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## IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND GLOBALIZATION ON HINDU MARRIAGE CEREMONIES

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### ABSTRACT

*Social change is a natural and gradual process. Every day some new circumstances emerge and to meet new challenges which are result of new circumstances, a society adopts, adjust and change. After 77 years of independence, we cannot expect Indian society to remain static and completely traditional. Marriage and family occupies a vital position among the institutions that have shaped human civilization. Similar to other institutions of the society, marriage also has been undergoing a gradual transformation and adjustment in different situations and ages of history. There are various factors which contribute to change in face of Hindu marriage like the advent of Western education, the process of urbanization, modernization and industrialization accelerated these changes. The rural and normative guidelines regulating marriage are also bound to change to meet new demands and expectations. Simultaneously many factors- legalistic, political, socio-economic and cultural also have cumulative impact upon the institution of marriage of urban family.*



*This study investigates the impact of social media and globalization on Hindu marriage ceremonies in India. While rooted in centuries-old traditions, Hindu weddings are increasingly influenced by global cultural flows and digital platforms. The research explores how social media shapes wedding aspirations, aesthetics, and rituals, and how globalization introduces hybrid cultural elements. Through case studies, interviews, and analysis of online content, the study reveals a shift from intimate religious rites to elaborate, performative events influenced by global trends and digital visibility. The present study has been conducted with the objectives to examine how social media platforms influence the planning and performance of Hindu wedding ceremonies and to understand the cultural consequences of globalization on traditional wedding rituals. Analytical method of research has been applied by the author. It is an attempt to understand and analyse the impact of social media and globalisation on marriage. The study focuses on the process of changes, which are taking place in sacramental Hindu marriage system. This is a secondary data base study and literature on globalization, media studies, and Hindu wedding rituals has been explored in light of the objectives of the study.*

**KEYWORDS:** Ceremonies, Social Media, Globalisation, Grahastha Ashram

### INTRODUCTION

Defining marriage in an impermeable compartment or any framework is very difficult because it involves sacredness. Social scientists working in different fields have accepted that marriage is the union between man and woman. Anthropologists like Lowie, Murdock and Westermarck emphasize on

social sanction in the union and how it is accomplished by different rituals and ceremonies. Sociologists like Blood, Lantz and Snyder, Bowman, Baber Burgess etc, view it as a system of roles and as involving primary relationships. Indologists look upon Hindu marriage as a sanskara or a dharma. The generally acceptable definition among British social anthropologists was proposed in a volume entitled 'notes and queries in anthropology' according which "Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are the recognized legitimate off-springs of both partners".<sup>1</sup> According to H.M. Johnson, "Marriage is a stable relationship in which a man and a woman are socially permitted without loss of standing in the community to have children". It is believed to be a most important institution for bodily, emotional, and social well-being of married couple and for the protection and education of their children. It is protected so that children can be cared for and properly cultured.

In the 21st century, the conjunction of globalization and digital technology has begun to reshape the nature and meaning of these weddings. Presently, Hindu weddings are not only deeply personal and spiritual events but also public showcasing, often crafted for online audiences and influenced by global aesthetics. Globalization, in the Indian context, refers to the increased exposure to and interaction with global ideas, commodities, lifestyles, and media. Post-economic liberalization (1991), India has witnessed the influx of global consumer brands, the rise of a new middle class with disposable income, greater access to international travel and education and cross-cultural influences through TV, cinema, and the internet. In the context of weddings, this has led to destination weddings, the use of Western wedding commodities like bridal gowns, cocktail parties and hiring event planners and designers influenced by global wedding industries.

### Origin and Development of concept of Marriage:

It is speculated by the many scholars that the human race must have originally lived in a state of promiscuity, where individual marriage did not exist, where all the men in a horde or tribe had indiscriminate access to all the women and where the children born of these unions belonged to the community at large. If that speculation may be accepted, it can be possible in Pre-Vedic period. During Rig Vedic period the institution of marriage was strongly planted. According to the Rig Veda the purpose of marriage was to empower a man, by becoming a householder, to perform sacrifice to the gods and to procreate children. Marriage (Vivaha) was one of the sacred sacraments which every individual had to undergo and was also the second stage, Grihasthashrama (householder) among the four stages of life prescribed in the Ashrama dharma. The term dampati used in the Rig Vedic period designates the mistress as well as the master of the house that is both husband and wife. 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 Moksha 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.

Changes in society have a direct impact on families and also on institution of marriages. In some societies, particularly more modern agricultural societies, marriage is viewed as relatively equal partners, contributing equally to the family's economic survival. The greatest change that industrialization brought to the family system was the separation of work and home. The separation of work and home affects the institution of marriage in many ways. First, the family has shifted from a large family system to a small primary household.

