As far as possible the wife also should have an independent income. Marrying a person who is very much above or below the economic and social status may cause many adjustment problems for both the partners. In many love marriages, economic disparity may not be looked into which may result in marital problems later on. It is very difficult for love to flourish in a 'poor' circumstance.

### **Education and Intelligence**

There should not be much disparity in these factors. In Indian villages, most women are still illiterate, men do not consider literacy as a pre-requisite for marriage. This is very sad state of affairs. Women should be educated to be intelligent wives and efficient home managers. An educated mother is the best insurance for the education of her children. As in the case of physical structure, men in India prefer partners with equal or a little lower level of education. If the wife is more educated, the husband may develop an inferiority complex.

Regarding intelligence, both the partners should be intelligent enough to manage a home. Intellectual companionship between the partners is a very important factor which is not given adequate emphasis in Indian marriages.

It is not advisable to marry persons who are mentally retarded. The intelligence of the parents will be inherited by children to a very large extent. So, intelligence is an important factor in mate selection.

### **Attitudes and Values – Basic Orientation to Life**

Areas where strong similarity is required are attitudes and values and the basic orientation to life. These include goals, values, religious convictions and general ideas about justice, honesty, truth etc. A simple tolerance of other's beliefs or conceptions is not enough to establish a lifelong partnership.

The partners should fully agree with the idea of marriage, its meaning and purpose. It is very important for them to have the same concept about fidelity,

reciprocal roles in the family, sex, children and in-laws. It is good to have a spontaneous agreement in fields such as entertainment, participation in cultural, social and political activity, religious practices and community life.

Temperamental compatibility of the mates prevents problems in marriages. Temperament means the physiological activity level and response patterns of the individual. The behaviour controlling glands of one individual may be different from that of another individual. Such biological differences help to explain many of the conflicts in marriage. For example, why one spouse is always active and the other inactive. To avoid all these problems, temperamental compatibility should be given due importance in mate selection.

Compatibility of needs is another factor which should be looked into the choice of the mate. There is evidence that persons seek a mate who will compliment their strengths and deficiencies. Person with complimentary needs tend to marry. Many boys and girls are attracted to each other because each satisfies the other's need. The need so satisfied may be the need for love, affection, sympathy, understanding etc.

Now we have seen some of the important qualities that are to be looked for in a mate. The selection of partner is not an easy process. It is an ongoing process which requires time and experience. It is better for the partners to have an opportunity to become well acquainted with each other. This called courtship. It provides the two persons the opportunity to test each other's feelings, ideas and orientations to life. This may help them to decide whether a life together will possible. It also provides them occasions to reveal to each other the different sides of their temperaments.

Inspite of the above advantages of courtship, it is generally not followed or accepted in Indian marriages. But it is a must in western countries. Anyway, it is good to have some acquaintance with the partner before marriage.

One may not get a partner who can satisfy all the above criteria of mate selection. Some compromises have to be made in some aspects. But once the selection is made, one should accept his/her partner totally. 'Accept toto' is a key word in marital success. Since it is not easy to change the behaviour of an adult the only way is to accept your partner with his/her merits and demerits and adjust accordingly.

There is no 'I' or 'You' in a marriage relationship, but only the 'We'. The husband and wife should become one and at the same time keep their own identities and individualities. The new Mathematics of marriage is 1+1 should be 'big one'; it should never be a -2- or a -11- where the partners proceed in two parallel lines which never meet.

#### **Check Your Progress V**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the

end of this unit.

1) What are the main criteria in selecting a partner?

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## 1.8 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, you have learnt about marriage, and family and the criteria for choosing a partner. Marriage is a lifelong conscious commitment between a man and a woman. It is a contract, a union and an institution. Marriage has many biological, social, psychological and legal aspects also. The main functions and purposes of marriage are, union and procreation, companionship and sex and socialization of the individual.

Family is one of the oldest social institutions. The human being is the most helpless creature at birth. It needs a long association with parents for its growth and development. This resulted in the evolution of the family. A family has certain distinct characteristics. It is a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood relation or adoption. They live together under one roof. The family members interact with each other in different roles as father, mother, husband, wife, children etc., it has a common culture also.

In India the family system is still stable and has solidarity. There are three types of families in India, the Joint Family, the Nuclear Family and the Extended Family. Each type has its own advantages and disadvantages.

The family has many functions. It meets the needs of children, adults and society. It provides for the reproduction of the race, physical security, protection etc. The family meets the physical, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual needs of all the members. It is the basic unit of our society.

The selection of a partner in marriage is very important, because it is a lifelong commitment. The choice can be made by parents, by self or jointly by both. There are certain social expectations that are commonly appreciated in a partner. There should be between the partners in all aspects of life. Some of these aspects are maturity: physical, emotional, social and intellectual; character, caste and religion; economic status, education, attitudes and values and orientation to life.

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## 1.9 KEY WORDS

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**Compatibility** : The capability of husband and wife to adjust with each other in all areas of life.

**Courtship** : The time before marriage, when a boy and girl try to win the



affection of each other. In western countries there is usually a period of courtship between the couples before marriage. During this period, they can know each other very intimately.

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## 1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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## 1.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress I

- 1) The term marriage has different meanings for different people. Marriage is a relationship. It is one of the deepest and most fulfilling of human relationships. For some people marriage is an institution. Marriage is described as a freely made contract between psychological aspect and a legal aspect as well.

### Check Your Progress II

- 1) Marriage has many purpose and functions. One of the most important purpose of marriage is union and procreation. Marriage is also for sex and companionship. It also helps for the socialization of the individual. Marriage creates a family to provide the natural environment in which a person can have full growth and development.

### Check Your Progress III

- 1) The human infant is born helpless. It requires years to achieve physical and mental maturity. So, the child needs a long association with parents. Hence the human being needs a family for its growth and development.

### Check Your Progress IV

- 1) Family has many functions in society like reproduction of the race, passing the cultural heritage and providing physical security and protection. Family contributes to the emotional, social and spiritual development of its members. Apart from these family has social functions also.

### Check Your Progress V

- 1) There should be compatibility between the partners in maturity: Physical, emotional, social and intellectual; health, behaviour patterns, caste, religion, economic status, education and intelligence, attitude and values or the basic orientation to life. The partners should have the same concept about the purpose and functions of their marriage and family.





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## UNIT 2 MARRIAGE IN INDIA

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\* Lizy James

### Contents

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Concept of Marriage
- 2.3 Views of Marriage
- 2.4 Forms of Marriage
- 2.5 Marriage among Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Tribals
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Key Words
- 2.8 Suggested Readings
- 2.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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The purpose of this unit is to provide you with an understanding about the concept of marriage, marriage as a social institution, and different forms of marriage.

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the concept of marriage;
- explain the various views on marriage; and
- list the different forms of marriage.

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit, you have learned about marriage and family and the considerations to bear in mind in choosing a life partner. The conceptual aspects of marriage and forms of marriage are discussed in this unit.

The popular concept of marriage is that it is a union between a man and a woman. Another concept about marriage is that it is a social sanction of the union and it is accomplished by different rituals and ceremonies. Yet another view about marriage is that it is a system of roles involving primary relationships. The Hindu concept about marriage is that it is a sanskar or dharma. Before studying the traditional and modern system of Hindu marriage, it is important to know the sociological significance of marriage.

Marriage is one of the deepest and most complex human relationships. It is the cornerstone of a society. It involves social sanction, generally in the form of civil or religious ceremony, authorizing two persons of opposite sexes to engage in sexual union. Dr. Radhakrishnan (former President of India) observe “marriage as not a mere convention, but an implicit condition of human society. It is institution devised

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for the expression and development of love. Its purpose is not only the generation and nurturing of children but also the enrichment of the personality of the husband and wife through the fulfillment of their need for a permanent comradeship, in which each may supplement the life of the other and both may achieve completeness”.

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## **2.2 CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE**

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Every individual has to play a number of roles in his or her life. Of the various roles one plays, two roles have a very great significance in life. One is the economic role and the other is the marital or family role. The former is prominent in life because one devotes quite a good part of one's career in performing it. Consider one starts earning one's livelihood at the age of 20 to 24 years and continues to do so, up to the age of 58 to 62 years. That is, the economic career is spread over to about four decades and that every day one devotes 8 to 10 hours to job/work. Thus, one can well assume the period which one's economic role consumes in one's life.

The marital role also involves about 40 to 50 years of one's life. But of these two roles, the marital role is more important than the economic role, because the latter involves secondary relations whereas, the former involves personal or primary relations.

In order to understand this, more clearly, we have to see the difference between primary and secondary relations. Primary relations are essentially unlimited, particularistic, emotionally involved, altruistic and spontaneous. But, secondary relations are typically limited, standardized, unemotional, utilitarian and contractual. Again, primary relationship in marriage is different from primary relationship in other primary groups like friendship, neighbourhood, village etc. It is in the sense that primary relationship in marriage is based on sexual relationship and this sexual relationship brings further intimacy and permanence in the relationship between a man and a woman. Primary relation in marriage has two important functions: one of need gratification and other of social control. It gratifies biological (sex satisfaction), psychological (affection and belongingness) and economic needs (food, clothing and shelter) of the individuals and also acts as a primary source of morality and ethics. When one finds one's partner performing certain tasks for him/her, he/she considers it his/her moral obligation to care for the other or to listen to the other. One is, thus, no longer free to be immoral and irresponsible.

Another sociological way of conceptualizing family is how marriage involves performing new and varied roles such as husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister and so on. Whether the persons involved are capable of performing those new roles or not, and how the inadequacy of performing these roles lead to family disorganisation. What is important in marriage is how the role enactment of one partner corresponds to the role expectations of the other.

According to Koos, a Sociologist, marriage is a dividing line between the family of orientation and family of procreation in terms of the nature of roles one performs in the two families. The roles in the family of orientation vary in infancy, childhood and adolescence and carry no responsibilities and obligations. But the roles one performs in the family of procreation after marriage as a husband/wife, a father/mother, a wage-earner, a grand-father/grand-mother, a retired person etc. have different expectations and obligations.

Thus, marriage is a miniature social system which must be kept in equilibrium if it is not to fall apart. Equilibrium requires adjustments, which in turn require give and take or some sacrifice on the part of both husband and wife. To maintain equilibrium, it requires certain tasks to be performed by someone, for example, of cooking, cleaning, wage earning, child-care and so on. Who performs which role is immaterial (though society has certain expectations from both husband and wife). What is significant is that somebody should perform these roles for the stability of marriage.

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## **2.3 VIEWS OF MARRIAGE**

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Various views have been expressed on this institution by anthropologist, sociologists and in religious texts.

Marriage is an institution in which men and women are admitted to family life, to live in the intimate personal relationship, primarily for a purpose of begetting and rearing children.

From the social point of view, marriage is an institution that serves to ensure propagation and socialization of children of a particular society. From the individual point of view, it provides assistance in bearing and raising of children and controls for the receipt and extension of affection.

Another view is that marriage is a socially legitimate sexual union, begun with a public announcement and undertaken with some idea of contract, which spells out reciprocal rights and obligations between spouses and their future children.

### **Indian Views on Marriage**

The above views represent western thinking about marriage. Now we are going to look at how Indian experts talk about marriage.

