3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Marriage is a social duty not only towards the family but also towards the community as well. As such several books have so far been written and published in various languages across the globe tracing the evolution of the concept of marriage down the ages, its importance in society, the promises and vows it holds and its significance. In our country too, there have been books published on topics dealing with marriage in ancient India, marriage in Hindu Society, marriage in Islam, marriage among the various tribal communities, the relation between marriage and morals. There have also been books published on the gradual change in the pattern of marriage as observed in different communities, its consequences upon society and also dealing with the conditions which make for happiness as well as for discomfort in marriage. But so far there has not been a single book written on matrimonial advertisements in newspapers to observe the change and continuity of our Bengali Hindu Society in West Bengal. Apart from several changes that have taken place, the process of selection of suitable mates for marriage has also undergone a considerable change. Although marriages still continued to be arranged, yet this arrangement is frequently initiated through non traditional means as matrimonial advertisement that appear in the classified section of several dailies especially on Sundays. Thus matrimonial columns are increasingly becoming an integral part of the mate selection process in modern India. This research works is aimed at studying this recent change sociologically to bring out its significance in the society that is in the making.
In the preparation of this thesis, I should not, however, claim any originality and I acknowledge my indebtedness to innumerable books on the topic available which I have freely consulted.

In this regard Atul Sur's valuable work on 'Bharater Bibaher Itihaash' came to be of immense help to me. As the title suggests, the book has been divided into a number of chapters dealing mainly with the diverse patterns of marriage as had been prevalent in different communities in ancient India. Out of the handful number of chapters I have freely consulted the ones on sexual life, marriage in ancient India, marriage among relations and marriage in Hindu Society.

Written in the form of historical piece the chapters depict the gradual evolution of different system of marriage in Indian Society down the ages. This book gives us an insight into how caste exogamy among the Hindus as well as among the different tribal groups played an important role in the process of selection of suitable mates during marriage. The exogamy of the Hindus has two aspects. Marriage among different caste groups of Hindus are generally regulated by class exogamy or "gotras" within the frame work of caste endogamy. The gotra exogamy prohibits marriage between members of the same gotra. And the Sapinda exogamy prohibits marriage between persons related to each other within certain generation on the father's and mother's side.
Analogous to the gotras among the Hindus is the ‘Toms’ among the various tribal groups. However, there are exceptions to this general rule. Among certain tribal of Nagaland and Khandas of Orissa, marriages are strictly prohibited between spouses belonging to the same village, class exogamy here being referred to as the “Gochi” and the “Khel” respectively. The Mundas of the Chhotanagpur are also seen to follow similar norms during selection of mates. Among the Gondas of Madhya Pradesh a somewhat similar class exogamy is referred to as “Bangsha”.

The book also provides us with elaborate discussion on different patterns of marriage and family as prevalent in Hindu Society. It gives an account of the distribution of patriarchal as well as matrilineal societies as found in different parts of the country. There are frequent references to polygamy (both polyandry and polygyny), the concept of dowry and bride-price at the time of marriage and to the idea of considering women as private property. It also mentions about the compulsion of marriage in Hindu Society. Among various other factors controlling the process of mate selection, there are references to the influence of astrology among the same systems.

Although the book has provided us with valuable information on the pattern of marriage prevalent in different regions and communities in India, it has not highlighted sufficiently on the customs of marriage as found in the
case of middle class Bengali Hindu family in West Bengal to show change
and continuity of our society.

Beside this, the book titled as ‘Marriage and Family in India’, written
by K. M. Kapadia has also been of much help to me. The book provides a
comprehensive study on the various patterns of marriage that we find in
different parts and among different peoples of the country. This book
includes several chapters on topics like ‘The Hindu Views of Life’,
‘Ashramas’ etc. Out of this whole lot, I have consulted the ones on
‘polyandry’, ‘polygyny’ and ‘selection in marriage’.