The emergence of the industrial economy has also facilitated the shift from producer to consumer culture. The early family system produced all the goods a family needed, from housing to food and clothing. This producer-to-consumer shift has had a major impact on marriage regulation. It triggered a trend of higher educational attainment and lower fertility among women. These changes have given women more opportunities outside the home and reduced the economic dependence of one

sex on the other. Despite the problem of rising divorce rates, they shift away from seeing marriage as a mere means of economic cooperation and the birth of children has given modern society many options.

Numerous studies have explored the ways in which social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, shape consumer attitudes, preferences, and behaviours. One of the key theoretical frameworks that have emerged in this context is the concept of social influence, which suggests that individuals' decisions are often shaped by the opinions, experiences, and recommendations of others in their social networks. Social media platforms also greatly influenced how couples spend on decor, venues, and personalized touches. Wedding fashion, too, has been shaped by social media, with brides opting for bold, photogenic gowns and camera-ready hair and makeup.

### **Ceremonies to Hindu Marriage:**

Hindu marriages in India involve a series of ceremonies, both pre- and post-wedding, with the core ceremony being the Saptapadi (taking seven steps) around the sacred fire, symbolizing vows and a commitment to friendship. Pre-wedding rituals include the Sagai (engagement), Haldi, Mehendi, and Sangeet. Wedding ceremonies can be mainly divided into two kinds these are pre-wedding and wedding day ceremonies.

### **Pre-Wedding Ceremonies:**

1. Sagai (Engagement): A formal engagement where rings are exchanged and the couple's families bless them.
2. Haldi: A ritual where turmeric paste is applied to the bride and groom's bodies, symbolizing purity and protection.
3. Mehendi: A ceremony where henna is applied to the bride's hands and feet, often with intricate designs.
4. Sangeet: A musical and dance event where family members celebrate the upcoming wedding.

### **Wedding Day Ceremonies:**

1. Kanyadan: The father of the bride gifts her to the groom.
2. Paani Grahana: The groom takes the bride's hand, accepting her as his wife.
3. Vivah Homa: A sacred fire ceremony where oblations are offered and Vedic mantras are chanted.
4. Laja Homa: Rice is offered into the sacred fire.
5. Agni Pradakshina/Mangal Phera: The couple circumambulates the sacred fire seven times, each step signifying a particular vow.
6. Saptapadi: The most important ceremony where the couple takes seven steps around the fire, symbolizing their vows and commitment.
7. Abhishek: After Saptapadi, the priest sprinkles holy water on the bride and groom, and they pay homage to the sun and pole star.
8. Sindoor and Mangalsutra: The groom applies sindoor (vermillion) to the bride's forehead and gives her a mangalsutra (sacred necklace).

### **Influence of Social Media and Globalization on Hindu Marriage Ceremonies:**

The impact of social media and globalization on marriage ceremonies in India is significant and multifaceted in reshaping traditional practices and influencing cultural norms in several key ways. Social media and globalisation has impacted the traditional ceremonies of marriage in both rural as well as urban areas.

### **Change in Urban Area:**

1. Amplification of Social Display and Status- Recently it has been observed that wedding are celebrated as social media Events. Indian weddings, already known for their splendour, are increasingly designed with Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook in mind. From pre-wedding shoots to live-streamed ceremonies, every moment is curated for public display. The scale and style of a

wedding often reflect a family's social standing, and social media magnifies this. Destination weddings, designer outfits, and celebrity-like photography have become benchmarks.

2. **Change in Wedding Planning and Trends-**Couples and planners use platforms like Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube to explore themes, outfits, venues, and decor ideas. This has led to the homogenization of certain aesthetics across regions. Social media helps discover makeup artists, photographers, venues, and wedding planners, often through influencers and reviews.
3. **Rise of Influencers and Sponsored Content-** Some individuals or couples become wedding influencers, collaborating with brands to showcase outfits, makeup, and venues. This commercializes personal ceremonies. Couples and families increasingly use their weddings as opportunities for content creation and monetization, blurring lines between personal celebration and public spectacle.
4. **Changes in Ritual and Participation-** Live streaming allow distant relatives and friends to participate virtually, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This continues to be popular for international families. The focus on content creation often means more emphasis on optics than personal connection, which can reduce the emotional intimacy of the ceremony.
5. **Fusion of Cultures and Rituals-** Global exposure and social media has led to the incorporation of Western elements into Hindu weddings, such as white wedding gowns, cake-cutting, and English music alongside traditional rituals like *phas* and *mangal sutra*. Popularized by the global elite, many Hindu families now opt for destination weddings in India or abroad (e.g., Thailand, Bali, Dubai), merging tourism with tradition.
6. **Empowerment and Visibility-** Social media has given space for inter-caste, inter-religious, LGBTQ+, and minimalist weddings to be visible and celebrated, challenging traditional norms. Brides now have more agency in how their weddings unfold, using platforms to express their preferences and sometimes challenge gendered traditions.