Marriage has been considered a ceremonial gift of the bride by her father, or other appropriate relative to the bride groom in order that both may together fulfill their duties which are necessary for human existence. These duties are “Dharma, Artha and Kama”. Dharma is religious duty based on ethical values, that is to do good and attain Moskha or salvation. Artha is the economic aspect of life and Kama is the physical or sexual duties to the partner and to produce children to perpetuate race. Marriage is not for sense of enjoyment, but to perpetuate the race. This is the Indian conception of marriage. It is a social duty towards the family and community.

Indian religious texts say that marriage is a religious sacrament which is considered primarily a complex of obligations, religious and moral on the one hand, and social and economic on the other hand.

The Hindu concept of marriage is that it is a sanskara (tradition) and a religious sacrament, not a contract. It is a holy union of the two souls and not simply of two bodies. It is an indissoluble bond which could be broken only by death.

On the other hand Islam says that marriage is an institution ordained for the protection of the society and in order that human beings may guard themselves from foulness and unchastity. Marriage is not a sacrament but civil contract, the objectives of which are the promotion of normal family life and the legalization of children.

Among the Christians marriage has been viewed as “ a voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of others”. This type of marriage is monogamous.

Summarizing the above views, you might have learnt that marriage is a union of two persons of different sexes to lifelong reciprocal possession of their sexual qualities, which aims at the individual’s biological, emotional, social and spiritual fulfillment and development and which cannot be achieved in isolation.

### **Hindu Marriage as Sacrament**

The Hindu view of marriage is that it is for fulfilling dharma and the need for pleasure (Kama). It is considered as a sacrament. There are several reasons for considering the Hindus marriage a sacrament.

- 1) Dharma (fulfillment of religious duties) is the most important aim of marriage.
- 2) Performance of religious ceremonies including certain rites like kanyadan, panigrahana, saptapadi etc. which are based on certain sacred formulae.
- 3) The rites are performed before Agni (the most sacred god) by reciting mantras (passage) from Vedas (the most sacred scriptures) by a Brahmin.
- 4) The union is considered indissoluble and irrevocable and husband and wife are bound to each other not only until death, but even after death.
- 5) Though a man can perform several sacraments during the course of his life, a woman can perform only one sacrament in her life i.e. marriage, hence it has great importance for her.
- 6) Emphasis is on chastity of a woman and the faithfulness of a man.
- 7) Marriage is considered a “social duty” towards the family and community and there are no ideas of individual interest and aspiration.

### **Check Your Progress I**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is the Indian view of marriage?

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2) What are the reasons to consider a Hindu marriage a sacrament?

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## 2.4 FORMS OF MARRIAGE

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Till now you have read about the concept, meaning and different views on marriage. Now you are going to learn about different forms of marriage. There have been different opinions regarding the original form of marriage. Some theorists say that primitive man lived in a state of group marriage. The group marriage in which men in a group or tribe had indiscriminate access to all women of the group and children born out of this union were considered children of the general community. There are some other social scientists who believed that monogamy was its original form. Whatever may have been the original form of marriage, at present the most prevalent form is monogamy. But polygamy, polyandry levirate and sororate forms are also found.

### **Monogamy**

Monogamy is the only form of marriage found in most societies; a man marries one woman, raises children within the wedlock and performs all rites with his mate. Monogamy has a long history of its own. Ancient Hindus regarded monogamy as the most ideal form of marriage.

### **Polygamy**

Polygamy is marriage of one male with more than one female, or what may be called the “plurality of wives”. A polygamous marriage may be unrestricted or restricted or conditional. In early Hindu society conditional polygamous marriage was practiced. According to the Dharmashastra, a man could marry again after ten years of his first marriage, if his wife is barren, or he could marry after thirteen or fourteen years if he had only daughters from his wife and wanted a son.

Manu said that, a man can marry another woman after eight years of his first marriage, if his wife is barren, after ten years if children produced by his wife do not remain alive; after eleven years if his wife produces only daughters, and immediately after first marriage if his wife is quarrelsome, rebellious, or harsh. The Mahabharata says that a man who marries twice without any rational cause commits a sin for which there is no penance.

Today polygamy has been legally prohibited. Besides the legal restrictions, people do not practice polygamy because (1) Maintaining higher living standards is not possible with more than one wife in the house, (2) Plurality of wives increase tension in the family, and (3) Women having economically independent status refuse to accept men’s dominance over them.

### **Polyandry**

Polyandry is a marriage in which one woman marries more than one man. This was found among the Todas and Kotas of Nilgiris in South India. There are two types of

polyandry which are prevalent in India. They are fraternal and non-fraternal. In the fraternal, the husbands are all brothers or possibly from cousins from the father's side. In the non-fraternal, they are not related, as among the Nairs of Kerala. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Nairs among the Hindus in Kerala practiced polyandry. But Westernmarck, a sociologist referring to these marriages, has said that polyandrous marriage unions of Nairs can hardly be called marriages because the male partners never lived with the woman and that the duties of fatherhood entirely were ignored. In 1896, the Malabar Marriage Act was passed which stabilized marriage norms among Nairs.

In the ancient literature the only example of Draupadi's marriage with five Pandavas in Mahabharata period was justified by Yudhishtira on the basis that similar marriages were performed by some of his ancestors and described it as "mother's command". Obeying the mother's command was a son's dharma. In the Mahabharata, referring to polyandry, it is said, "to have many wives is no dharma on the part of men, but to violate the duty owned to the first husband would be a great adharma in the case of woman".

### **Levirate**

Levirate is a form of marriage under which a woman is taken as the wife of the late husband's younger brother or even during the life time of the elder brother and the younger brother exercises sexual rights over the wife of the elder brother. The form prevails among the Ahirs of Haryana, some Jats and Gujars and some other castes of U.P.

### **Sororate**

In sororate, wives of a man are invariably the sisters. The origin of the word sororate lies in the Latin word 'Soror' which stands for sister. In this form of marriage several sisters are simultaneously or potentially the spouses of the same man. It is usually observed among the Nagas, Gonds and Baigas of India who pay a high bride price. It has been observed that the death of the wife or her being barren is compensated by supplying a new spouse who is generally the younger sister of the deceased women.

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## **2.5 MARRIAGE AMONG HINDUS, MUSLIMS, CHRISTIANS AND TRIBALS**

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In the Mahabharata, four distinct forms of marriages are mentioned. They are: Brahma, Gandharava, Asura and Rakshasa.

Gautama and Asvalayana, two of the ancient law-giver of the Hindus, refer to eight different forms of marriage. They are Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya, Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa and Paisacha. Among them four were considered proper and desirable (dharma) which had the approval of the father/family. The other four were regarded as undesirable (adharmya) which did not have the approval of the father. The proper marriages recognized by the "Smritis" were Brahma, Daiva, Arsha and Prajapatya while the four undesirable marriages were Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa and Paisacha.

**Brahma** was the form of marriage in which a fully dressed girl – with proper decorations and ornaments– was given to a man of the same class by performance of the ceremony mentioned in the holy texts. The bridegroom used to be learned person of pure character and selected/approved by the bride's father.



**Daiva** form of marriage was one in which the father of the girl gave her to a sacrificial priest as a part of his fee for officiating at the ceremony. The bride was properly dressed, decorated with jewellery which formed part of his fees.

In the **Arsha** form of marriages, instead of the dowry, the marriage was based on a system of barter in which the father of the bride was given a pair of cattle or two cows by the young man in exchange for his daughter.

The **Prajapatya** form of marriage is one in which the bridegroom is duly worshipped and married to the bride with due honors and blessing with these words, “go both of you and fulfill the duties of a householder”.

In the **Asura** form of marriage, bride-price is given by bridegroom to the bride’s father. This is sort of economic contract. There is no limit of the amount given.

The **Gandharva** form of marriage was the union of a willing girl with a man in solitude when both of them were in love. In this form of marriage, neither the consent of the parents nor the rites of dowry were essential. Only the will of the marrying parties was given importance. This marriage is believed to spring from desire and had sex satisfaction as its chief purpose.

The **Rakshasa** form of marriage was marriage by capture in which the girl was forcibly abducted by the man. If she cried for help and if her kinsmen came to her rescue, they were killed.

The **Paisacha** form of marriage was marriage by seduction, stealing or fraud, where the girl was sexually violated while she was asleep, intoxicated or unconscious or when incapable of protecting herself. Of these eight forms of marriage Brahma is considered to be the best marriage, where a girl is married to a boy of merit in the same caste or in a caste of equal status.

In the Mahabharata age, the two most prevalent forms of marriage were Brahma and Gandharva. Gandharva marriage was declared to be proper for a Kshatriya. Many of the heroes of Mahabharata contracted this form of marriage; for instance, Arjun married Ulupi and Chitrangada, and Dushyanta married Shakuntala.

**Swayamvara:** A variant of the Rakshasa form marriage was considered to be the norm for princely houses; for instance, Arjun won Draupadi and Nala won Damayanti.

Marriage within the caste was the prevalent order of things during the period of the Smritis and the Puranas. Marriage was rigidly regulated by the caste system and caste laws.

As a matter of fact, a man of higher caste could marry a woman of lower caste which is called **anuloma** marriage. But a woman of high caste marrying a man of lower caste which is called **pratiloma** marriage was not allowed.

Another custom relating to marriage was the law of consanguinity – close relationship by blood over generations. There are sapinda, gotra and pravara degrees of relationship. They are intended to prevent marriage among certain kins and gotras.

The present custom of Hindus is that marriage within the same gotra is to be avoided.

### **Endogamy**

Endogamy is a social custom that requires a person to select a spouse from within certain groups. These endogamous groups specifically refer to Varna, caste and sub-

caste. Thus, a boy from a particular caste marries a girl from the same caste. Caste endogamy was functional in early society because (1) it made marital adjustments easier, (2) it preserved the occupational secrets of the caste, (3) it maintained the solidarity of the caste, and (4) it checked the decrease in the membership or strength of the castes. The most typical endogamous rules are enforced by tribe race, religion and social class.

Hindu couples planning to marry are obligated to belong to the same caste and sub-caste. Sub-caste refers to a further subdivision of castes into endogamous categories which, for all practical purposes, are themselves independent castes.

The negative effects of caste endogamy are that, it creates (1) inter-caste tensions which adversely affect the political unit of the country, (2) the problem of marital adjustment, because the field of selection remains limited, and (3) problems of child marriage and dowry system.

### **Exogamy**

The term 'exogamy is essentially covered by the incest taboo which is prohibited universally. Similarly, universally banned is the marriage between brother and sister. An interesting exception to the latter prohibition occurred in the royal families of ancient Egypt, Hawaii and the Incas of Peru. The explanation for this is the determination to maintain intact a royal line of descent in societies which had not developed a system of inter marriages with foreign royalty.

Close blood relationship is typically a bar on marriage for all people in all times and places. Frequently first cousins may not marry. Alliance of affinity, as well as blood relationship, has been included within exogamous rules. Among some people, marriage between persons belonging to the same village or other territorial group is banned, or at least discouraged.

Exogamy is a social custom which forbids selection of a spouse from certain groups. There are two types of exogamy practiced by Hindus. They are Gotra exogamy and Sapinda exogamy. They are intended to prevent marriage among certain kins and gotras.

