

WOMEN, EMPLOYMENT AND MARRIAGE
A CASE STUDY ON TAMIL WORKING WOMEN IN
URBAN SEREMBAN

PERPUSTAKAAN
TARBIYAH ANTHROPOLOGI DAN SOSIOLOGI

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SYNOPSIS

This is a case study based in urban Seremban. The aim of this study is to look into the situation of Tamil working women from a Hindu background, to see the changes in the women's attitudes, values and behaviour towards marriage. It is divided into five chapters, all of which are based on the fieldwork conducted from the 10th of April to the 15th of May. Below is a brief outline of the various chapters.

Chapter one gives a general introduction of the objective and significance of this study. It also discusses the research methodology, the problems encountered during the fieldwork. the concept of women in work, concept of marriage and the profile of the traditional Hindu woman.

Chapter two gives a deeper understanding on various customs in marriage, and the traditional Indian wedding ceremony.

Chapter three discusses about women's attitude towards marriage in areas like age at first marriage, type of marriage, criteria for selection in marriage relationship before marriage and the customs in marriage today.

Chapter four discusses about the married life of the Indian women. We look at the type of family she likes to form after marriage, family planning, the size of the family, authority patterns in family, housework and finally her views on divorce.

Chapter five gives a conclusion of this study.

SINOPSIS

Ini adalah satu kes kajian yang dilakukan di bandar Seremban. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk melihat situasi wanita India yang beragama Hindu, yang bekerja bagi melihat perubahan-perubahan di dalam sikap, nilai dan tingkah laku wanita terhadap perkahwinan. Ini di bahagian kepada lima bab, semuanya berdasarkan pada kajian luar yang dijalankan dari 10hb April hingga 15hb Mei. Di bawah ini adalah satu rangka yang ringkas mengenai semua bab-bab tersebut.

Bab satu memberi satu pengenalan umum tentang objektif dan kepentingan kajian ini. Juga membincangkan faedah kajian, masalaah yang dihadapi semasa menjalankan kajian luar, konsep wanita dalam pekerjaan, konsep perkahwinan dan keadaan wanita Hindu yang tradisional.

Bab dua memberi penerangan yang mendalam mengenai adat-adat dalam perkahwinan dan upacara perkahwinan India yang tradisional.

Bab tiga membincangkan tentang sikap wanita terhadap perkahwinan dalam hal seperti umur pada perkahwinan pertama, jenis perkahwinan, kriteria bagi pemilihan pasangan, perhubungan sebelum perkahwinan dan adat-adat yang diamalkan dalam perkahwinan pada hari ini.

Bab empat membincangkan mengenai kehidupan setelah berumahtangga. Kita melihat pada bentuk keluarga yang disukai selepas berkahwin, perancangan keluarga, bentuk kekuasaan dalam keluarga, kerjarumah dan akhir sekali pendapat wanita India mengenai penceraian.

Bab lima memberikan kesimpulan mengenai kajian ini.

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CHAPTER I: Introduction

1.1 Aim of Study

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1.8 Historical background of Indian women workers
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Introduction

1.1 Aim of Study

The aim of this study is to look into the situation of Tamil working women from a Hindu background, residing in an urban environment. Indians in Malaysia often tend to be regarded as constituting part of one ethnic group, within a multi-ethnic society. It would however be misleading to treat all Indian as belonging to one homogenous group. The broad category of Indians, comprises a range of interconnected groups organised on the basis of a host of divided loyalties most prominent among these are differences in language, religion, caste, rural or urban residence, educational level, occupations, income level and finally generational difference. Since all these factors greatly influence how a women thinks, acts and feels, they have important implications in the study of Indian women in Malaysia.

Majority of Indians in Malaysia came originally from one particular region of India, namely Tamilnadu, in response to the need for plantation labour. 80 percent of the Indians in Malaysia are Tamils and also a vast majority of them are Hindus. Logically therefore the

group of Indian women selected for this study should be Tamil women from a Hindu background.

About 35 percent of the Indian population has moved into larger urban centers. An urban environment was preferred to a rural one or plantation oriented one because changes in the attitudes, values and behaviour of these women are expected to be highlighted mainly in urban areas.

The purpose of this study is to see the changes in the working women's attitudes, values and behaviour towards marriage. To see the changes we ought to have a brief view of the model of a traditional Hindu women which originated from the Indian sub-continent and also the traditional Indian weddings. Only then can we have a deeper understanding of the true situation.

Rapid development is usually associated with increased education opportunities and also increased job opportunities in various economic sectors. Although socio-economic development has increased opportunities for women to take on new roles outside the home, does the Indian socio-cultural values still relates women with family, marriage, children and housework? Do the married working Indian women face difficulties of trying to co-

ordinate and balance the home life with work. The strain of having to cope with traditional "wifely" chores and wage work can lead to many problems. Are working Indian women's perspective towards marriage gaining a new dimension? Do they have a say in this selection of their life partner, age at marriage and other matters relating to marriage?