Social media and globalization has reshaped Hindu marriage ceremonies by integrating global cultural elements, enhancing individual agency, and transforming the socio-economic dynamics of weddings. While it enables creativity and modernization, it also raises concerns about the dilution of traditional practices and increasing social inequality due to rising costs and consumerist pressures.

### Change in Rural Area:

1. **Exposure to New Cultural Norms-** Social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube expose rural populations to urban and global wedding styles, creating aspirations for grandeur and modernity. Rural families often try to replicate elements like pre-wedding shoots, bridal entry music, choreographed dances (*sangeet*), and modern décor seen in viral wedding videos.
2. **Shift in Ritual Practices-** Traditional multi-day rituals are being shortened or stylized to fit modern formats. Some older customs may be skipped if they appear "outdated" compared to what is seen online. New customs like exchanging rings (not traditionally Hindu) or including "first dance" ceremonies are adopted under the influence of globalized content.
3. **Economic Pressures and Social Comparison-** The desire to match social media portrayals creates financial strain on families trying to host weddings that look "modern" or "high-class." A wedding's "success" may be judged by its social media visibility, leading to spending on photography, videography, and décor even in economically modest households.
4. **Digital Access and Wedding Planning-** With rising smartphone penetration and internet access in rural areas, families are using WhatsApp, Facebook, and YouTube to find ideas, vendors, and even astrologers or priests. Globalization has increased the use of online matrimonial platforms even in rural areas, expanding the pool of potential matches and sometimes crossing caste or community lines.
5. **Cultural Hybridization-** Rural weddings now commonly include hybrid elements like Western-style gowns for receptions, imported flowers, and LED lighting, replacing local traditional decorations. Menus often include non-local or non-traditional items influenced by urban/global tastes (e.g., Chinese, Italian, or desserts like cupcakes replacing traditional sweets).

**6. Digital Documentation and Publicity-** Professional photography, cinematic wedding videos, and drone coverage have reached rural India, changing how weddings are remembered and displayed. Wedding moments are increasingly posted online, sometimes generating status competition within the community.

In rural India, social media and globalization have transformed Hindu marriage ceremonies by introducing new aesthetics, altering rituals, and shifting social values. While they provide opportunities for creativity and broader horizons, they also bring challenges of cultural erosion, financial pressure, and social comparison. Rural communities are actively negotiating between preserving tradition and embracing modernity.

### Conclusion:

Change is inevitable and the institution of marriage has undergone many changes. Technological, economic, new educational patterns and lifestyle changes are key factors that play an important role in this change. The influence of social media and globalisation has significantly transformed Hindu marriage ceremonies in India. While the essence and spiritual significance of traditional rituals remain important, the presentation, scale, and execution of these ceremonies have evolved. Social media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Pinterest have popularised curated, aesthetic weddings, contributing to a rise in destination weddings, theme-based décor, and cinematic wedding photography.

Globalisation has introduced new customs, fusion ceremonies, and western influences, such as pre-wedding shoots, bridal showers, and choreographed sangeets, which were not traditionally part of Hindu marriages. The reach of global fashion, food, and event management trends has made Hindu weddings more elaborate and often commercialised, especially among urban and affluent communities. However, this shift has also led to a growing emphasis on outward display and social validation, sometimes overshadowing the cultural and spiritual essence of marriage rituals. Additionally, the homogenisation of ceremonies due to global influences risks eroding regional diversity and traditional customs.

### Suggestions:

- While adapting new trends, efforts should be made to preserve regional and community-specific rituals to maintain the cultural richness and diversity of Hindu marriage ceremonies.
- Awareness should be raised about the environmental and financial impact of extravagant weddings.
- Encouraging eco-friendly, simple, and meaningful ceremonies can help re-focus on the core values of marriage.
- Social media should be used to celebrate the essence of the marriage rather than to compete in showcasing extravagance. Families can use these platforms to document traditions and share knowledge rather than solely for social validation.
- A thoughtful blend of traditional and modern elements can enhance the uniqueness of ceremonies. Fusion should be done respectfully to avoid cultural dilution or appropriation.
- As younger generations engage more with visual media than traditional teachings, digital content can be leveraged to explain the significance of rituals, encouraging deeper understanding and appreciation.

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