#### ***Gotra Exogamy***

Gotra is a group whose members are believed to have descended from a common mythical ancestor. Initially there were only eight Gotras, but gradually their number increased to thousands. The Gotra exogamy prohibits marriage between members of the same gotra.

#### ***Sapinda Exogamy***

Sapinda means one who carries the particles of the same body. Sapinda relationships arise from being connected by having particles of the same ancestor. Marriage between such persons is prohibited. Since there is no limit to persons related by blood, some limit is prescribed for avoiding persons for marriage related to each other within certain generations on the father's and mother's side. In practice and according to law, five generations from father's side and three generations from mother's side are avoided. However, breach of sapinda exogamy was never penalized, though breach of gotra exogamy was considered a heinous practice.



## **Cousin Marriage**

There are four types of cousins (1) chachera (father's brother's son/daughter), (2) mamera (mother's brother's son/daughter), (3) phuphera (father's sister's son/daughter) and, (4) mausera (mother's sister's son/ daughter). Of these, chachera and mausera cousin (where the two sibling parents of the child belong to the same sex) are called parallel cousins and mamera and phuphera cousins (where the two sibling parents of the child are of opposite sex) are called cross cousins.

Of these two forms of cousins, cross cousin marriage was practiced in ancient Hindu society. Even now cross-cousin marriages are practiced among Hindus and Muslims.

The main arguments for and against cousin marriages are biological, social, psychological and cultural. The arguments against cousin marriages are: (1) it will lead to biological degeneration of family because parental defects will be transmitted to their children, (2) it will create secret relations between primary relations in the family and thereby lead to immorality; and (3) it will be against our religious norms. Arguments in favour of cousin marriage are: (1) one's property will remain in one's own family; (2) it will create stronger bonds of love between brother and sister, and (3) with the breakdown of joint family cousins no longer live together in the same house.

## **Hypergamy and Hypogamy**

As a matter of fact, a man of higher caste could marry a woman of lower caste which is called anuloma marriage (hypogamy). But a woman of high caste marrying a man of lower caste which is called pratiloma (hypogamy) marriage was not allowed.

## **Inter-caste Marriage**

It is a marriage between man and woman belonging to different castes. Inter-caste marriage in India is generally understood to mean not only marriage between sub-castes of a major caste group (as between Brahmin sub-castes), but also marriage between two major castes (as for eg. Brahmins and Vaishyas).

Inter-caste marriages which are increasingly common in India, especially in urban and industrial are not between high and low caste people but between the members of various sub-castes within a large caste group (as between Brahmin sub-caste). At present, many of the modern minded and liberal people in India believe that inter-caste marriages should be accepted (legally such marriages are permitted) by the people/ society. Also, they believe that inter-caste marriages would help breakdown the traditional caste system. It will also help wipe out caste distinction and untouchability.

Formerly marriage outside one's caste was not to be even thought of. Today many men and women are prepared to break through the bonds of caste if mutual love or attraction demand it.

However, studies conducted on inter-caste marriages show three features.

- 1) When a person outside the caste is wealthy and had a social prestige, there has been a general approval.
- 2) Persons with higher education and who are older marry outside the caste.

- 3) Even today, the large number of marriages are within the caste and these are marriages arranged by parents. The only significant change is with respect to the restriction against sub-castes which has now been practically eliminated at least in the urban areas among the educated persons.

Arranged marriages are the marriages arranged by the parents of the bride and the bridegroom, considering all the norms and customs of the society and religion.

### **Inter-religious Marriage**

Inter-religious marriage in India is basically understood to mean marriage between persons belonging to different religions.

### **Influence of Legislations on Hindu Marriage**

Over a period of time many beliefs, values and ideals related to Hindu marriage have lost their original meaning and purpose. People started questioning certain evil practices like child marriage, sati system, restrictions of widow remarriage etc. consequently during the British rule and even after independence various legislations were enacted. Some of them were; The prevention of Sati Act, 1829, The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856, The Civil Marriage Act, 1872, The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929 and its amendment in 1978, The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and its amendment in 1986.

The above mentioned legislations have led to significant changes in the Hindu marriage system. Some of the important impacts of legislations on the institution of Hindu marriage are:

- i) Divorce is now socially and legally permissible. Thus, marital relation has ceased to remain unbreakable.
- ii) Provision for widow remarriage and divorce has affected the ideal of 'pativrata'.
- iii) Marriage is no more a religious duty rather it is performed for lifelong companionship.

### **Marriage among Muslims**

Marriage among Muslim is universal and obligatory. Since the Muslim community discourages celibacy, marriage has to be performed. It is true that marriage among Muslim is a civil contract as it is meant for procreation of children and legalizing sexual intercourse; it is a religious duty also. It is considered an 'ibadat'. Characteristic features of Muslim marriage are; acceptance of the proposal of marriage by the bride; capability of the bridegroom to enter into a marriage contract; preference system i.e. parallel cousins (father's brother's daughters) and cross cousins (mother's brother's daughters) are given preference; and marriage is valid only if it is free from legal complications.

It may be noted that man and women did not enjoy equal rights with regard to the provision of divorce. Women have always been at the receiving end. However, industrialization, urbanization, modernization and spread of modern education have

drastically changed the perspective. Spread of small family norm and lesser incidence of divorce are some of the impacts of social change on the institution of Muslim marriage.

### **Marriage among Christians**

The Christian community has two major denominations: Catholics and Protestants. The Catholic owe allegiance to the Pope. The Pope is the supreme authority in the Catholic Church. All the teachings of the Catholic Church have the approval of the Pope. The Protestants have several denominations or groups. Hierarchical approach is limited within each denomination.

As per the teaching of the Catholic Church marriage is a sacrament. There is no provision for divorce. However, a marriage can be declared null and void if one of the spouses is already married and the partner from the first marriage is still alive. A marriage can also be declared null and void in case if the spouse is of unsound mind, impotent etc. at the time of marriage. But the procedure to get a marriage declared null and void from Church is very tedious as the clearance has to come from the Vatican.

Among the Catholics mixed marriages are permitted (with a person from any other religion). However, the Catholic spouse has to make an undertaking that the off springs would be brought up in the Catholic faith.

Among the Protestants divorce is permitted. Marriages are usually performed within the church in the presence of relatives and friends. Married couples are free to register their marriage for legal purpose. Protestant couples usually seek divorce from a court of law. Among the Protestants, remarriage is also permitted after divorce.

According to the teaching of the Church free consent from both the parties is must. Consent must be an act of the will of each of the contracting parties, free of coercion or grave external fear.

### **Tribal Marriage**

Family comes into being only through the establishment of culturally controlled and sanctioned marital relations. Marriage, therefore, is universal. We find various forms of prescriptions and proscriptions regarding marriage among tribes, also. However, uniqueness of tribal marriage lies in the ways by which mates are acquired. There are: probationary marriage among Kuki; marriage by capture among Nagas, Ho, Kharia and Birhor; marriage by trial which is recognition of personal courage and bravery among Bhil; marriage by what has been called purchase or bride price prevalent all over tribal India: marriage by service---a solution to the problem of high bride price among Gonds and Baigas; marriage by exchanging women of two households for avoiding the payment of high bride price prevalent all over India except Khasi Tribe; marriage by mutual consent and elopment among those tribes who have youth dormitories, and marriage by intrusion among Birhor and Ho.

#### **Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Explain different forms of marriage.

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2) Discuss the different forms of Hindu Marriage.

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## 2.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, you have learnt about the concepts of marriage, sociological views on marriage, the Hindu concept of marriage, the forms of marriage and the Hindu forms of marriage along with their advantages and disadvantages. The discussion included the Indian views on marriage, as well as the Hindu marriage as sacrament. In addition to Hindu marriage, reference was also made to marriage among Muslims, Christians and different tribes of India. While discussing the forms of marriage, we also learned about monogamy, polygamy, polyandry, levirate, sororate, endogamy, exogamy, gotra exogamy, sapinda exogamy, cousin marriage, hypergamy and hypogamy as well as inter-caste and inter-religious marriages.

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## 2.7 KEY WORDS

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- Dharma** : Fulfillment of religious duties
- Monogamy** : A man marries one woman. No other sexual partners in between.
- Polygamy** : Marriage of one man with more than one woman.
- Polyandry** : Marriage of one woman with more than one man.

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## 2.8 SUGGESTED REDINGS

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Ahuja, Ram (1993), *Indian Social System*, Rawat Publications Jaipur and New Delhi.

Green, Amold W. (1964), *Sociology, An analysis of life in modern society*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Jinc Kogakusha Company Ltd., New York.

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## 2.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress I

- 1) The Indian view on marriage is that it is considered as ceremony of gift of the bride by her father or other appropriate relative to the bride-groom in order that both may together fulfill their duties which are necessary for human existence. The duties are Dharma, Artha and Kama. Dharma is a religious duty, that is, do good and attain Moskha or salvation. Artha is the economic aspect of life and Kama is the physical or sexual duties to the partner and to produce children to perpetuate race. Marriage is a social duty towards the family and community, not for sense of enjoyment, but to perpetuate race. This is the Indian view on marriage.
  
- 2) There are several reasons for considering the Hindu
  - a) Dharma (fulfillment of religious duties) is the most important aim of marriage.
  - b) Performance of the religious ceremony including certain rites like Kanyadan, Panigrahana, Saptapadi etc.
  - c) The rites are performed before Agni (the most sacred God) reciting mantras (passages) from the Vedas (the most sacred scriptures) by a Brahmin.
  - d) The union is considered indissoluble and irrevocable and husband and wife are bound to each other not only until death but even after death.

### Check Your Progress II

- 1)
  - a) Monogamy is the only legal form of marriage. A man marries a single woman, raises children with in the wedlock, and performs all rites with his mate.
  - b) Polygamy is in which a man marries more than one woman.
  - c) Polyandry is in which one woman marries more than one man.
  - d) Levirate is form of marriage under which a woman is taken as the wife of the late husband's younger brother or even during the life time of the elder brother, the younger brother exercises sexual rights over the wife of the elder brother.
  
- 2) **Brahma** was a form of marriage in which a fully dressed girl-with proper decorations and ornaments-was given to a man of the same class by performance of the ceremony mentioned in the holy texts.

**Daiva** form of marriage was one in which the father of the girl gave her tgo a sacrificial priest as a part of his fee for officiating at the ceremony.

**Arsha** was a form of marriage in which instead of the dowry, the marriage was based on a system of barter in which the father of the bride was given a pair of cattle or two cows by the young man in exchange for his daughter.

**Prajapatya** form of marriage is one in which the bridegroom is duly worshipped and married to the bride with due honours and blessing with these words, “go both of you and fulfill the duties of a householder”.

In **Asura** form of Marriage, bride-price is given by bridegroom to the bride's father. The marriage is sort of economic contract.

The **Gandharva** form of marriage was the union of a willing girl with a man in solitude when both of them were in love.

The Rakshasa form of marriage was marriage by capture in which the girl was forcibly abducted by the man.

The **Paisacha** form of marriage was marriage by seduction, stealing or fraud, where the girl was sexually violated while she was asleep, intoxicated or unconscious or when incapable of protecting herself.

Of these eight forms of marriage the first four are considered proper or Dharmya and the last four are considered Adharmya.



