CHAPTER-V

FINDINGS
AND CONCLUSION
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From the analysis of the above data, we can list a few major findings. It appears from the analysis that there is close inter-relation among the different traits and there is reflection of the changing scenario of our socio-economic conditions.

I

Analysing the data of educational standard, we found:

- Grooms' educational qualifications is not the prime condition for marriage but consideration of brides' educational qualification is certainly an important factor during negotiation for marriage. The percentage of the undergraduate brides has been decreasing and that of the graduate brides has been increasing since 1951.

- Since 1971 grooms shown interest to prefer brides with 'professional' qualifications. There is also a leaning of the brides towards professional education which is found since 1971.

- Preference to 'equally qualified' brides and grooms by grooms and brides respectively has been increasing gradually.
Regarding age, we found:

- 'Marital age' of both brides and grooms are found to change over time. The tendency of shifting the 'marital age' of grooms is found to be from 25–30 years to 30–35 years and above during 1951, 1971 and 1991. During this period, tendency of shifting 'marital age' in case of brides is also found from 18–25 years to 25–30 years.

- 'Over age' or 'higher age' of grooms seemed to matter little in matrimonial alliances. So, Grooms' age may not be an important criterion during marriage but consideration of brides' age is certainly an important factor during negotiation for marriage.

- 'Lower age group' brides are preferred by grooms' parents as well as by brides' parents earlier. Such interest is however found to decay and there is increase in interest in 'same age group' spouses. This is evident in 1991.

Brides and their parents also gave importance to higher educational qualifications of girls so as to reach the target of 'self dependence'. The age of marriage of a bride is therefore getting higher. In the two generations taken under consideration, the 'marital age' for grooms is found to shift from 25-30 years to 30-35 years and that for brides is from 18-25 years to 25-30 years up to 1971. Both brides and grooms are found to prefer 'same
age group' for marriage which was reflected in the data related to age since 1991.

Grooms' age and educational qualifications may not be very important for matrimonial alliances if they have ability of earning money. This confirms partly our first hypothesis where the present worker mentioned that 'preference of grooms with better family background and education is giving way to his richness and income'. But consideration of brides' age and educational qualifications are still important factors during negotiation for marriage. Dominance of such patriarchal attitude though gradually fading out, is still continuing in our society.

Data related to 'occupation' also support brides' interest in jobs for self-dependence. We found, working girls (brides) are increasing in number with changing time. We may mention that social awareness influenced people to educate their girl-children not for the sake of education alone but for job – for self-dependence. This 'awareness' taught the society not to discriminate among boys and girls. This confirms fully the second hypothesis where the present worker mentioned that 'in place of beautiful and homely brides, preference is shifted to employable or already employed brides'. So, at the end of the second generation taken under consideration i.e., in 1990s, we observe the followings.
Increase in preference to ‘same age group’ brides both by brides’ and grooms’ sides are evident in 1991.

Preference to ‘equally qualified’ brides and grooms by grooms and brides respectively is also increasing gradually.

Grooms showed interest towards ‘professional’ qualifications and there is a leaning of the brides also towards ‘professional’ education since 1971.

Now, the question may arise: why the people became increasingly interested for female education and for their jobs to be self-dependent since 1951? It is understandable that ‘education’ with a view to create an enlightened new generation is important, but the quest for ‘self-dependence’ mainly due to meet the financial need of the family is apparent from these preferences. We also observe a reflection of the above in the data related to ‘occupation’. We find, working brides gave first preference to ‘teaching’ profession, second preference to Government or Government undertaking organisations and third preference to private organisations. Grooms’ continued their first choice to Government organisation during the last two generations. This shows that the members of middle class families preferred secured job. Such secure incomes through grooms and even through both brides’ and grooms’ occupations, gradually brought a change in the structure and status of families and so a change is noticed in the traditional joint family system. Thus, ‘joint family’ practice gradually gave way to ‘nuclear family’ practice. While education created a new
enlightened generation, there was also something in our education system which triggered individual aspirations. So, the educated youth of both sexes started looking for jobs. Since joint families are not conducive to the individual aspirations and the system also inhibits them in many ways, the educated youths prefer nuclear families. Thus 'nuclear' families grew. This observation is also supported by data related to 'family type' of brides and grooms mentioned in the advertisements. There we find a change in regard to 'family type' especially from 1971 onwards. Creation of such 'nuclear' family from the joint family system and preference to brides and grooms towards small families becomes evident from the data of 1991.