1.2 Method Used

Questionnaires were arranged in such a manner as to include both open ended or opinion questions, and close ended questions. A total of sixty questionnaires were used to interview the respondent. The open ended were used in aspects requiring more detailed responses and discussion on the part of the respondents, especially on subjective matters as views and aspirations of respondents. Interview were also held with people of the older generation ie in their late 50's and a priest from a local temple. This was done in order to obtain information about traditional Indian wedding. The older generation are knowledgeable about the necessary things that ought to be done during the ceremony, but quite often do not know the reasons why such ceremonies are held. The temple

priest was very helpful in matters regarding marriage and costume.

Library research was also necessary in order to get more information regarding this topic and in understanding relevant concepts and theories. Among the materials referred to are books, articles, magazines, seminars, journals, and thesis.

1.3. Significance of study

Many studies have been done on women in Malaysia, especially the Malay women. Some of these works were for graduation exercises in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology, University of Malaya, such as these by Maimon Mat Yunus (1977), S. Desnawati (1981), Jamayah Zakariah (1982). Other studies on Malay women were done by Shajaratuddur Abd. Halim (1968), Shahar Banum Jaafar (1969) and Azizah Kassim (1969).

In recent years there has been an increase in interest in researching the Indian Society in Malaysia. Much has been done about the Indian rural families, especially those in the estates. A few undertook studies on the Indian women in the estates like Ampalovanar R

(1969), Apputhurai S.D (1971) and Dorjitham K.S.S. (1983, 1984). Only Dorjitham K.S.S. has done some research on women and Indian urban families for her thesis, 'A Comparison of South Indian Working Commercial Class Families in Urban Penang (1979). The author discussed much about the role of Indian women in urban families. The same author has also written an article, 'Indian Women in Urban Malaysia - A Sociological Approach' (1983). The author discussed about the role of traditional Indian women and the Indian women today. It includes marriage, decision-making, and husband-wife relationship.

With reference to the Indian sub-continent, we find that much has been written about the Indian women and marriages. Some of them are K.M.Kopadia (1958), V.Kapur (1973) and K. Kapur (1978).

This study about urban working Indian women and their perspective towards marriage is intended to give a view on the changes these women have gone through from a traditional Indian women. Attention will also be given to aspects such as attitudes and views of these women which influences their position in marriage today.

1.4 Location of study

These fieldwork was done in Seremban town, between the 10th of April and 15th of May. The writer had to travel to town everyday to meet the respondents during the lunch hour. The interviews were held in their offices or in the cafeteria. Interviews were also held at home. 48 of the respondents lived in housing areas in the outskirts of Seremban town and 12 of them lived in the town itself. Traveling was made easy by the public transportation available such as the bus and taxi.

1.5 Background of respondents

The total number of Indians in Seremban is 21,262 people and out of these 10,457 are female. The total number of females Indian from a Hindu background in Negeri Sembilan is 10,639. The writer interviewed a total of sixty Indian working women from a Hindu background. Thirty of the respondents were married women and the other thirty were single women (characteristics of sample is given in table 1).

In terms of education, all the respondents had completed their primary school education. 83 percent of

the respondents completed their secondary school education while 17% had not. These women did not complete their secondary school education due to reasons like failure of the Form 3 exam (lower Certificate of Education / Sijil Rendah Pelajaran) and lack of interest in studies. Among the respondents who completed their secondary school education, a great many finished their Form 5 (Malaysian Certificate of Education / Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia), while only a small number completed their Form 6 (Higher School Certificate / Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran / Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia).

83 percent of the single women started working before they were 21 years of age. The majority started working after finishing their Form 5. Among the married women, 60 percent started working between the age 22 - 25 years of age. The income they earned was mainly between \$200 - \$800 per month. 25 percent of the respondents were government employees and the rest were employed in private sectors.

Table I
Characteristics of the samples

Age Group	Married		Single	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
18 - 21	-	-	6	20.0
22 - 25	4	13.3	17	56.7
26 - 29	7	23.3	4	13.3
30 - 33	5	16.7	3	10.0
34 - 37	9	30.0	-	-
38 - 42	2	6.7	-	-
42 - 45	2	6.7	-	-
46 - 49	1	3.3	-	-
total	30	100	30	100

<u>Education</u>				
Lower secondary school	6	20.0	4	13.3
Higher secondary school	24	80.0	26	86.7
total	30	100	30	100

<u>Sector</u>				
Private sector	20	66.7	25	83.3
Government	10	33.3	5	16.7
total	30	100	30	100

<u>Occupational Structure</u>				
Factory worker	7	23.4	6	20.0
Clerk	9	30.0	12	40.0
Nurse	4	13.3	6	20.0
Teacher	4	13.3	3	10.0
Others	6	20.0	3	10.0
total	30	100	30	100

<u>Income group</u>				
\$200 - \$300	7	23.3	14	46.7
\$400 - \$500	8	26.7	12	40.0
\$600 - \$700	13	43.3	4	13.3
\$800 - \$900	2	6.7	-	-
total	30	100	30	100

1.6 Difficulties faced

The writer did not face much difficulties during her fieldwork as all the respondents were educated women. They could understand all the questions that were put forward to them in the questionnaire.