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## UNIT 3 SOCIETY, CULTURE, RELIGION AND FAMILY VALUES

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\* *M. Suja*

### Contents

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Family Life: Changing Patterns
- 3.3 Aspects of Value Formation in Family
- 3.4 Family values and Influence of Socio-cultural and Religious Dimensions.
- 3.5 Family as the Agent of a New Society
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Key Words
- 3.8 Suggested Readings
- 3.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 3.0 OBJECTIVE

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This unit deals with some fundamental concepts related to family. At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand that family is the core of the society and describe the importance of value formation in children;
- discuss the changing patterns of value system in human life and factors influencing them;
- explain the nature and influence of the social, religious and cultural variables and reassess their characteristic functions on values in family life; and
- to suggest ways of renewing and protecting human values in families.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the preceding unit, we have examined in detail the meaning of marriage, choosing a life partner, and the various forms of marriage. Human beings as social entities are part of the global family of the world and the particular culture and social strata in which one lives inseparably related to individual through his/her family, neighbourhood, education and social surroundings. Though religion, culture and society are independent subject in themselves, they influence one another and have a serious impact on human values of family life.

Family life education is based on values and relationships. Many people yet have to become aware of the changes that have already overtaken patterns of family life and they have also to know how to handle them. Some take for granted that all families of all time have a permanent basis, untouched by contemporary problems and social changes. This is not true, as families have been exposed to the changing patterns of culture in an age of globalization. In fact family is a word that triggers emotions in most people.



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## 3.2 FAMILY LIFE: CHANGING PATTERNS

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### Definition of Family

A family is a community of persons related to one another, living together in an environment of understanding and acceptance. A family is a place where one can freely express one's feelings, emotions and needs without being threatened or ashamed of them. Family is a place where one can feel security, wholeness and a sense of being wanted.

Family can also be defined as "Those related persons who live together within a household, usually with common eating habits or one kitchen." It is experienced and proved that children grow best in an atmosphere of security and affection and that material attributes can never be substituted for true love.

### Types of Family

Development in society in the recent years have focused their attention on man's self-fulfillment through individualism, materialism and consumerist values isolating man from his need to belong to one another as persons. Authentic fulfillment and happiness is experienced not in the acquisition of the external, material wealth and possessions, isolated from one's relations to the rest of humanity, but in his intimate and significant experiences of other people starting with the family. In fact, every human being is bound together in family and in the earliest experience of interacting with the father, mother and other significant people, one learns to find meaning and identity for the rest of one's life.

The traditional pattern of family living in India was that of joint family, in which members were bound together by ties of common ancestry and common property. Now in India we find three types of family structures.

- a) The large Joint Family
- b) The Nuclear Family
- c) The Extended Family

### Joint Family

A joint family is one that has a greater generation depth than the nuclear family, in which members are related to one another by property, income, mutual rights and obligations.

The large joint family is almost like the large patriarchal family where three or four generations of parents and off springs live together. This mostly seen in rural areas. These families are mostly agricultural families. Member are related to one another by property, income, mutual rights and obligations.

### *Advantages of the Joint Family*

The joint family assures shelter for the aged and sick, security for the unemployed and support for the young couple. The care and maintenance of dependents is a moral obligation. Members of the family are closely knit together and share the problems and joys of social living, having strong feelings of mutual obligations during crises and regard self-interest as being identical with family welfare.

Men grow up with the knowledge of people around, confidence and skill in family business matters. Children grow up with the experience of life cycles: birth, maturation, marriage and death. There is no difficulty of boy-girl relationship, no problem of single woman, no problem of single or neglected



child and marriage are arranged by parents. Children grow up in an atmosphere of security and affection. The newly married couple get training in family life and child care.

In a joint family, the wisdom and experience of the elders are shared. The joint family has its own codes of behaviour and its own values which are transmitted from one generation to the other generation. On the whole, we can say that the joint family provides an umbrella of support which covers financial loss, social security and even provides informal counseling.

### ***Disadvantages of the Joint Family***

In the joint family the supreme authority is vested in the senior male member. So, the whole life of the family goes according to his efficiency and attitudes. The junior members may not take up any responsibility and initiative. There is no freedom for the individuals, especially women. The head of the family may not be able to adjust to the social changes that are taking place outside the family. There will be a perpetuation of old customs and values.

### **Nuclear Family**

In a nuclear family, the husband and wife live with their children. This is mostly seen in urban areas. Both the husband and wife may be earning members in such families.

### ***Advantages***

The husband and wife have the full freedom to act according to their own ideas. There is more financial security and individual freedom. This type of families can easily adapt to social changes. There is more responsibility and initiative for all the members.

### ***Disadvantages***

There is nobody to help and guide the members, especially when some conflict arises. The practical wisdom and emotional security offered by the joint family is lacking in a nuclear family. There is nobody to look after the children. Children miss the protection and affection of grandparents. Working mother are forced to leave the children either with the servants or in a day care centre.

### **The Stem or Extended Family**

This midway between the joint family and the nuclear family. The extended family is a later development of the joint family system with a transformed image. It mediates the nuclear family and the large joint family. In this type the nuclear family is extended with sons marrying, bringing up children and remaining within the original family of the parents.

### ***Advantages***

This type of family has all the advantages of the joint family and the nuclear family, provided the grandparents do not dominate. Children are looked after properly. Grandparents also may not feel the loneliness and will be happy with their children and grandchildren. Parents can give all the security and guidance to their son and daughter, who are newly married.

### ***Disadvantages***

If the parents who live with their son/daughter are too dominating, the young couple may lose their freedom and individuality. There are chances of problems with in-laws.

Each system of family has its own advantages and disadvantages. But if the members are cooperative and have concern for each other, the disadvantages can be reduced to the minimum. The newly married couple who start their family life should have the freedom and initiative of a nuclear family and the emotional security and practical wisdom of a joint family. They should have the feeling of the 'home' where one has full relaxation and recreation and can live without masks.

### Transition in Family Patterns

We live in a fast changing world. We have reached a time in history when sitting at home, we are able to know what is happening around the world. We are able to move around the world in a shorter time than before. We are living with all the modern technologies that dictate easy life, pleasure, comfort and provide automatic answers for most of our problems. Many are doing their own business sitting at home. The science and technologies have progressed to such an extent that man only has to sit in homes press a button in order to send a written message across the world and receive the reply. Any information one needs on any topic can be obtained through our family computer.

Over the years, the Indian Family has gone through many transitions. The larger families of six and eight children have been replaced by families of one or two children who learn constantly to compete with each other over toys and personal possessions from their infancy. In place of joint families where adults, children and the elderly interacted with one another in a secure atmosphere, now we have strangers and lonely individuals living in separate worlds. The elderly are conveniently put into old-age homes and children are kept waiting at the school gates or in front of family

T.V. till their parents return from the offices. Children who spend long hours in closed houses or in the company of servants or other school children develop a sense of rejection, depression and isolation. All that they are able to interact with for long hours after school are toys, story books, T.V. computer games and cartoons that contribute to the formation of a mechanical, dehumanizing, individualistic, and narrow-minded attitudes in children.

### Significance of Transitions in Families

The joint family cannot be dismissed as outdated. Many Hindus as well as Muslim still families follow that life-style. Rank and wealth are not the conditions for this system but blood relations and social value are. They are mostly found in non-urban, non-industrialized settings. It is interesting to note that even when the members of an extended family do not live in the same household, they still share a common budget and follow the same family leader. Besides, even among the members, who live separately, we observe that all belong to a joint family system and believe in this value.

There are problems connected with all extended families, as the joint family is based on the relations among the adult males rather than on the conjugal bonds between spouses. The spouses do not feel the allegiance toward the large units as the husbands feel and there are quarrels, competitions and dissatisfaction among women and children. In recent years majority of Indians prefer to live in nuclear families. The role of religion is to give a perspective to human life, hence, to family life and through it to society.

### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Define the term "family".

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### **3.3 ASPECTS OF VALUE FORMATION IN FAMILY**

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#### **Definition of Values**

Values are those ideas which direct our thinking and living and give meaning to our existence. The values we hold dear are expressed in our actions by which our lives receive a certain amount of identity. It is the value one possesses which gives him/her an image by which others judge or measure him/her. In order to make values meaningful, they have to be practical and directive.

#### **Classification of Values**

Values can be classified into three groups---personal, social and neutral. This classification is based on the traditionally held on customs and beliefs inherited by the person which make a society proud and protective of the culture which is inherited.

Values can also be classified as material values and higher values. Material things have their own values: food, physical health, and clothes are such visible values by which one exhibits one's identity and are essential for survival in a society. Higher values are seen only by way of behaviour. Since food is a necessity for human life, working for daily food is a value, but to share what one has with other needy people is a higher value. Even though joy is a value, all things which give joy need not be values, though there can be a desire to possess all things. Higher values are eternal values: they can be understood as human or divine.

Whenever, there is a doubt; a need for the expression of values becomes apparent. Life is made up of small and big decisions. Where families are authentic in loving one another and caring for each other, obeying God and working for Him as the source and centre of the universe, progress, peace, harmony and human development will be the outcome.

#### **Socialization and Value Formation**

Social, religious, and cultural values affect family life to a great extent. In fact no family can exist independently of these factors. One of the most significant stages of one's life is socialization. Socialization is a process through which the child absorbs, assimilates and internalizes socio-cultural and religious practices from the significant persons in his/her life e.g. parents, teachers, siblings. Thus, a child acquires attitudes and values, some of which pertain to moral standards and others relating to people love and hate, superior and inferior, etc. These attitudes and values exist in children in different ways, at different levels according to the atmosphere, psychological stages and physical conditions.

Socialization is seen by sociologist as a process toward cultural conditioning. For an individual infant to survive, it must be socialized. There is a structural relationship socialization. As result of being socialized by parents, one becomes an agent of socialization for one's children and grandchildren. These obligations become fixed and specified for generations. It is easy to understand that such a conditioning attached to a joint family system can be so strong in the Indian society as it has existed for over 2000 years with its culture, beliefs and socialization process give a meaningful value to family life that are inseparable from society.

Thus, we see that the individuals and the families are motivated to serve the society's interests and keep up the system. In this sense the socialization process is more or less a natural process to make

the individual conform to the social norms and cultural pattern of a society. There is a tendency in many individuals, to deviate from this type of forced pattern, since all human beings have an innate longing for freedom and self-expression, for spontaneity and personal identity. This explains the reason for teenagers and young adults growing up with antagonism and rebelling against parents and those in authority.

### **Value Formation in Parent Child Interaction**

The mother-child ties is emotionally intimate which facilitates the process of socialization. The span of human life is long and hence socialization continues. The pattern of dominance by father or mother gives further authority to what is learned and fixes attitudes and values in the minds of children.

Already learned experience of children through families are made forceful and commanding by the way the society lives and interacts. At this stage, the experience of the father and mother and the strength of the parent-child relationship will determine the values of selfhood (identity, security and self image of the child), which form the core of a child's personality.

Children of pre-school age are already exposed to a competitive world. Parents, out of enthusiasm for proving their identity and getting approval for their status, pressurize their children to achieve excellence in studies, sports, music and other fields and push them beyond their capacity and speed up their performance. But gradually this creates stressful feelings and inferiority complexes in children and they become victims to physical and verbal humiliation in school and at home.