II

Education has made people socially aware. It helped a lot to fight conservatism in our society. This is clearly reflected in the data related to caste, religion, regional background, asset, dowry, marriage, marital status. We observed those from the relevant data.

- Caste rigidity in our society is found to relax gradually. Both bride and groom seeking parents are interested to give priority to other traits than 'caste'. Because, Brahmin brides and grooms are found to prefer 'no caste bar'. Preference to Brahmin brides and grooms by Brahmin grooms and brides respectively is also decreasing gradually. Preference to 'no caste bar' brides and grooms also by non Brahmin grooms and brides is increasing gradually. But not a single case is found to
prefer SC/ST brides and grooms by Brahmin or, non-Brahmin grooms and brides respectively. However a lone case is found where a bride seeking parent preferred Hindu/Christian/Muslim bride. Though a single case, it can be a pointer to the opening up of our society and doing away with age-old conservatism.

- In 1951, groom seeking parents neither preferred ‘East Bengal’ grooms nor put any option such as East Bengal / West Bengal grooms. During 1971 – 1991, the groom seeking parents’ preference to ‘East Bengal’ grooms and East Bengal / West Bengal grooms are increased. This is very important as well as obvious especially after partition of Bengal which indicates a change.

  In 1971, East Bengal groom seeking parents preferred West Bengal grooms, West Bengal groom seeking parents preferred East Bengal / West Bengal grooms and East Bengal groom seeking parents preferred East Bengal / West Bengal grooms. The preference indicates a change in scenario of Bengalee Hindu society in West Bengal in connection with the matrimonial alliances where grooms of East Bengal and West Bengal are getting equal preference.

  East Bengal bride seeking parents are found to prefer East Bengal / West Bengal brides. This also confirm the changing trend of our society.
The trend of mixing east-west in our societies is clear in 1971. The impact of Bangladesh freedom movement and influx of East Bengal people to West Bengal for food and shelter is one of the main reasons behind the relaxation in our cultural rigidity. The East Bengal families enjoyed safety in West Bengal. So, they did not hesitate to build family relationship with the West Bengal people through marriage. Forgetting the question of adjustment in family because of cultural differences, the East Bengal groom seeking parents basically for future security and stability preferred West Bengal grooms. East Bengal bride seeking parents’ preference to West Bengal brides and vice-versa are also clear in the above observations. But the cases for East Bengal parents seeking grooms for their daughters is greater than that of the parents seeking West Bengal brides.

During 1951-1971, mention of ‘asset’ by bride seeking and groom seeking parents was also indicative to their ability of giving ‘dowry’. A change in such mentioning is observed in 1971. Besides social awareness, this change was due to the introduction of ‘The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961’. In this year, in one advertisement it was found that the groom’s father resided in a rental house. This is important because the said parents wanted to contact selected brides who would be able to make themselves adjusted with their
(grooms) social status. More changes took place in case of 'asset' in advertisements in 1991. In spite of mentioning 'asset', the advertisers started to mention 'well established'.

The practice of 'dowry' in our society is found to decline rapidly since 1971. No case is found in 1971 and 1991 where dowry was demanded or entertained by grooms' parents or brides' parents respectively. A hint of change in dowry practice in our society is clear in 1951. A section of brides' parents are found to mention 'inability to meet dowry demand', 'without / minimum dowry', 'dowry according to ability' etc. On the other hand, grooms' parents are also found to prefer 'without or minimum dowry', 'loan in lieu of dowry' etc.

- A hint of change in the custom of our marriage is found in 1971. This is more clear in 1991 when both brides and grooms showed interest in 'registry' marriage. Such preference was both to honour the act related to marriage registration and also to curtail expenditure for social formalities. Busy schedule of spouses may also be considered as one of the main reasons for preferring 'registry' marriage.

- A change is clear in 1991, when divorcee brides and grooms advertised to marry unmarried / divorcee /widow grooms and brides respectively. More important
is that the percentage of divorcee is higher than that of widow/widower in 1991 among brides and grooms.

III

The concept of brides' 'health' underwent change during the last two generations. Mention of 'slim' by the brides is found to increase gradually with the decrease of 'healthy' mentioned brides. Percentage of 'healthy' brides and grooms are shifted to 'slim' brides and grooms during the period taken under consideration. The trend of such change though found in 1971, is absolutely clear in 1991. This change towards preferring 'slim' brides is closely related to our social changes. At the time of independence, joint family system was prevalent in West Bengal and girls in job was not whole-heartedly accepted by our the then social custom. People then preferred 'hard working' girls for matrimonial relationships. Because, they realised that only 'healthy' brides would be able to make them adjusted with the work load of joint family system. We would be able to recall the practice that mothers and grandmothers would take special care for their daughters' health during negotiation for marriage. Now the concept of 'health' has been changed and 'slim' is also considered as 'good health'. It is also argued that 'slims' are hard working, smart, easily adjustable with tough daily routine and are found mostly free from disease. People have also become very careful about their health and contact 'health care' organisations according to their necessity.