Respondents could not be interviewed during the office hours because they were busy with their work and also their bosses did not allow this. Most of the married respondents had to attend to the housework after working hours. The writer had to wait till they completed their work or make an appointment before going to their houses. The appointments were made through phone calls. Interviewing the respondents at home brought about the problem of being influenced by their family members especially the mother and the husband. The writer often had to wait until they were alone in order to ask certain questions.

1.7 Concepts of women at work

The position of women workers appears to be a phenomena worthy of research attention in contemporary society and yet it is known fact that women have laboured since time immemorial. Women have never been isolated from work; on the

contrary their commitment to work often exceeds that of men. Nevertheless it is men who are generally associated with the 'worker' image in most societies. To come to terms with this discrepancy, the concept of 'work' and the corresponding values attached to it have to be carefully examined.

The historical perspective will facilitate an understanding of the adaptations and changes that have taken place with regards to the status of women in society, specifically focusing on the concept of 'work'.

In primitive society, there were many task which had to be performed. This meant that there were some level of social differentiation with work but this did not involve any stratification, or ordering of the work in terms of hierarchy. Both men and women were involved in work on an equal basis for the functioning of the group or community. There was division of labour based on certain biological functions, where for example women were more related to the task of giving birth and caring for children. This did not mean they were excluded from other task in society. They also played an active role in the economy and political spheres. Thus, while men and women in primitive societies may have had some differences in the work undertaken, they were both deemed to be of equal importance. Thus in these societies women enjoyed equal status and privileges with men. (K.S.S. Dorjitham 1984, seminar).

With the passage of time, these primitive societies became more stabilized in terms of location, with the practice of land cultivation. Even in these societies, male-female tasks were not ranked in a hierarchal framework. However the change was set into motion with the emergence of more permanent areas of residence when women were confined more to their home. This was tied closely to their task of bearing children. Thus while women and the work which they performed was valued equally with that of the men, there were slowly being pushed into more narrow confines, men being more free to move about were more actively involved in agriculture and even in warfare. In this they were aided by their stronger physical abilities. As a result of warfare, a surplus in production and wealth was often created. The men now playing a more dominant role in these spheres, began to control the surpluses. With time they begin to dominate decision making in these spheres and finally to propagate the right of man to own and inherit property on an individual basis. This set into motion a hierarchy of tasks, where men's task were higher than these of women. With the advent of this hierarch with regards to 'work' grew a corresponding family system, namely the patriarchal family. in this legacy women were considered incapable of managing their own affairs helped to create a situation whereby women become supported by their husbands (Dahlstrom A., 1967: 20).

Abeyesekera S., Bastian S., Siriwaedera R. (1983)

discuss this transformation of the concept of 'work' and the role of women in great depth. Monetisation of the economy and the growth of capital, they claim further devalued women's work, which was often outside the sphere of work for which a wage was paid. The development of capitalism took out of the women's hand most of the product task that she had fulfilled, the preservation of food, the preparation of clothing and all other household needs. In an era when the household was the basic unit of production as well as the centre of all educational, health and religious activities women played a key role in the overall social structure. As society developed and many areas of production passed out of the home into society itself. Women were still secluded in their homes, still burdened by the task of child bearing and rearing which also by then ceased to be a 'collective responsibility' were easily marginalised and pushed in to a subordinate position.

Thus it has become clear that with the continued growth of capitalism, the very notion of 'work' itself is stratified. In contemporary society, the development of the capitalist mode of production has caused many of these values related to 'work' to become even embedded in the lives of men and women. However Dorjitham K.S.S. said that many have argued that the rise of capitalism will eventually lead to the increased participation of women in the mainstream of economic

production in society, which in turn should result in equality of status with men. Furthermore the participation of women in mainstream labour market, would lead to the weakening of male dominance within the family system. This would eventually undermine the patriarchal family system, thereby creating more slope for equality in opportunities and status for women. She further adds that this conception seems plausible, but in reality it proves otherwise.