### **Women's Role Affecting Family Values**

We cannot satisfactorily talk about the formation of family values, by passing the nature and role of women in both society and family. The house is the pivot of society and the woman is its centre. The home – the family – is the first institution which imparts self identity to an individual and where he/she formulates a self image. The respect and esteem the mother is given in the family greatly determines the values with which the family looks at others in society.

“A women's position in the family is lowered if she gives birth to female children, and she is looked down upon by others. On the other hand, producing sons is considered to be a great achievement” (Basin (ed) 1972). Such families cannot give a positive self-concept to female children who in turn look at women negatively and pass on negative values to the coming generations.

“The cultural conditioning has gone so deep into the psychology of people of India that even among the educated and so called enlightened and well-to do urban-dwelling people, the birth of son is much more desired”. Though some change is evident in cities, most of the village women still live under the subjugation of men and traditional social customs.

It is clear from what has been said that one of the important aspects of family values depends on the position that women occupy in home and in society. The women's self-image, the opportunities and congenial environment for utilizing the rights and privileges due to her has a great deal to do with the type of families and the quality of values imparted to the family members. Hence women's empowerment is necessary for the formation of new values in Indian families.

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## **3.4 FAMILY VALUES AND INFLUENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIMENSIONS**

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### **Values in Family and Society**

The family is made up of individuals but it is also a part of the larger social network. Thus, individuals are initiators and promoters of culture. Individuals and society are mediated by families. It

is in and through families that people learn and pass on values. But all members of a society are under the constant supervision of parents in childhood, of friends in teenage, and of the public in adulthood. Family is where children are trained; the adults feel free to praise, criticize, suggest and order so that the children learn family preferences. They are taught what is right and wrong, what to tell others and not, how to behave inside and outside the home, who must be their friends etc. All these influences and communicate to the children directly and indirectly the attitudes, values and conduct which remain with them for the rest of their life. What they learn is part of that culture and customs of the society which are valued by the adults.

Family as a social institution is the basic structure of the society. Hence the flow of values between the family and society is very lucid and they interact very closely, intrinsically and inter-dependently before the effect is apparent.

It is not wrong to say that it is through the family that the values and attitudes are absorbed by the child in his/her early age, cultural transmission of particular society is kept up and the major agent for all these is the woman. The significance of the family is the mediating function of family in the larger society, as it links the individual to the larger social structure. As part of the society, families like to keep their identity linked to it, hence the family values remain mostly undifferentiated from the values of the society.

Socially, man's relationship with other human beings is diminishing. His engagements are more with the machine and technically produced means of communication. Communication, which is the medium of relationship and social connection, is no more concerned with human relationships, but media and media-related learning and knowledge. Media also has helped to replace human interactions with group interactions.

Studies (Erich Fromm, 1973) have shown that in societies where human life and peaceful living are valued, there is little competition and there seems to be hardly any exploitation of one another. Work is done essentially in co-operation and there is no economic rivalry. Women are respected and included in the decision making processes. We can also see that the opposite is true in societies where wealth and success are valued over human life. When money, position and power are valued, individuals grow up with aggression, violence, competition and manipulation. Families become unable to foster human values that can sustain and uphold members, as they are subjected to the negative influences of peers, employees, neighbours and organisations in the society.

According to Mahatma Gandhi, truth and love are the most admirable and cherished values of youth.

### **Values in Family and Culture**

The Indian family is no more unicultural following customs, practices and beliefs of definite pattern but a plurality of practices and patterns. The elders used to be the central persons whom the youngsters looked up to, learned from and were agents of imparting the traditions and values of family, life, parent-child relationship and discipline. The uniqueness of the Indian culture is being engulfed by the global culture.

However, the villages still hold on to the traditional values of hospitality, simplicity, submissiveness, and belief in God. They have been excluded from the modernism by deprivation of economic and technological development.

Man's uniqueness consists in developing language and preserving meaningful, creative behaviour and in communicating the internal conditions and feelings through external expressions. The cultural implications of values are tied up with practices, symbols, religious rituals and the customs of a society. Also, traditions and languages of the different regions or nationalities are expressions of values of the ethnic group to which one belongs. Though India is known for its unique culture, the different religions have specific cultures. Culture expresses itself in one's life-style, food habits, dress



and symbolic expressions. Indian culture is unique in comparison to the West, but each culture has its own richness and inherent in it are specific messages, interpretations and expressions of values the people of that society hold dear. The diversity of perception, experience expressed through different and creative ways become integrated in the life of individuals through learning, understanding and accepting in the given cultural contexts. The family is the place where the atmosphere of unity, integration, harmony and respect of different beliefs and expressions become a necessarily parts of unified consciousness.

India is a land of many striking contrasts, and a great cultural complexity, social diversity and regional variation can be found among the people. In the diversity of the Indian scene it is very difficult to make any generalized judgments concerning the values in family life. But it is the unity running through diversity which reveals the positive dimensions of social and cultural values in family life.

Older attitudes and prejudices still persist and social opinion is taking its time in changing itself.

As values are integrated with culture, religion as well as socially determined attitudes, behaviour and customs, an evaluative and critically questioning methodology is required for the promotion of family values. In course of social change people adopt new ways of living. Old customs and practices fail to make meaning to younger generations. Hence, the need for introducing meaningful values become a necessity. For example, the role of women was considered to be within the family, taking care of the husband and children, but now as women are working on equal terms with men, outside home the attitude toward women cannot remain the same. This perception affects family values.

### **Values in Family and Religion**

The world is not the ultimate reality. This is the teaching of all Religions. The Bible, Gita, Koran and other scriptures affirm and acknowledge the one and only powerful and omnipotent God who is invisible to the external eyes and to the physical world in which we live.

All religions emphasize the need for forming a mature conscience in people. Religion provides a code of norms which will guide and enable persons to have an objective understanding of God. Religion must help people to grow in a balanced, harmonious, altruistic attitude which will result in accepting all people as one's relations, regardless of their caste, creed, religion, or customs/ language.

It is difficult to differentiate the socio-cultural and religious values as they affect family life. Religion in its purest form deals with one's faith in God and shows how he/she must live in this world. Hence religion frames 'law' or teaches one's duty to God and towards others, which we call Dharma. All religious founders taught how to live our lives in worship to God and our duty towards our neighbour. Hence Buddha taught compassion and less desire for worldly pleasure. Jesus taught of love for neighbour to the extent of giving up one's life for the other in service. Hinduism talks of Nishkamakarma; doing one's duty toward others and not expecting the results of the actions. However, the truth is that it is the religious beliefs of a society that sweeps under all other values in family and society.

### **Family Values and Attitude toward Sex**

According to the study and analysis of number of psychologists and educationists, the attitudes and values (either positive or negative) which the parents have, become the most powerful instrument in the hands of the children for later years. The self-image, as well as the ability to interact with other in children from childhood to later years are affected by the early experience of sex-related values taught in the family.

According to a classic concept a little boy at the age of five or six chooses his mother as the first object of his sexual desires. The same thing is true about girls concerning their father. The upbringing

of children with a positive, balanced, relationship with family members and outsiders at this age is essential for the growth of proper values regarding sexuality in children. The understanding of sex as part of the body for a special purpose in the plan of God for the world has to be taught to children gradually as they mature in life.

Respect for all persons, regardless of sex difference is a higher value which very few people possess. At the same time a family that does not respect persons and considers sex as an object of pleasure and a means of play can cause negative understanding of sex in children who may grow up to be exploiters of women in society.

### **Values in Family and Role of Media**

As we have already seen earlier, with the breakdown of the joint family and the advent of industrialization, the family atmosphere has changed drastically. The family has become small in size, the elderly and children are left alone at home and the parents are burdened with over time jobs. The rise of materialism and consumerism has created unnecessary anxieties of isolation and loneliness in families and among families. The advertisements set the norms for values concerning food, dress and friends. The concepts of values are created in children by what they see and hear in the media. T.V., internet, computer and other technological devices have become source of entertainment for both children and adults. In place of listening to the stories of parents and grandparents while going to sleep, children seek music, serials and cartoons before going to bed. Role models for the present generation are film stars who constantly appear on televisions. Balance in the media against the values of families has gone beyond the control of parents.

On the positive side, children are becoming aware of the wider dimension of human life and interactions. Young children are growing rapidly in their intellectual curiosity and general knowledge of the world around them. Teenagers, youth and adults themselves are becoming more aware of their rights. Environmental Preservation, Animal Protection and Human Rights are becoming issues of priority for the young people of today. The demands of children and adults in families to up-keep with the media-world has become an obsession affecting the dignity and self-worth of family members.

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## **3.5 FAMILY AS THE AGENT OF A NEW SOCIETY**

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### **Family in Process of Value Formation**

The truth that family is the foundation for a stable and strong society is becoming more and widespread throughout the developing countries. The topic is complicated one, as family, society, culture and religion are inseparable factors and each one has something to do with the shaping of values in the individual and families.

The family is a 'mini school' and it is there the children learn to relate with others. According to physiologists the child perceives and experiences its parents in the first year of life. The child's personality and attitude to a great extent are shaped by the age of four. The significant persons of the child's life in this stage are the mother, father, brothers, uncles and aunties. This is the period in which parents can play a great foundational role in families.

The future of humanity passes by way of family. Philosophers and social analysts have noted that society is a structure made up of families, and that peculiarities of given society can be described by outlining its family relations. The earliest moral and ethical writing concentrated much on family due to its importance as the base of the society. True happiness and progress of a society depends on the positive attitudes and behaviour of the members of the family. When these attitudes and relatedness extends from family to society, the society mirrors the family. When the influence is vice-versa, the family becomes the mirror of the society. In either situation, both family and society influence each other and one of them will always be dominant.



## **Family must become the Basic Unit of Change**

Families as the basic and most important unit of social institution must be given special attention by any educational field that deal with society and progress. Being the fundamental constituting unit of the society, the family concerns itself with the wellbeing and growth of persons. A happy family is where the parents and children together experience the joy of belonging, and the feeling of being cared for the deepest needs. Food, clothing and shelter are the basic needs of all human beings, but the happiness of a family depends on higher needs such as being loved, trusted, understood, for given, recognized for one's talents, gifts and the ability to reach out to those less fortunate. The fulfillment of family life is in bringing forth persons strong in body, mind and spirit, with emotional maturity and altruistic outlooks as citizens of the nation. Persons must be socialized and educated for bringing about a social change. Hence, schools have a vital role in the attitudinal change and inculcation of values in children. This has to be done in co-operation with families. Parent-Teacher Associations and Management Committees are such means through which schools and families can take co-operative responsibility for education of children in the true spirit of formation.

## **Personality Traits and Basic Life Orientations**

- 1) Basic trust vs. basic mistrust;
- 2) Autonomy vs. shame and doubt;
- 3) Initiative vs. guilt;
- 4) Industry vs. inferiority;
- 5) Identity vs. role confusion,
- 6) Intimacy vs. isolation;
- 7) Generativity vs. stagnation; and
- 8) Ego integrity vs. despair.

Men and woman are made in the image of God so that they can think, question and differentiate between good and bad, design their own destiny and reach the ultimate goal.