'Appearance' is one of the most important traits in matrimonial relationships. During the last two generations, we found, appearance played
important role. Though 'dowry', in most cases, dominated appearance and complexion of brides, the interest of mentioning appearance of brides is increasing gradually. On the other hand, grooms though reluctant to mention their own appearance, they are very much choosy about brides' appearance. So, a hint of domination by the grooms in this regard is apparent. But a change in such domination is found in 1991 where at least two brides (out of 685 brides) preferred handsome, good looking, attractive and smart grooms. This is definitely an important change and should be considered as a reflection of our changing socio-economic culture of our society.

In this context, we can mention findings related to 'complexion'. There brides generally do not give attention to grooms' complexion. The grooms also do not bother to mention their complexion. But a change of trend in this regard was found in 1971 and in 1991. Grooms started to mention their own complexion. This is definitely to meet the demand of the brides. This shows that grooms are also trying to be liberal to the changes.

By the end of the 20th century, people understood importance of some of the traits and so they gave priority to the selected traits. They realised more clearly that 'marriage' is not merely a custom of living together, but also to build up a better generation. So, right choice with justified reasons is a must. They do not even want to ignore 'height'. Instead of mentioning tall/short, they are interested to mention exact height.

Outlook of both brides and grooms in connection with 'qualities' of spouses are found to change since 1971. Preference was given to cultured, progressive, ambitious, broad minded brides/grooms rather than homely, efficient in domestic affairs, simple, polite, good taste, intelligent, honest,
very diligent, well accomplished brides/grooms. This change is found to be increasing in 1991.

IV

In the last decade of the 20th century and even in the new century, we find, the following important features in connection with the matrimonial alliances.

• Both brides and grooms are interested to mention their blood groups.

• The parents are now eager to check the blood of the incumbents through 'Hemoglobin Electrophoresis Test' related to ‘Thalassemia’ before negotiation for marriage.

• Brides and grooms in some cases even mention their personal telephone numbers and even their e-mail I.D.

• Preference to registration for marriage is given priority than a colourful occasion for marriage.

• ‘Match making’ has become an important profession. Practice of so called ‘match maker’ has been changed. Now some organisations have started match making with data available even by use of computers.

• TV serials have also started in Kolkata where brides and grooms present individually during the program.
and mention their names, other status and their preferences.

- An ‘engagement fair’ was organised by a marriage consultant house at Hotel Knilworth, Kolkata.

Marriage may be considered as an experiment in family system. During the last two generations taken under consideration for study, we found the people – the main constituents of our society, have changed their preferences gradually. Preferences regarding matrimonial alliances have a close relationship with changes in our society. That’s why impact of our socio cultural change is evident in the preferences of the bride seeking and groom seeking parents. We, the present generation are the creator of a new generation. So, selection of each individual for marriage is very much important. Matrimonial advertisements may be considered as the lense of a camera through which we can easily visualise our society and thus we can observe the changes take place in our society.

Social or for that matter socio cultural change is a multi-faceted phenomenon. The system of marriage and the institution of marriage are possibly the most important constituents of the society. The change in the values is both a reason and effect of marriage and family system. There is no denying of the fact that economic conditions and environment largely shape the concept of security of individuals in their own as well as outside society. Economic conditions and the changes therein influence the marriage system very much. But there are many uneconomic and aesthetic
aspects which may broadly be turned as social preferences of the individuals. By this we mean, an individual may have a unique choice. But when the question of institutionalizing a marital relationship, he / she cannot be unique. We, therefore, purposively use social choice of the individual which is conditioned by his/her social existence. While studying this phenomenon, we found that narrowness of discipline is inadequate to comprehend such social phenomenon like marriage. It is not just economics, caste, complexion or region can explain the social choice. This is all taken together and to find some other societal compulsion which explain the choice. The advertisements indicated that there is a dynamics of the social choice of individuals and cannot remain isolated from the changes in the societal values. The advertisements also point out distant changes which are perceptible but yet not practiced. This is how society moves on and also intervenes into the system and its various institutions.