In the fourth chapter, there has been an elaborate discussion on the
practice of ‘polyandry’ i.e. a woman being married to more than one person
at a time. This was once of a common occurrence among the people of the
Cis-Himalayan tract in Northern India and among certain tribes of the
Dravidian group in South India. Though reference of polyandry had been
given by Yudhisthira in Mahabharata when he illustrated the marriage of
Jalita with seven Rsis, and Varksi with ten brothers called Prachetas with a
view to justify Draupadi’s marriage with the Pandavas as righteous, yet
disapproval of polyandry has prevailed in the Brahmanic tradition from very
early times.
Besides dealing with the Mahabharata and the rituals practised by the Vedic Aryans, the chapters also give us a detailed insight into the practice of polyandry as is found in the case of various tribal groups.

Among the Khasas, polyandry exists in the Jaunsar Bawar Paragana of Dehradun district and in Rawain and Jaunpur Parganas of Tehri. Among these tribal people, when the elder brother marries, his wife is entitled to as the wife of his younger brother as well. And among the ones who do not practise polyandry, after husband’s death, his widow is generally married by his brother. However, the marriage bond does not completely comprehend the sex life of a woman. A Khasa woman can enjoy socially approved sexual freedom on certain fixed occasion. In order to understand the pattern of polyandry, other aspects of Khasa social life have been referred to in the chapter in great detail. In this respect we also find references of dowry concept and considering women as property. The bride-price as mentioned in the book may even vary from Re. 1 to Rs. 1000, the usual range being Rs. 12 to Rs. 20. Again under the Gorkhas, there has been a practice of levying taxes on the sale of wives and widows. Besides, a wife is regarded by a Khasiya peasant as “one of the most laborious and valuable of his domestic animals”. This concept of property in woman explains some of the social facts of Khasa Society. Apart from the Khasas, polyandry is also practised by other tribal groups like the Nairs, the Iranan and Kammala (Artisan) caste in Malabar, the Coorgs, the Todas and Kotas of the Nilgiri Hills.
Polygyny too has been considered separately in a different chapter. The practice involves the union of a man with more than one wife at a time. This has been of frequent occurrence in India right from the Vedic times till the recent past.

According to the Vedic rituals, “to have many wives is no adharma on the part of men, but to violate the duty owed to the first husband would be a great adharma in the case of a woman”. Although polygyny was socially approved, the Vedic ideal of marriage still favoured monogamy.

The sixth chapter on ‘Selection in Marriage’ also came to be of great help to me. The matter contained in this text is similar to the one mentioned in Atul Sur’s ‘Bharater Bibaher Itihaash’. Beside all this, the chapter also provides us with a liberal discussion on inter-caste as well as cross-cousin marriage.

This book too like the previous one does not deal directly with change and continuity in Bengali Hindu Society in West Bengal as regard to matrimonial aspects.

I have also sought considerable help from the book on ‘Marriage and Morals’ by Bertrand Russell. It includes several chapters related to marriage, but it does not contain any passage which is directly relevant to the topic on
which I worked. However, the tenth chapter, ‘Marriage’ written in the form of an essay is interested and informative as well.

In this chapter, the author discusses marriage without referring to children merely as a relation between men and women which is a legal institution and also a religious one in certain communities. It begins with the concept of marriage in its early form and depicts the gradual changes that have crept in it down the ages. Marriage in earlier days had been strictly monogamous as in the case of anthropoid apes, the lowest races of savages — the Bushmen, the Tasmanians. Even in civilized mankind, faint traces of monogamous instinct could sometimes be perceived. The author, however, considers the intrusion of the economic motive as a probable factor which caused the breaking up of primitive monogamy. In early agricultural and pastoral communities both wives and children were an economic asset to a man. Consequently, the able men aimed at having as many wives as possible as a result of which the concept of polygamy gradually crept in.

The chapter also gives us an insight into how marriage which was previously considered to be a mere sexual union came to be regarded as a sacrament and therefore lifelong, owing to the views of Christianity. The author being a bit inclined towards Westernized thoughts and ideas is found to deal frankly with the conditions which make for happiness as well as for discomfort in marriage leading to its break-up.
However, all the information provided here are largely applicable to the Westernised world. It does not reveal the customs of marriage as prevalent in the middle class Bengali Hindu Society.