## **Parents' Focus on Value Clarification**

In order to function as moral human beings in society, children need to grow in an atmosphere of clearly defined values which are practiced by adults. Children need to see/hear parents doing and talking what they believe in. Mostly, children learn from adults through imitation when they are young, and through reasoning when they grow up. They look for impartiality in behaviour and preaching in practice. Hence there is a need for clarification of values in the day-to-day life of the families. Initiated by parents, children seek guidance and answers to question in order to understand and accept values in the light of their purpose in life. Therefore, every family's first priority in training and educating children must begin with the question of personal identity.

Who am I? Where have I come from? Where am I going? These basic foundational principles of life must become a stepping stone for the positive socialization of children. Religious and moral values of God as the Creator-Father and the Universe as His Creation – Home should occupy important place

relationship with self, with God and with others will pave the way through to the child's mind. Children then will learn to relate to others as extension of themselves and develop social consciousness. The understanding of personal, social and spiritual relationships will grow in children through their experience in the family with the interaction with one another, day in and day out.

### **Family Values and Positive Strokes**

Psychologists have come to the conclusion that positive thinking is the secret of happiness. In order to grow up in positive thinking, one must be exposed to positive strokes. The families where parents accept one another and encourage what they are and their contributions, health and happiness abound. From childhood on, children need to feel secure in themselves from the recognition and understanding they get from their significant people. Positive strokes can be effective in families for the proper self-image and upbringing of children.

Case studies show that the most unhappy and violent people have been those whose childhood was spent with adults who were strict, constantly nagging, criticizing, and condemning. Allowing children to grow up with clearly defined freedom, respect, love, encouragement and appreciation will result in making new generations of good citizens for the nation. The quality of change thus brought about in persons through families will prepare the groundwork for causing a gradual change in the society. Therefore, the parents must concentrate on giving positive strokes to the children in order to direct them toward a new value system making families agents of social change.

Marriage is a point of departure in which boys and girls, brothers, and sisters realize themselves as persons with responsibilities in life, from individual ties with other persons and appear mature and able to make decisions for life.

### **Recommendations**

In order to form families with lasting value that can influence society and change it for the better, the following values must be inculcated and transmitted to children both by parents and social institutions.

- 1) Family life must be based on truth, faith and justice.
- 2) A culture of peace, brotherhood and tolerance must be taught in families.
- 3) Respect for life and respect for different views regardless of religions, ethnicity and regions must be fostered in families.
- 4) A sense of responsibility for the welfare of others; family must be recognized by society and educational systems as a primary unit of society.
- 5) Adults must become examples of inter-faith dialogue, critical analysts of social issues and promoters of Nation Building.
- 6) True patriotism must be affected in children through parent's efforts and social institutions.
- 7) Education at home and in an institutional set up must direct the yearning of human communion and self-realization.

- 8) Young people must be recognized for their energy, enthusiasm and new knowledge and the elderly must be respected for their wisdom and practical knowledge.
- 9) Correct judgment and common sense must be cultivated in children right from childhood.
- 10) Opportunities for making personal decisions and evaluating the choices be made and carried out.
- 11) Children must be brought up with consideration for their aesthetic, moral, intellectual and emotional development.
- 12) Boys and girls must be brought up at home with equal participation in the household duties, given equal treatment and respect.
- 13) A sense of compassion for the elderly and those less fortunate due to cosmic, social or economic situations must be part of children's curriculum.
- 14) Sacredness of sex, beauty of growing up and happiness of family life must become experiences for children in families.
- 15) Lastly, there must be the conviction that every parents in this world has a privileged duty of being an agent of re-creating the society and transforming the world.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is the Indian view of marriage?

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### 3.6 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have examined the concepts of family values, types of family and different factors in society affecting family values. We have also looked at the concepts of culture and religion and how important and inter-connected they are in the value formation of individual and to the network of society.

We have dedicated a great deal of time to the study of Indian society and the role of family values. Lastly, we have focused on some important points on the role of parents in the formation of values in different areas of human life. Through the family

the mother's role in forming human and divine values in children and in transforming the society is pointed out. However, concern is expressed for the need of family and society, taking a co-operative and co-responsible role in value formation. The unit ends with recommendations for parents to take initiatives in making families agents of change in the society.

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### 3.7 KEY WORDS

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- Value :** The question on which the worth, desirability or utility of a thing depends.
- Culture:** Culture is the characteristics and knowledge of a particular group of people, defined by everything from language, religion, cuisine, social habits, music and arts

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### 3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Bhasin, Kamla, Edited (1972), *The position of women in India*.

Bird, Joseph and Lois (1983), *To Live as Family: An Experience of Love and Bonding*.

Fromm, Eric (1973), *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*.

Mascarenhas, M.M., *Parivarik Jeevan Shiksha (Hindi)*, Vikas Publication House.

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### 3.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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- 1) A family is a community of persons related to one another, living together in an environment of understanding and acceptance. A family is a place where one can freely express one's feelings, emotions and needs without being threatened or ashamed. Family is a place where one can feel security, wholeness and sense of being wanted.

Family can also be defined as "Those related persons who live together within a household, usually with common eating habits or one kitchen." It is experienced and proved that children grow best in an atmosphere of security and affection and that material attributes can never be substituted for true love.

#### Check Your progress I

- 1) The five values that must be transmitted to children by parents are:
- Family life must be based on truth, faith and justice.
  - A culture of peace, brotherhood, and tolerance must be taught in families.
  - Respect for life and respect for different view regardless of religions, ethnicity and regions must be fostered in families.
  - A sense of responsibility for the welfare of others: the family must be

recognized by society and educational system as primary unit of society.

- e) Adults must become examples of inter-faith dialogue, critical analysts of social issues and promoters of Nation Building.



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## UNIT 4    MARITAL LIFE AND ROLE                   EXPECTATIONS

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\* *Teresa Chacko*

### Contents

- 4.0    Objectives
- 4.1    Introduction
- 4.2    Role Expectations in Marital Life
- 4.3    Role Conflicts
- 4.4    Role Changes in Different Phases of Marriage
- 4.5    Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6    Key Words
- 4.7    Suggested Readings
- 4.8    Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 4.0    OBJECTIVES

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The purpose of this unit to explain the role expectations of man and woman in married life. We shall also discuss the basic emotional factors involved in marital life.

After completing this unit, you would be able to:

- explain the role expectations of man and woman in marriage;
- describe the typical role changes that occur in marital life over the years;
- identify the different ways couples adopt to manage marital conflicts;
- guide couple to identify the sources from where they can get help to solve marital problems.

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### 4.1    INTRODUCTION

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You have already learnt about the meaning of marriage and the values in family life in the preceding units. Some of the relevant questions are: What is your concept of marital life? What type of relationship exists between husband and wife? Marital life is believed to be the happiest, most important and beautiful period in the life of an individual. In marriage the couple promises to be faithful to each other. A happy and fruitful marital life can be built on this foundation.

The essence of marriage is the interpersonal relationship between the spouses. This relationship is an ongoing, dynamic process. It can be strengthened if the couple adhere to role expectations in marriage.

In this unit, we discuss the nature of the relationship between husband and wife. We also emphasize the role expectations in marital life and the changes that occur in their

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\* *Prof. Teresa Chacko, Cochin*

roles over time. The effects of dysfunctioning families in marital life are also mentioned in this unit.

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## 4.2 ROLE EXPECTATIONS IN MARITAL LIFE

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Shakespeare wrote that the world is a stage upon which men and women are acting out the drama of life.

The same thing can be said of marriages. There are many cultural and social expectations about appropriate behaviour for males and females. The goals, purposes and functions in marriage can be achieved only when each family member plays his or her particular role.

### a) Marital Roles

What is meant by marital roles? Marital roles are the behavioural expectations of husbands and wives in a particular society at any given time. Roles are cultural creations, rather than biological imperatives. Roles provide the facility for the smooth running of society by a division of labour for men and women.

### b) Changes in Gender Roles

Are there any hard and fast rules for assigning sex type roles? Can we change the gender roles? Of course there are no definite rules to assign roles to men and women. Cultural variations and the purposes of spouses may bring about changes in marital roles. But they cannot violate nature's goals for marriage. So we can find that some marital roles are unchangeable.

### c) Disparity in Role Conceptions

In the past there were clearly defined roles for man and woman. Today we all are living in a rapidly changing society. In the modern society, there are no definite patterns of behaviour or roles for men and women. There is wide disparity in role conceptions. This changing nature of gender roles creates problems for all types of couples as they settle down to live together.

### d) Factors Affecting Changes in Roles

The industrial revolution, emancipation of women, urbanization, employment of women, preoccupation of men with career etc. are some factors which have left their imprint upon family roles.

### Role of Man

Role patterns for each sex are based on masculinity and femininity. Men and women are born with certain basic characteristics. Each culture has its own expectations of the roles of men and women.

**Unique male roles:** What is the key role of man? On what basis do we assign this role to the male? In most cultures strength and courage are still considered to be the qualities of men. They are also independent, tough and can control their emotions in better ways than women. Physical strength and social dominance are more functional for the male roles. So, man is generally expected to be the provider and protector of



the family. He is the master of the family. According to the traditional role expectations, he is the bread earner and the head of the family. He is expected to acquire a job to support his wife and children. He has to show determination in the achievement of difficult goals.

**Leadership role:** The man is also entrusted with the role of leader and supervisor of all family endeavours. For the child, his/her first heroes will be his/her own parents, particularly the father who holds the position of authority in the family.

**Role as a husband:** As a husband he has the role of sex partner, companion, confidant, decision maker and accountant. He must train himself to be a better observer so that he can be of great help to his wife. He must notice his wife and praise her performance and ability. He should also give emotional support to her.

**Role as a father:** The father holds a dominant position in the family. In our culture, he is the chief authority in the home. Children need him for their all round development. They learn many good qualities from him. Some of the qualities are sense of justice and fair play, steadfastness, inspiration to be useful etc. Hence he should be firm without being despotic, decisive without being dictatorial and gentle but not weak.

### **Role of Woman**

Females, in most cultures, have been conditioned to carry out the reproductive function.

**Traditional roles:** The woman is biologically, psychologically and emotionally prepared for motherhood. She is trained to carry out the roles of birth, nurture, protection, gratification and giving comfort to children and men. In the life of woman, these functions are given priority over all other engagements. According to the traditional role expectations, she is oriented towards rearing capable children, helping her husband to achieve the goals of the family and being useful to the community in which she lives. But are all women satisfied with this role concept? Talented and ambitious women, in addition to these functions, want to develop their special aptitudes.

**Role as wife:** As a wife, she is expected to be an affectionate companion, a good sex partner, confidant and social secretary of her husband. She has to take charge of the social life of the couple. She should develop interest in her husband's work. She should be able to understand his world of activities. Moreover she should be able to give intellectual companionship to her husband.

**As a home maker:** It is the duty of the woman to make her house a beautiful place to live in. She has to take care of the basic needs of the family such as nutrition, clothing, recreation etc.

**Role as a mother:** She represents to her children the ideas and ideals of perfect womanhood working in harmony with her husband. The child's first attachment is to his/her mother. She is his/her source of nourishment, warmth and comfort.

### **Changing Roles of Man and Woman Today**

You may be wondering whether the couples are following the traditional roles of man and woman today. What are the changes that have occurred in their roles? Why? Let us look at the changed role concepts and the reasons for these changes.