In the case of contemporary Malaysia, it is evident that the participation of women in the mainstream of economic production is indeed still fairly minimal when compared to men. Recent initiatives to attract foreign capital, such as the inducement offered to transactional corporation by the Malaysian Government, have provided young women with employment but at a price, arduous and monotonous work in poor conditions for low wages (L. Manderson, 1983: 193). The majority of Malaysian women still give predominance to their role as wife and mother. Working class women in the first instance enter labour market due to low finances in the family. In addition to this within the labour market itself, women are recalculated in greater numbers to fill certain jobs, which are often stereotyped and identified as being 'feminine' like nursing, teaching and public relations. In the case of factory workers, the growth of industrialization has forced the recruitment of women workers in greater numbers. This has led

to the identification of factory workers with women. One of the motives behind their recruitment in large numbers is to obtain skills traditionally associated with women as gender group eg. manual dexterity, accuracy, passivity and patience, as well as the greater exploitability like low remuneration, low opportunities for promotion and the negative attitude of men towards women workers (L.N.O'Brien, 1983: 194).

For the single women, industrialization has meant opportunities for self-respect. It presented an opportunity to the single women to live her own life and pursue a career. The customary assumption is that the motive for the married women working is an economic one. Women married to men in the lower income group have relatively higher participation rates. The wife's income can contribute to the maintenance of a given external standard and can help to release a specific consumption goal. The work of the wife can also constitute a form of security for the future, a form of insurance against the risk that the husband's income might drop or discontinue e.g. due to divorce, retirement, illness or death. The increasing risk of divorce contributes towards a more permanent working life for women. With her own income, the wife can perhaps attain a greater measure of influence and respect relative to her husband. The working wife is not totally dependent upon her husband for support; she administers a

proportion of the family's cash income and she derives the respect accorded to an income earner (Dahlstrom E., 1967: 27).

1.8 Historical background of Indian, women workers in Malaysia

The phenomenon of Indian workers in the Malay states begin with the British economic expansion phase in Asia. Indian workers, primarily male first came to work on the sugar cane and coffee plantations in Penang after its founding in 1786. However the numbers were voluminous only after the growth of rubber industry around the middle of 19 century. In addition Indian workers were also brought in to work in the oil palm estates (Sandhu, 1969: 81). Indian immigrants were made up mainly of adult males, and the proportion of female was often below 20%. Female labour was scarce even in India as a result of early marriage and the restriction of the joint family system. Women were considered dependent on men and so were not permitted to travel alone. They were also thought to be weak and unable to stand the strain of travel and pressure of work in a foreign environment. This was also a mechanism to ensure the return of male members who emigrate. Furthermore, the employers too often considered the female labourers less efficient and productive and more costly to maintain in terms of supervision, accommodation and maternity and nursery provisions (Oorjitham K.S.S. 1984: 14).

Since the intake of female workers was much lower than that of men, Indian women workers did not become a phenomenon of consequence till the late 1920's. However various measures were undertaken to increase the intake of Indian women workers, into Malaya. The Indian authorities stipulated that there should be at least one female emigrant for every 1.5 males assented to emigrate as labours. 80 percent of the Indian women workers in the Malay states were in the agricultural sector. These women workers participated mainly as a result of low family finances and the availability of creche facilities (Sandhu, 1969: 85).

Manipulation of women's social role as wife and dependent to men to ensure a labour force that was cheap, flexible and malleable to control. Lower wages could be paid to women and children as casual-contract labourers on the justification that there were merely dependents of male workers and need not be given the status of standard wages regular employees. This was applied also to those women who were not married. The position of female workers can therefore be understood partly by the nature of the family's incorporation into the plantation economy.

Other than the plantation sector, Indian labour has also participated actively in the government services both in the rural and urban areas. Since the early part of the 20th

century, Indian labour has actively participated in the field of transport, communication and civil administration. Thus the role of Indian labourers in the public sector has indeed been predominant. However this sector has been monopolized by the Indian male workers. The participation of Indian women workers in this sector has indeed been negligible. This indicates clearly that there were certain areas of the economy from which women were strategically excluded in the plantation sector, women workers could smoothly combine their domestic work and their work in economic sector and so there was no disruption. However if women participated in the public sector especially in urban areas, there were fear that they might not perform as efficiently as the male workers due to their domestic commitments. Here again patriarchal values are found to be impinging on the opportunities available to Indian women (Dorjitham K.S.S., 1984: 16).

Before the second world war, the development of industrialization process was confined to the processing of agricultural products such as rubber and oil palm, purely as the basis of import substitution. The participation of Indian workers in this stage accounted for only 15 percent of the total (Sandhu, 1969: 282). The role of Indian women were indeed minimal. This pattern of industrialization continued after independence until 1970, when there was a change towards export-orientated and labour intensive concerns with the

implementation of the New Economic Policy (1970 - 90). This attracted participation from foreign investors and major multinational corporation. Thus, there has been an influx of labour to the urban areas, in search of these employment opportunities, particularly in the industrial sector. Many Indian workers migrated from the rural areas to participate particularly in the service and manufacturing sectors. A large percentage of these include Indian women workers who are located in light industries, such as manufacturing electronic products and garments. There has also been dramatic increase in the participation of young Indian women from the urban areas themselves, who have entered this sector. Indian women workers in this sector together with other women workers are paid low wages, have to work on shift duties and are generally involved in a monotonous routine. Their increased participation in this sector has led to the stereotyping of this sector with female labour.