Unlike the other books, the one published by the Bethune School Alumni Association on the eve of 150th Anniversary of the School Foundation day has indirectly helped me in framing the contents of my work. The book entitled as ‘Bethune School and Naari Shikshar Dersho Bachhor’ gives an account of the spread of education among women and their position in society in general.

The 150th years celebration of the foundation day by the school itself provides an example of the general awareness among women as regards to the spread of education among them. The various data obtained from school records preserved for years reveal the gradual increase in the popularity of spreading education among women as the number of student admitted to the school in a foundation year has now arisen from 21 to 100. This long span of 150 years bears witnesses of various social, economic and political changes and analyses its consequences on women in general.

Though the book does not particularly deal with marriage in Hindu Society, it gives us a considerable idea of the changing socio economic pattern in the society and its immediate influence upon women. It is needless to say that the condition of women in the society largely determines the
pattern of marriage prevalent in the system. With these gradual changes in the position and status of women in society, various patterns and forms of marriage and its rites have also undergone a considerable change down the ages. Such changes which can be predicted from the given data in the book have helped me much in shaping the contents of the research work.

I have gone through some papers on matrimonial advertisements in regard to mate selection. But my study is found to be quite different from those, the former being absolutely investigative in nature. Beside this, I would also like to mention about some important features those have brought a speciality to my research paper.

'Man in India' published a paper of Mitra Das of University of Lowell, U.S.A. in its December 1980 (Page – 187) issue. The title of paper was Matrimonial Advertisements : An examination of its social significance in mate selection In Modern India.

Here, matrimonial Advertisements are collected from Hindustan Times during its publications from March 1975 to August 1975. As such, there is no scope of comparative study. So, the question of observing change and continuity of our society does not arise. A static picture of a specific time can only be drawn from such a study.
The study is very much limited. Because 66.36% (i.e. 48 ads) were classified as 'different' and not included in the analysis as these ads were from people who had been divorced or widowed and were looking for spouses for a second time. Only those advertisements attempting to contact a primary marriage are included in the study.

Hindustan Times, the English newspaper taken under consideration was published from Delhi and services the area close to it. Hence, this clientele includes those groups (i.e. Hindu, Jain, Sikh, Muslim and Christian) that are concentrated in the region. So, the mentality of the Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians residing in Delhi and its adjacent areas are only reflected in the matrimonial columns. And this is quite different from the areas in which the present researcher is working.

But, this paper may help as a 'reference paper' with regard to Female Education, working brides, castes, occupation etc. during my analysis.

In this connection I would also like to mention another paper entitled as 'Inter caste Marriage Pattern among some Caste Groups of Calcutta' by A. R. Banerjee and Sumitri Banerjee (ref. 'Man in India', vol. 58. page 327).
Since the content of the work is similar to that of my field of study, I have gone through with great attention and realized that it was not of much help to me due to the following factors:

The paper is prepared on limited inter caste marriage among some caste groups of Calcutta. As such the picture of Bengali Hindu families of Calcutta can not be seen through the analysis.

In order to prepare the paper, its study materials comprise of case records of 1604 marriages, collected during the period 1975-1976 from the out patients who visited the Genetic Laboratory of the Ramkrishna Mission Seva Pratisthan Hospital, Calcutta for routine blood group and other genetic investigations.

Therefore, in this case too, the analysis is made for the period 1975-76 only and no scope is there to compare the data emerged from the sample study with that of the other years. Then a static picture for a fixed period can only be seen through this analysis. Moreover, in this analysis only the inter caste marriages are taken under consideration. A picture of marriage as a whole of the people of Calcutta cannot be found in the paper.
Hence, it can be clearly understood that the objective and analysis of my research paper is totally different from that of the instant papers and a correlation between these can hardly be made from any point of view.

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