### **Reasons for Role Changes**

Today family roles are changing largely because they have become less appropriate for the social and economic realities of the modern world. Most of the families are small in size and more women are employed. We can see changes in the styles of femininity as well as masculinity. The man is not maintaining the image of the brave, strong, tough, aggressive male of the past. The gentle, passive, submissive female is a character of yesterday. Opportunities are open for both sexes in education, work and family life. So greater flexibility is required in the role expectations of husbands and wives. You may be interested to know what exactly are the changes in role concepts. Is there confusion in male's roles? We shall discuss these changes one by one.

#### 1) **Sharing roles**

Originally the husband was the head of the home and the chief authority in the family. But now the domination of the man seems to be giving way to equalitarian roles between husband and wife. More women have moved into employment outside the home. So the husband has to share the provider role with his wife. He also has to give up his position as the custodian of family wealth as the wife has come to share spending. He has to accept her equality in community affairs also. They share household chores including the care of children.

#### 2) **Economic equality**

A working wife plays an important role in decision making. When the women are employed, there is a tendency for the couple to share power equally. Wives are less dependent upon their husbands. The husbands in turn are freed from the burden of total support to their wives. Husbands provide more emotional support to working wives.

#### 3) **Changes in the leadership role of man**

The vocational demands may take the man away from home for long periods of time. In his race for achievement and success, he may forget his major duty towards his family. Naturally we can find a decline in the respect given to husbands and fathers. The leadership role of man also tends to be reduced proportionately. At times, they stay away from home to avoid responsibility in difficult situations. Then, the handling of the situation falls on the shoulders of the mother.

What happens when fathers are reluctant to take up their responsibilities? In such cases, children may develop certain behaviour problems such as anxiety, aggressiveness and antagonism.

You can observe the shrinking of father's role and an enlargement of the mother's role within the family. The masculine role has been greatly modified by the new role demands of the female

#### 4) **Role expectations in different classes of society**

Do you think that role concepts are the same among people of different social strata? There are differences. In the case of lower class males and females, the traditional definitions of masculinity and femininity persist. For them, roles are strictly segregated. But for the middle and upper classes, the spouses have sharing roles.

They share responsibility in providing family finances, in bringing up children, and in giving them good education.

Even in the middle and upper classes, is this type of relationship accepted by everybody? The answer is no. In actual practice in India, the husbands have more say in the family.

#### 5) **Woman's expectations of man's role**

Do you feel men are becoming more effeminate in today's culture? What do women expect from men?

Men are taking more interest in domestic tasks, and in the care of children. But they are still less gentle, less family oriented and less domestically oriented than women. There is no doubt that men are still trained to be more materialistic, and more success-minded than women. They have more efficiency, competence and material success.

A woman still expects many of these traits in a man. Many women still want the male to be strong and at times they want to depend upon males. They still admire and feel safe with a strong male. The man has to exhibit some courage and strength to meet the role expectations of his wife.

#### 6) **What do husbands expect from the wife?**

The wife should become the companions of the husband. She is expected to give love and affection to him. He expects an equal sharing of responsibilities. He expects cooperation, support and recognition for his efforts.

#### **Factors Influencing Choice of Marital Roles**

Marriage roles differ from many other roles in everyday life. There are no definite general role patterns. Each couple has to work out a role pattern for themselves. There are many factors influencing the choice of marital roles. Some of them are the following.

##### **Family**

Customary roles are learnt largely from the family. It is through the attitudes, expectations and habits formed in the family that a boy or girl gets basic training in role expectations for him or her as well as for the opposite sex. In some families the parents consciously instill what they feel is the appropriate sex role behaviour in their children. Children also learn sex roles and authority patterns by imitating the behaviour of their parents.

##### **The Peer Group**

The peer group is oriented towards new attitudes and expectations for both sexes. They create new role expectations. These are usually in direct contrast to customary roles.

##### **Culture**

In our culture, men have more freedom of action. The women are expected to behave according to the norms dictated by society. Education has given her social and

economic equality. But still she is restrained to traditional roles by our culture. This ties here down to house keeping and child care in addition to outside employment.

### Employment of Women

This is a role assigned by culture, not by nature. Today, women are bearing a double load of work. Employment gives economic independence to the woman and she shares the financial burden of the family. She is fatigued after a day's work. There are more emotional and physical strains for the working woman. She may neglect her duties at home and may even refuse sexual rights to her husband. In some cases, the husband may feel inadequate in his roles as provider. Children also suffer from lack of care and supervision. She may not be able to satisfy her role expectations. She may face the following problems:

- i) good health
- ii) willingness of the husband to share household duties
- iii) adequate pay
- iv) a mother substitute if there are young children in the family and
- v) co-operation from all family members

A couple has to face many adjustmental problems, if both of them are committed to their jobs.

#### Check Your Progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is the Indian view of marriage?

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2) What does a husband expect from the wife?

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### 4.3 ROLE CONFLICTS

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You have already learnt that couples should have a clear concept of their roles when they marry. This concept forms the basis of marital adjustment. The goals in marriage can be achieved when these roles are played properly.

Do you expect that the couple can adhere to role expectations always? If not, why? When do role conflicts arise?

Role conflicts occur when there are discrepancies in role expectations and the actual behaviour of the couple. It also occurs when partners relate to each other in some new or different ways because of emotional changes.

### **Reasons for Role Conflicts**

No two persons are exactly alike. There are differences in attitudes, behaviour and beliefs. Husbands and wives gather different role concepts from their families. For success in marriage, each one has to produce in his/ her personality some resemblance of the partner's image of a man/woman. They have to change their values, attitudes and behaviour to fit in with the new role concepts.

In the case of the woman living along with her husband and other family members, the mother-in-law may criticize her. She may be forced to change in order to fit in with her mother-in-law's concept of an ideal wife.

Role conflicts are brought about by the strain put upon the wife in meeting the role expectations of her husband and his family and in adapting to the demands of his work. The husband also faces problems when his wife is having an established role in her life.

Money management is another area creating role conflicts. Money management is the handling and spending of the family income. Usually, conflicts arise over the issues of who should handle money and how it should be spent. You may think it is a simple question touching only the surface. But the decision has far reaching effects on family life. It affects the attitudes and relationships of the couple. Problems of domination, submission, insecurity, inferiority feelings etc. are created by the decision regarding the spending of family income. This in turn leads to conflicts between husband and wife.

The other areas bringing about conflicts in marriage are unrealistic expectations from marriage, sexual incompatibilities, the discipline of children, struggle for domination etc. However, the most difficult problem is difficult in communication. The failure in communication occurs at a deeper level of sharing feelings, expectations, intentions and personal needs.

### **How can we resolve role conflicts?**

In marriage, spouses are involved in the lives of each other. Hence disagreement in some areas is inevitable. How couple manage conflicts is more important.

### **Conflict Management**

There are many ways in which conflicts can be managed by the couple. In the first method, compatibility can be achieved when one partner is dominant and he/she attempts to get the other person comply with his/her desires and the partner agrees and accepts the complementary role. But when the disagreement is very strong and both partners are not willing to give in, tension is intensified. They may emotionally withdraw from each other's relationships without finding out an actual solution for

the problem. An uneasy peace is achieved. There may not be any quarrels, but both of them are not happy or satisfied.

How can one manage conflicts without hurting the personalities of both the spouse? The best method to solve the problem in a reasonable way is by negotiating with each other. Changes are to be made in the roles of both partners. This helps them to learn and understand more about themselves and about each other. This will deepen their relationship.

**Personal Factors to be remembered**

In quarrels, be very careful in the use of words. Pay attention to the good things your partner does. Do not pay too much attention to his/her faults. Don't fall asleep without making up a quarrel. Control you temper. Don't compare your spouse with your parents. Learn to compromise to forget and to forgive. The partners should have flexible personalities. They should understand each other.

Avoid scathing criticism and curb the impulse to make cutting retorts. Settle a problem through mutual discussion. If things cannot be resolved mutually, you will need to seek help from a family counselor or spiritual counselor. Although seeking help from a counselor is not common in India, we need to adapt ourselves to changing situations.

**Check Your Progress II**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Explain the personal factors to be remembered in role conflict.

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**4.4 ROLE CHANGES IN DIFFERENT PHASES OF MARRIAGE**

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As you have gone through the changes in marital roles you may have noticed that the relationship in marriage is not a static one. It is an ongoing process. In marriage you will find a variety of separate stages. Each stage requires new adjustments and re-valuation of the old ones. The couple has to re-organise their ideas, values and goals for the smooth running of their married life.

**Early years of marriage**

Marriage takes the new couple to new and unfamiliar ways of life. Every day they have to take some decisions, solve some problems and make plans for the future. The first year of marriage is one in which the husband and wife belong predominantly to each other, expenses are low, health is usually good and needs are simple. Their

unique plan of life is in the making. Each one is becoming established in the routine of his/her job.

During the first year or two of marriage the couple faces a multitude of adjustments. The following are some of the areas of adjustments in marriage which will be affecting their behaviour or role in early marital life.

### **Relationship between husband and wife**

When you get married you say “I take you”. It is not just the company, thoughts or the body of the partner that you take. You take the whole of the other person.

### **Accepting each other**

The husband and the wife have to accept each other with all their shortcomings. At the same time, they should maintain their individually, personal worth and self-respect.

### **Communication**

The spouses should show the ability and willingness to communicate with each other. Communication is the breath of married life. It is not enough to love, to care or to respect. The lover must express affection.

### **Give and take**

The couple should possess the ability to give and take. To give oneself to the other means to share one’s most intimate feelings. They should be co-operative and should be capable of emotional interdependence.

### **Personality factors in relation to role expectation**

You know man and woman differ in their physical structure. Do they show differences in their emotional and psychological structure too?

As every cell of the body is different, so also every feeling, every reaction, and every attitude of man and woman have particular characteristics according to one’s sex. The respective nature of man and woman determines their roles in marriage. Success in marriage can be attained when the couple respects the characteristic qualities which nature has given to each of them and when they adhere to their respective roles. Do not expect one’s own characteristics in the other partner and do not try to change him/her.

### **Personal habits**

Most of the problems faced by the couples arise from their basic personality patterns. Each person learns particular habits and attitudes from early childhood. So regardless of their similarities, each partner, always brings to marriage enough differences in their attitudes, punctuality, formality and informality in housekeeping and management of home, observing social conventions etc. may bring about role conflicts in marriage. Only if both partners are willing to compromise from the beginning of marriage, can they get along smoothly.

### **Sexual relations**

Why do you consider sex as an important factor for the success of marriage? It is because; sexual relationships directly and indirectly influence the adjustment in other areas of life. It is the physical foundation of marital relationships. If there is any



frustration in sexual relationship it will affect the emotional, mental and social adjustment of the concerned person.

### **Sexual adjustment in marriage**

You know that biological factors are important in determining the sexual satisfaction of the individual. Cultural factors are also equally important. What are the other factors? From where does an individual gain his sexual attitudes?

The sexual attitudes and expectations are learnt by an individual from his/her early childhood from his/her family and his peer group. The cultural norms of the society in which he/she grows up and matures and his/her biological structure modify the acquired attitudes of the person. Knowledge of sexual anatomy and appropriate sexual activities are also necessary for good adjustment. The other factors conducive for good sexual relationship are complete emotional acceptance of each other and an understanding of each other's behaviour.

