CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

In India, there is no greater event in a family than a wedding, dramatically evoking every possible social obligation, kinship bond, traditional value, impassioned sentiment and economic resource. In the arranging and conducting of weddings, the complex permutations of Indian Social Systems display best themselves.

Marriage is deemed essential for virtually everyone in India. For the individual, marriage is the great watershed in life, marking the transition to adulthood. Generally, this transition, like everything else in India, depends little upon individual volition but instead once occurs as a result of the efforts of many people. Even as one is born into a particular family without the exercise of any personal choice, so is once given a spouse without any personal preference involved. Arranging a marriage is a critical responsibility for parents and other relatives of both bride and groom. Marriage alliances entail some redistribution of wealth as well as building and restructuring social realignments, and of course result is the biological reproduction of families.

Some parents begin marriage arrangements on the birth of a child, but most wait until later. In the past, the age of marriage was quite young and in a few small groups, especially in Rajasthan, children under the age of five are still united in marriage. In rural communities, pre-puberty marriage for
girls traditionally was the rule. In the late twentieth century, the age of marriage is rising in the villages, almost to the levels that obtain in cities. Legislation mandating minimum marriage ages has been passed in various forms over the past decades, but such laws have little effect on actual marriage practices.

1.1 The Nature Of Marriages In India:

Essentially, India is divided into two large regions with regard to Hindu Kinship and Marriage Practices, the north and south. Additionally various ethnic and tribal groups of the central mountainous, north, and eastern regions follow a variety of other practices. These variations have been extensively described and analysed by anthropologists especially Iravati Karve, David G, Mandelbaum and Clarence Maloney (ibid).

The nature of marital alliances can be observed in different ways in different parts of the country. Broadly, in the Indo-Aryan-Speaking North, a family seeks marriage alliances with people to whom it is not already linked by ties of blood. Marriage arrangements often involve looking for a field. In the Dravidian-Speaking South, a family seeks to strengthen existing kin ties through marriage preferably blood relatives. Kinship terminology reflects this basic pattern. In the north, every kinship term clearly indicates, whether the person referred to is a blood relation or an affinal relation, all blood relatives are forbidden as marriage mates to a person or a person's children.
In the south, there is no clear-cut distinction between the family of birth and the family of marriage. Because, marriage in the South commonly involves a continuing exchange of daughters among a few families, for the married couple, all relatives are ultimately blood kins. Dravidian terminology stresses the principle of relative age; all relatives are arranged according to whether they are older or younger than each other without reference to generation.

On the Indo-Genetic Plain, marriages are contracted outside the village, sometimes outside of large groups of villages, with the members of the same caste beyond any traceable consanguineal ties. In much of the area, daughters should not be given into villages, where daughters of the family or even of the natal village have previously been given. In most of the region, brother-sister exchange marriage are shunned. The entire emphasis is on casting the marriage net ever-wider, creating new alliances.

In most of the North India, the Hindu bride goes to live with strangers in a home she has never visited. There, she is sequestered and veiled, an outsider who must learn to conform to new ways. Her natal family is often geographically distant, and her ties with her consanguineal kin undergo attenuation to varying degrees.

In South India, in sharp contrast, marriages are preferred between cousins (especially cross-cousins, that is, the children of a brother and sister)
and even between uncles and nieces (especially a man and his elder sister's daughter). The principle involved in it is that of return—the family that gives a daughter expects one in return. If not now, then in the next generation. The effect of such marriages is to bind people together in relatively small, tight-knit, kin groups. A bride moves to her in-laws home—the home of grandmother or aunt—and is often comfortable among these familiar faces. Her husband may well be the cousin she has known all her life that she would marry.

Many South Indian marriages are contracted outside of such close kin groups when no suitable mates exist among close relatives, or when other options appear more advantageous. Some sophisticated Indians, for example, consider cousin marriage and uncle-niece marriage outmoded.

Even remarriages are also held. But rules for the remarriage of widows differ from one group to another. Generally, lower-ranking groups allow widow remarriage, particularly if the woman is relatively young, but the highest, ranking castes discourage or forbid such remarriage. The most strict adherent to the non-remarriage of widows are Brahmins. Almost all groups allow widowers to remarry. Many groups encourage a widower to marry his deceased wife's younger sister but never her older sister.

Finding the perfect partner for one's child can be a challenging task. People use their social network to locate potential brides and grooms of
appropriate social and economic status. Increasingly, urban dwellers use classified matrimonial advertisements in newspapers. The advertisements usually announce religion, caste and educational qualifications, stress female beauty and male earning capacity, and may hint at dowry size.

In rural areas, matches between strangers are usually arranged without the couple meeting each other. Rather, parents and other relatives come to an agreement on behalf of one couple. In cities, however, especially among the educated classes, photographs are exchanged and sometimes the couple are allowed to meet under heavily chaperoned circumstances, such as going out for tea with a group of people or meeting in the parlor of the girls home with her relatives standing by.

Semi-arranged love marriages are going to be held today. Almost all Indian children are raised with the expectations that their parents will arrange their marriages, but an increasing number of young people, especially among the college educated, are finding their own spouses. So-called love marriages are deemed a slightly scandalous alternative to properly arrange marriages. Some young people convince their parents to "arrange" their marriages to people with whom they have fallen in love. In the upper classes, these semi-arranged love marriages increasingly occur between young people who are from castes of slightly different rank but who are educationally or professionally equal. If there are vast differences to
overcome, such as in the case with love marriages between Hindus of very different caste status, parents are usually much less agreeable, and seriously family disruptions can result.

In much of India, especially in the north, a marriage establishes a structural opposition between the kin groups of the bride and groom-bride-givers and bride-takers. Within this relationship, bride-givers are considered inferior to bride-takers and are forever expected to give gifts to the bride-takers. The one-way flow of gifts begins at engagement and continuous for a generation or two. The most dramatic aspect of this asymmetrical relationship is the giving of dowry.

In many communities throughout India, a dowry has traditionally been given by a bride's kin at the time of her marriage. In the past, the dowry was considered a woman's wealth property due a beloved daughter had no claim on her natal family's estate and typically included portable valuables such as jewelry and household goods a bride could control throughout her life. However, over time, the larger proportion of the dowry has come to consist of goods and cash payments that go straight into the hands of groom's family. Today, throughout much of India, dowry payments have escalated and a groom's parents - sometimes insist on compensation for their son's higher education and even for his future earnings to which the bride will presumably have access.
Thus, the marriages are held in different forms in different societies in India. These forms of marriage are going to influence on and determine the demographic, economic and social behaviour of population in the society. For instance, the fertility, morbidity, migration and economic behaviour etc., and even the social behaviour of the population like type of family, setup up of marriage and type of personality and all these are determined by the forms of marriage adopted by a particular society.