Historically, these mark the major economic trends in employment of Indian women workers.

1.9 Concepts of Marriage

Westermarck (1971:26) defines marriage as:

"A relation of one man or more to one women or more, which is recognised by custom or law and involves certain rights and duties both in the case of parties entering the union and in the case of children born of it."

Westermarck puts forward that marriage always implies the right of sexual intercourse. Society holds such intercourse allowable in the case of husband wife, and generally speaking even regards, it as their duty to gratify in some measure the other partner's desire. At the same time, marriage is something more than a regulated sexual relation. It is an economic institution, which may in various ways effect the proprietary rights of the parties. It is the husband's duty, so far as it is possible to support his family. Very often marriages determines the place which a newly born individual is to take in the social structure of the community to which he or she belongs.

Khana and Varghese (1978: 10) states that marriage has been recognised to serve certain basic function. Marriage, whether regulated by customs, belief traditions or social laws provides for the care and up-bringing of children and gives the progeny legal recognition and social status. Marriage makes the division of work convenient for the upkeep of the home and family, provides sexual gratification for the partners and helps the economic growth and welfare society. In short marriage caters for the very basic needs of men and women by

providing security, companionship and stability forming the nucleus of family ties. Marriage thus becomes vital for human happiness.

E.R. Leach (1961: 91) says that the institution commonly described as marriage does not have the same legal and social commitments in every society. It is concerned with the allocation of number of distinguishable classes of rights. In particular a marriage may serve.

- i. to establish the legal father of a woman's children.
- ii to establish the legal mother of a man's children.
- iii to give the husband a monopoly in the wife's sexuality.
- iv to give the wife a monopoly in the husband's sexuality.
- v to give the husband partial or monopolistic rights to the wife's domestic and other labour services.
- vi to give the wife partial or monopolistic rights to the husband's labour services.
- vii to give the husband partial or total fights over property belongings or potentially accruing to the wife.
- viii to give the wife partial or total rights over property belongings or potentially accruing to the husband.
- ix to establish a joint fund of property - a partnership for the benefit of the children of the marriage.
- x to establish a socially significant "relationship of affinity" between the husband and wife's brothers.

But no single society can marriage serve to establish all these rights invariably, nor is there any one of these rights which is invariably established by marriage in every known society.

Finally, it is necessary that a union to be recognised as marriage, should be concluded in accordance with the rules laid down by custom or law, whatever these rules may be. They may require the consent of the parties themselves, or their parents or both the parties and the parents. They may compel the man to pay a price for his bride or the parents of the later to provide her with her dowry. They may prescribe the performance of a particular marriage ceremony of one kind or other. No man or woman are regarded a husband and wife unless the conditions stipulated by customs or law are complied with. These customs and law has made marriage into a social institution.

In conclusion, we can say that a marriage:

1. is a social institution declared by custom or law.
2. is a partnership.
3. gives the partners a right of sexual relation.
4. establishes the parents of the child born of the marriage.

5. is an economic institution which provides for the people involved: husband, wife and children.

1.10 Traditional Hindu Concept of Marriage

"The traditional Hindu concept of marriage is that of sacrament which enables one to fulfill dharma (religious, as well as social obligations towards the family, community and society), proja (progeny) and rati (pleasure)."

Kapur P., (1978:121)

The traditional concept of marriage, according to which marriage was considered to be a sacrament, joining together two human beings into eternal and indissoluble union, was in itself responsible for making people accept their marital situation ungrudgingly and hence for not considering adjustment in marriage a problem. The principle of familism is supreme and primary and must be followed while the individual's interest, needs and happiness are considered secondary to the interest of the family and community as a whole.

Because of this concept, the parties to the marriage cannot dissolve it at will. They are bound to each other until the death of either of them, and the wife is supposed to be bound to her husband even after his death. Husband and wife have to make efforts to adjust to one another's tastes and temperaments by subordinating personal gratifications and by

making compromises between themselves rather than breaking with each other in the event of differences and dissimilarities. Referring to the injunction laid down in Manusmirit, the Hindu Law, with regard to the conduct of husband and wife, it says:

" once they are united by the nuptial ceremony they must always event themselves to see that they are never at variance with each other, and they must ever remain faithful to each after."

(Prabhu, 1958: 224)

Kapadia (1958: 169) while discussing the concept of traditional Hindu marriage says that marriage was a social duty towards the family and the community and there was little idea of individual interest. The social background provided no scope for recognition of any personal factor, individual interests and aspirations in the relations between husband and wife.

