

INTRODUCTION

Marriage is one of the most important institutional expressions of sex in mankind. The sex-instinct in man is a powerful biological impulse which has played a dominant role to the evolution of human culture in the matrix of society. A number of psychic phenomena, ethical values and spiritual idealities are interlaced with it. The configuration of sex-life, which brings about a unison of two minds, touches the deep spring of the varied aspects of personality and of ~~xxx~~ social life. It endows the life of impulses with ethical values and meanings to lead it to the higher reach of social experience.

Sex and love consummate^m themselves in the matrimonial and familial institutions. These are blended with several other basic desires and interests and through diversely^a remified social expressions are finally sublimated into aesthetic and spiritual experience.

The changing variety of matrimonial institutions through the ages and as differently distributed over the different spheres of the world can only be explained by the fact that sex is integrally connected with other interests and impulses which do not always ~~xxx~~ pursue an even course. They act and react and change their directions in response to the needs, traditions and ~~morés~~ of society.

The evolutional history of marriage in India and its varied phases of development through the ages are marked with some of the traits and characteristics of the milieu to which Hindus have striven for continued adaptation. Any shift of emphasis on the collocation of interests and impulses or any change in the interests and motives with which the sex is integrated brings new forms and institutions in existence.

Both man and woman play a variety of roles in human institution in the passage of times. The mutual adjustment

of attitudes has shaped and modulated their relative position according as there have been ever-changing affiliations of the sex with other human interests. Marriage as an institution, therefore, represents a rich and variegated pattern of feelings, emotions and attitudes that have been slowly woven in the course of history.

The age-old culture of the Hindus views marriage as a religious sacrament. It opens up a new vista of career where emotional integrity of two individuals is harnessed for the refinement and orientation of their activities in accordance with the ethos of the race. In the earliest and most sacred literature of India, viz. the 'Rgveda', the hymn of creation (X.129) describes marriage as a replica of the great sacrament of creation. Marriage to the Hindus symbolises cosmic 'dharma'. The sacramental conception of marriage is deeply tinged with the spiritual import of parenthood and the social solidarity of the patriarchal family, 'transmitting faith and culture across the generations'. The marital bond unites the partners of marriage in an indissoluble tie. It affords opportunities for the married spouses to discern goals and values in love, reproduction, in economic collaboration or in rearing of children to the standard of the race-ethos to which they belong in discharging varied social and religious duties, catering needs to the guests, gods and the cosmic universe as a whole. The social and religious values have thus been brought to bear upon the process of sex-maturation to reach the acme of sex-sublimation. The philosophical and mystical aspect of human love in India purified of its dress, is assimilated to the metaphysical relishing of rasa(bliss) of 'Brahman'.

But such association of sex-life with a myriad of interests and idealists has to tell the tale of a long history, the course of which is a dubious and devious one. It is a field of study in which the standards, mores and

values as shaped and formulated in the codes and conventions of family and society are not denuded of complexities. The present thesis undertakes to probe into the mysteries of such evolution and the process of its development on Indian soil according to the Hindu view of life.

With these introductory remarks let me now take up the connected topics for discussion in different chapters.