### **Sexual maladjustments in marriage**

Unfavourable attitudes towards sex, ignorance about sex and sexuality lack of proper sex education, unfavourable sexual experiences of early years of life, unrealistic expectations about sex in marriage and the unwillingness to be open with one's partner etc. are some of the reasons for sexual maladjustment.

Psycho sexual development influences an individual's sex life. Fixation or regression at any stage of development will adversely affect the sexual adjustment. According to Freud at one stage of development, the male and female children are attracted to the parent of the opposite sex – the boy to the image of his mother, the girls to the image of her father. For the boy this phenomenon is known as Oedipus complex, for the girl it is Electra complex. Normally the boy and girl will pass through this stage and begin to identify with the parent of one's own sex. If they are fixated to this stage, in their later marital life it will cause problems in sexual relationship with the partner.

### **Confusion about sex and false attitudes towards sex**

In Indian society discussion on sex continue to be a taboo since long. This conservative attitude of elders prevents the imparting of healthy facts about sex to the teenagers. So they may turn to some other source to get information. They may be knocking at the wrong doors and getting wrong and dangerous information. Inaccurate and distorted information creates unhealthy attitudes towards sex. Later on in married life it will create a number of problems.

The role of man and woman in sexual adjustment depends upon the attitudes and expectations each person brings into marriage. Both the spouses should have balanced and positive attitudes towards sex.

### **Relations with in-laws**

Marriage joins not only the man and woman together, but their families also. Hence, in-laws are the new relatives acquired through marriage. You may wonder whether in-laws are bringing problems to every marriage.

The relationship with in-laws may bring about problems in some marriages. The circumstance in which each person lives is different. If the son-in-law or daughter-in-law fits in with the expectations of the respective family, he/she will be accepted easily. Otherwise, problems may arise.

### **Interference of mothers**

Usually, it is the mother-in-law who is more involved in in-law problems. Mother's lives are tied up with the lives of their children. They are very close to children. Some mothers are reluctant to give up their roles and try to maintain their responsibilities and expect privileges from their married children. The boy or the husband should understand this phenomenon and manage the situation accordingly.

### **Husband's mother interferes more often**

The mother is the first woman in the life of her son. After the son's marriage some mothers cannot accept another woman loving and caring him, even though it is his wife. The wife feels the mother-in-law to be a threat to her marital happiness. Only an intelligent and understanding husband can solve this problem. He should give due importance to both of them. Don't make them rivals. The wife should not be in competition with the mother. Give mothers time to find out new interests.

### **Other in-laws**

Sister-in-law also creates problems in the life of married couple. Brothers-in-law and fathers-in-law also share a small part in the in-law problems. Care of elderly relatives also creates troubles.

### **Why do the parents interfere?**

Parents are concerned with the growth and achievements of their children from the time of their birth. Hence, when children get married it is difficult for the parents to ignore or to be indifferent about their lives. At the same time the young couple is eager to be independent. They do not like the interference of parents.

In many cases, the parents are not economically independent. They are forced to live with their married children. This also creates problems.

### **Positive contribution of in-laws**

The in-law relationships are not always a problem. If the young wife appreciates her husband's mother and loves her as a second mother, she will find her very helpful.

### **Cultural factors affecting role changes**

The role expectations vary with different cultures. Culture conditions the personality of an individual. Marital roles are determined by the culture in which one grows up. The couple coming from two different cultures will behave differently in a given situation. They will be having different expectations and their goals in marriages will be different. There may be few common interests. Each brings from his/her culture quite often different values, attitudes, customs and styles of living. Cultural differences make mutual understanding and communication difficult.

What should the couple do to adjust to each other?

The couple requires more adjustment than others in a homogenous marriage. Before marriage, they should think carefully whether they are capable of making all the adjustments in such a marriage. To achieve marital satisfaction, they should work with more maturity, understanding and determination than a couple marrying from similar backgrounds. If the couple can accept one another without trying to recast the mate into one's own particular mould, they may get along well.

### **Religion**

Society may accept inter-racial marriages. But it seldom approves inter-religious marriages. The chances for success of an interfaith marriage depend upon the ability of the couple to face the situation maturely and realistically. Before marriage, they should have a clear evaluation of the difficulties they have to encounter and overcome.

### **Areas of conflict**

One's desire to make the other person adopt his/her religion causes major marital problems. Whether the parents and friends will accept the match is another difficulty. This affects the relationship of the parents. The religion to which children shall belong their education, choice of child training methods, the use of birth control measures etc. are some of the major areas of conflict.

### **Adjustments**

If they are of an understanding nature and tolerant of each other's religion and have no desire to impose their own religion on the mate, they will get along well. If they have a clear idea of the many obstacles they have to encounter and if they are flexible enough to make their adjustments, their marriage may become successful.

### **Importance of early years**

During the early years the couple has to make all the above adjustments for the success of their marriage. Each partner must learn how far he/she can take the mate in different areas and which are the things he/ she must avoid.

A couple may be able to make adjustments successfully in the early years. But marital life is a continuous process. Aging and maturity bring about changes in the lives of the couple. The new and changing situations in life makes further adjustments in the roles of husbands and wives necessary and inevitable.

### **Role changes with the arrival of children**

The next phase in marriage starts with the arrival of children in the family. It signals the beginning of a new stage in the relationship of husband and wife.

### **Life along with offspring**

There are radical role changes to be made with the birth of children. Parenthood brings fulfillment and completion to marriage. It fundamentally changes the whole character of marital relationships.

### **Problems related to transition to parenthood**

The coming of the child is early anticipated, loved and cherished by the parents. But transition to parenthood brings about a number of readjustments in the lives of parents. The arrival of the child upsets the balance maintained in the family.

### **Parental role**

Parental role brings personal, social and economic privations.

### **Economic problems**

The father is worried about his responsibility and additional expenses. The wife may have to give up her career and take up the role of a full-time housewife. This affects the income and expenditure of the family.

### **Personal difficulties**

The wife may be embarrassed about the conditions of pregnancy and its effects on her social life and marital relations. Men also have to make role changes. When the wife is overburdened with child care and other household chores, he may have to share her duties.

### **Social participation**

The social life and recreation of the parents are severely affected. The young couple is tied down with the of children. When they can entrust someone else for child care, they can have joint participation in social activities. Otherwise, they attend social functions separately. However, joint participation gives more satisfaction to the couple.

You have already learnt that, in the early phase of marriage, the couple had a child-centered relationship. They had very few outside interests. Their lives were built around their children.

### **Feelings of uselessness**

Some women feel that their lives are empty and futile. When parental responsibilities diminish, they may be having a feeling of uselessness. For such women, ending of parental role is a traumatic experience. It may cause neurotic difficulties. They can try to learn new skills and become engaged in some activities. Husbands are occupied with their work. In this way, they can adjust to the changes in the family.

### **Adjustment with in-laws**

Children may get married and the parents have to adjust to the children's spouses. Another adjustment is the care of aging parents. Caring for the elderly may help to fill the gap created when children leave home. But in many cases the care of aging parents deprives the couple of the opportunities for social participation and development of new interests.

### **Role as grandparents**

You may be well aware that many men and women become grandparent before grandparent middle age ends. This is a new role in the life of the couple.

### **Formal roles**

Some grandparents play a formal role following a hands-off policy as far as care and discipline of grandchildren are concerned.

### **Surrogate parent role**

In some other cases they assume the responsibility for the care of children. Grandmothers are more active in this role.

### **Fun seeker role**

Another role is that they impart special knowledge to their grandchildren and teach them certain skills.

The role of grandparents gives couple more satisfaction than their earlier role of parents.

### **Role changes in old age**

You must have observed the role changes in early adulthood and middle ages of the couple. What are the changes during old age? How does the couple adjust to these changes? You also know that the couple had a close, intimate relationship in the early phase of their marriage. Later on, it changed into a child-centered relationship. In old age, the relationship between a husband and wife again takes the form of a pair centered relationship.

### **Effects of retirement**

The pattern of family life undergoes further changes with the retirement of the husband. Perhaps the greatest adjustment of all occurs during this period.

The husband retires and suddenly faces the insults of old age. He feels unwanted and has no motivation to compete with other men. He feels lost and does not know what to do with his free time. He tends to be depressed and unhappy. He is irritable in his treatment of his wife. He always criticizes and finds fault with the spouse. He does not want to help the wife in her household duties thinking it is woman's work.

### **Common interests**

Retirement forces the couple to be together most of the time. They can develop a pattern of togetherness in recreational activities. The same pattern can be applied to other areas of life. With the change of time mutual interests can be developed. When children leave home the parents are drawn towards each other more closely.

### **Check Your Progress III**

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What do you understand by sexual maladjustments in marriage?

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2) Write a brief note on role changes in old age.

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## **4.5 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit we have examined the role expectations in marital life. We have described the role of a man and a woman in marital life. We also discussed the factors influencing choice of marital roles. Another important issue covered in this unit is about role conflicts, reasons for role conflicts and conflict management.

We also described the role changes in different phases of marriage. Apart from personality factors in relation to role expectations, we also examined other factors such as relations with in-laws, cultural factors affecting role changes, religion, as well as problem related to transition to parenthood.

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#### 4.6 KEY WORDS

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**Marital roles** : Marital roles are behavioural expectations of husbands and wives in a particular society at any given time.

**Role conflicts** : Role conflicts occur when there are discrepancies in role expectations and the actual behavioural performance by the couple.

**Surrogate Parent** : A person acting the role of a parent (either mother or father)

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#### 4.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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#### 4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR ANSWERS

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##### Check Your Progress I

- 1) Marital roles are the behavioural expectations of husbands and wives in a particular society at any given time. Roles are cultural creations, rather than biological imperatives. Roles provide the facility for the smooth running of society by a division of labour for men and women.
- 2) The wife should become the companion of the husband. She is expected to give love and affection to him. He expects an equally sharing of responsibilities. He expects cooperation, support and recognition for his efforts.

##### Check Your Progress II

- 1) In quarrels, be very careful in the use of words. Pay attention to good things your partner does. Do not pay too much attention to the bad things your partner does. Do not pay too much attention to his/her faults. Don't fall asleep without making up a quarrel. Control your temper. Don't compare your spouse with your parents.

Learn to compromise, to forget and to forgive. The partner should have flexible personalities. They should understand each other.

Avoid scathing criticism and curb the impulse to have cutting retorts. Settle a problem through mutual discussion. If things cannot be resolved mutually, you will need to seek help from a family counselor or spiritual counselor. Although seeking help from a counselor is not common in India, we need to adapt ourselves to changing situations.

### **Check Your Progress III**

1) Unfavorable attitudes towards sex, ignorance about sex and sexuality, lack of proper sex education, unfavourable sexual experiences of early years of life, unrealistic expectations about sex in marriage and the reasons for sexual maladjustment.

2) We know that the couple have close, intimate relationship in the beginning phase of their marriage. Later, it changes into a child-centered relationship. The relationship of the couple in old age again takes the form of pair centered relationship

Role changes occur at various stages of one's life. In early adulthood and middle age, the role keeps changing. Similarly, in old age too, the role of a person takes on a different shape. For example, the older people are called upon to take the role of grandparents. Both their children and grandchildren approach older people for sharing anxieties and often seek guidance in managing crisis situations.