On account of the traditional concept that marriage was rather a social duty towards the family and the community, every one was expected to do one's duty regardless of how one felt about it. With these goals, there was hardly any room for marital frictions and still less for it's expression in public. With regard to the traditional marriage, Goode (1965: 93) writes that "in most society the young were taught that at best they could count on respect and a proper discharge of duties from their spouse, but they could not expect happiness and naturally could not divorce, if they fail to have happiness.."

When little happiness was expected in marriage, there was hardly any question of recognising any marriage as unhappy, and the problem of mental adjustment never came to the forefront.

Another explanation for absence of the overt expression of the problem of marital adjustment in traditional Indian families could be found in the very structure of the traditional joint family. The large joint family supplied the husband and wife with contemporaries in age and sex with whom they could get 'companionship' satisfaction. This may have been one reason for their relatively good adjustment, for they were not wholly dependent on each other for deep affection or companionship. This may be one of the factors which facilitated marital adjustment in traditional Hindu families.

Yet another explanation for there being little likelihood of marital friction becoming a social problem might lie in the absence of conflicts in traditional Hindu families with regard to the roles, status and obligation of husband and wife, there being so markedly specified as not to permit any conflict to arise. A definite conduct was expected of each member of the family and everyone conducted himself or herself in conformity with the prescribed conduct. As there was agreement among its members regarding every one's duties and rights, they discharged their individual duties without demure.

(P. Kapur, 1970: 8)

1.11 Profile of the traditional Hindu woman

As explained earlier, the position of Indian women in urban Malaysia cannot be isolated from the model of a traditional Hindu woman.

P.Kapur (1978: 110) emphasizes that in Vedic times women had absolute equality with men in the realm of religion. Women also held respectable position both in the family and in society. A female child was welcomed and she was entitled to education, a voice in the selection of her life partner and considerable freedom of movement. Even though the families were joint in nature and monogamy was the rule, certain trends like widow remarriage and divorce were permitted.

The Vedic Law of Marriage introduces to us a state of society where men and women acted as free agents in matrimonial matters where women were treated not as inferiors but as equal to men. There were apparently no costly ceremonies attending marriages, nor were large dowry demanded from fathers of girls (Rai Bahadur Lala, 1981: 32). Kapur claims that according to most authorities, women by and large held equal status with and in the home and in society until 300 B.C. However due to certain socio-cultural and political factors the status of Indian women began to gradually decline after this period. Women's education was discontinued, their age at marriage was

reduced and they were given no rights in the choice of their marital partners. Manu, the Hindu Law-giver, formulated certain rules whereby:

a women was to depend on her father in childhood,
on the husband in her younger age and,
on her sons in her old age.

P. Mukherjee (1978: 13) states that spirit issues and also general views on the character and role of women have been discussed in the Mahabharata. There was no other god for a woman but her husband, and by serving him she attained heaven. She must be kind to an unkind husband and obey him. She should respect and serve her parents-in-law, supervise the cooking, feed the members of the family, guest and servants. She should manage the house and look after the family members. Obviously, the life of an ideal wife was neither smooth nor an easy one. But by working hard in this life, she would be happy afterwards. Comforts and ease do not bring happiness, its path is strewn with and difficulties. A good women, therefore, toiled and milled hard in this world to aim happiness in the next world. P. Mukherjee (1978: 17) concludes that a traditional Hindu woman should be submissive, dutiful and loyal wife totally dependent upon her husband. An ideal woman is she who is an ideal wife. In other words, it was rather an ideal wifehood and not an ideal womanhood.

The position of Hindu women in India only begin to improve around the 19th century due to the efforts of social reformers and progressive religious leaders. However improvement in the situation of working class women was by comparison the smallest. Dorjitham K.S.S. (1983: 117) claims that this would have strong implication for the position of woman in the Tamil working woman in urban Malaysia today, as a majority of them are decedents from the Tamil working class brought in originally to work in the plantation in the Malay states, act as the model for the subsequent generations. Major writers of this traditional model and the resulting changes as observed in the case of the Tamil working women in urban Malaysia, will be discussed in the coming chapters.

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER 2: Marriage as it was 30 years ago

2.1 Customs in Marriage

2.2 Betrothal

2.3 The traditional wedding ceremony

Women employment and marriage

In this chapter, the writer will discuss on marriage among the Tamils as it was 30 years ago. As stated earlier 80 percent of the Indian immigrants to Malaya were Tamils. The isolation of the people in the estates and their concentration in small groups in their housing settlements led to the practice of Hindu customs and ceremonies in a manner closely to that in India. The increasing migration of educated Indians into Malaya in the first two decades of the twentieth century led to some determined attempts to preserve the Indian culture in the urban area. The Indian culture that exist today are results of their effort (Arasaratnam S., 1968)

2.1 Customs in Marriage

International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences (1968) refers to customs as:

"the whole body of the shared behaviour patterns in a particular group or society that are regarded as the traditional and established way of the people"

To speak of 'customary' way of acting is to suggest that conduct in question has come down from the past and is not regarded as solely as a matter of immediate expediency customs are more than mere aggregates of individual habits; a custom is

always tacitly supported by social approval. Thus, the actual enduring regularities in social behaviour, accepted by and approved by most members of a group or society may be called customs. Westermarck (1932) further adds that customs of people are percepts in themselves. When it is said that 'customs commands' or 'custom demands' and even when custom simply allows the commission of a certain class of action, it implicitly lays down the rule that such actions are not to be interfered with.

Marriage customs among the Tamil in Malaysia, as told by a local priest are discussed below.

Astrology

Astrology occupies an intergrat part in the day to day behaviour of th Tamils which often finds expression not only among orthedox Hindus but also in the life of the ordinary people. According to the Hindu view, certain times of a day, certain days of the week, and certain months of the year are auspicious (mankalam) or inauspicious (amankalam), and thus desired or not desired for important undertakings. The auspiciousness and inaspiciousness of a particular time of the days, the weeks, and the months depends on the position of the planets, the stars and signs of zodiac called racis or

racilakkinankal. The auspicious and inauspicious time can be calculated. The calculation of the times are computed and recorded in the Hindu Almonac colled Pancankam at the begining of every Hindu year and made avaliabile to the public. This Pancakam is imported every year from South Indian and Ceylon and made avaliabile locally. It is avaliabile in most Indian shops in Seremban which deals with Tamil books. Important particulars which affect day to day life are also recorded in the daily Tamil calender, which is used in private homs for quick reference. In more orthodox Hindu homes a copy of the Pancakam is kept and consulted on all important occasions. Yet when it is necessary to take a more serious decision, a local astrologr or a priest referred to as Iyar is consulted.

Raku-kalam, that is when the planet called Raku holds sway is considred to be the most inauspicious hour. Hindus do not begin any auspicious ritual or ceremony during this hour. Just as certain hours of the day are thought to be inauspicious, so also there are certain hours which are believed to be very auspicious and thus desired for all kinds of bussiness, ceremonies such as marriage and moving into a new house. This period is known as citta-yokam and amirta-yokam. The most auspicious hour is also know as mukurttam. For instance, it is believed that marriage which is an important auspicious act must be held at the right mukurttam consulting a temple priest or an astrologer. A Hindu marriage held

according to Brahminical rites usually has a wedding invitation containing such information. In acts like marriage, not only the hour must be auspicious but also the day, and the month. The Tamil month of Tai (which falls between January and February) is believed to be the most auspicious month for all kinds of activities, especially marriage. This cultural value perhaps can be attributed to the fact that this month in South Indian is associated with agriculture. Because it is in this month that the peasants bring home new crops from the fields, which inevitably also brings prosperity in the life of the peasants. Since people are prosperous and have the means they tend to engage themselves in a variety of social and economic activities, namely holding a marriage or building a house, etc. Consequently, the month which brings happiness in the life of the Tamils came to be considered an auspicious month.

Certain other months, namely Pankuni (which falls between March and April), karteikai (which falls between December and January) are too considered auspicious months for holding marriages. The month of Ati (which falls between July and August) is believed to be very inauspicious month, and thus undersired for any important activities specially marriage. This can be attributed to the fact that if a couple consummates a marriage in this month, the child will be born in the month of Citirai (which falls between April and May). This is the summer time in South India. The new born child will be very

uncomfortable in the month of summer. In order to avoid this, marriage is not performed in the month of Ati.

Numerology

The Tamils in West Malaysia also believe in numerology. Certain numbers have high ritual value while others have low ritual value. Generally odd numbers are considered good and believed to have high ritual value. The involvement of people in any ceremonies should always be in odd numbers. Ladies will always be called upon in odd numbers to perform or to get involved in certain ceremonies like marriage and engagement. During the engagement ceremony, the boy's party will bring presentations for the girl in trays. Any number of presentation can be given, but they must always be in odd numbers. The normal practice among the Tamils in Malaysia are to give either seven or nine trays of presentation to the girl. After the wedding, gifts to the bride and bridegroom in the form of money will be given in odd numbers.

Horoscope

Matching of horoscope forms an important part of Hindu marriages held among the Tamils. The boy's horoscope and the girl's horoscope will be compared (jatakam-pporuttam

parttal) to determine the compatibility. The horoscope compatibility (jatakam -poruttam) is said to be observed on ten aspects. They are:

- the day
- the group (kanam)
- numbers
- longevity of the women (stri-tirkam)
- agreement of yoni (vagina called by the name of an animal)
- luck (raci)
- agreement of the planets in the zodiac (racyatipati)
- charm (vacyyam)
- agreement of the relationship between the stars (irajja)

Finding horoscope compatibility occupies an important place that is even observed in the case of love marriages. However it is usually difficult to find agreement on all ten aspects. As such, in practice agreement on more than five aspects is considered to have compatibility.

Sacred vessel

The presentation of a sacred vessel (purana - kumpam) in all orthodox Hindu wedding takes an important place. A copper or stainless steel vessel is placed on a banana leaf spread with rice grains. The vessel is wound around with white thread and is filled with water. A husked coconut with a tuft of fiber at the end is placed at the mouth of the vessel, the tuft pointing upwards. Mango leaves are inserted round the coconut. The vessel is decorated with flowers, sandal paste, turmeric paste and saffron powder. The purana-kumpam symbolises fullness of prosperity and fertility. The various items which form part of the sacred vessel contribute to this symbolism. The banana leaf represents long life since the banana tree has the characteristic feature of perpetuating itself. The rice grain signify fertility. Water is the life principle. The mango leaves are associated with the God of love (kaman). The coconut which has special significance to the Hindus also signifies fertility. The sacred vessel is placed in front of the marriage booth and also at the entrance to the bride and bridegroom's house. This sacred vessel is highly revered and is represented on all auspicious religious ceremonies.

Ladies

Ladies are always called upon to get involved in marriage ceremonies. Only married ladies (cumankilis) are allowed to get involved. Widows are not allowed to get involved in any ceremony at all. They can only watch the ceremony.

Dowry

Among the Tamils in Malaysia, parents (or head of the family) of the girl are expected to give dowry. The dowry will be given to the girl, to be taken to her husband's house after the wedding. The common practice among the Tamils is to give dowry in the form of jewellery, bedstead and cooking utensils. In Tamil dowry is called citanam or varatatcanai.

2.2 Betrothal

When a girl reaches 18 years of age, her parents will start finding a male for her. They will inform their friends and relatives to find a suitable boy for their daughter. As soon as a suitable boy has been found, the girl's parents usually go about in an indirect way of knowing about his family. This is done either through a middleman or enquiring

from friends. The middleman will approach the boy's parents and inform them about the girl. They will also go about in an indirect way of knowing the girl and her family. This is then preceded by a formal visit by the boy's side to the girl's house to 'see' the girl (pen-parttal).

An auspicious time and day is set for the boy's side to visit the girl's house. This auspicious time is referred from the Tamil calendar. The boy's side consist of the boy, his parents (or any member who is the head of the family) and the middleman. The boy's side will be able to see the prospective bride when she serves them drinks. As soon as she finishes serving the drinks, she will leave the place. The boy's side will return home after having the drinks. If they are satisfied, they will send the middleman to get the girl's horoscope. This is done so as to assess compatibility between the girl's horoscope and the boy's horoscope (jatakam poruttam partal).

After comparing the horoscope the girl's parents will be notified and necessary arrangements are made for niccayatatartam, a ceremony to agree upon the marriage by the respective parents. On a day considered auspicious, 3 members of the boy's side (all men) visits the girls house. The exchange of betel leaves with two bananas placed on top takes place between the respective parents. This marks the agreement

between the two fathers to get their children married to each other. On this day also an auspicious date is set for the engagement (paricam).

On the engagement day (paricam), the bridegroom's family relatives and friends will visit the bride's house. The party will bring either seven or nine presentations for the bride. These would be carried by married women (cumankilis) and young maiden on silver or copper trays to the bride's house. The common presentations were sari (paricap putavai / engagement sari) and cosmetics in the first tray; sandal wood paste (santanam), saffron powder (kung-kumum) and scented water (panir) in the second tray; bananas in the third tray; sweets in the fourth tray; betel leaves, arcca nuts, quick lime and tumeric in the 4th tray; 5 coconuts in the sixth tray; and finally flowers in the seventh tray. All these trays will be presented by the bridegroom's father to the bride's father. The first tray consisting of the engagement sari and cosmetics will be taken to the bride's room. The bride will use the engagement sari and the cosmetics. While awaiting for the bride, the date for the marriage ceremony, the dowry to be given by the girl's parents and the mode of sharing the wedding expenses are decided. Parents of the respective parties would not engage in direct talks. It is usually done through representatives who act as spokesmen. When the bride is dressed, she will be brought into the hall where the

bridegroom's party are waiting. This marks the end of the engagement ceremony. The guest will be entertained to a feast.

2.3 Marriage

Marriage is considered as very auspicious occasion (mankal - kkariyam). All Hindu marriage have two aspects namely the preparatory rites and the marriage rites proper. Hindu marriage rites involve long and elaborate procedures - which will be difficult to discuss here, thus only major ones are discussed below.

A day or two before the marriage ceremony, a rite called mukurtak-kal-natutal (the planting of the marriage tree) takes place in the home of the bridegroom. At an auspicious moment a small branch of a pipal tree (araca maram) is planted in the house compound. The planting of the 'tree' is done by the bridegroom, while the elder members of the family help in performing the rites. Sandle paste (santanam), tumeric paste (manjal) and saffron powder (kung-kumum) are rubbed on it. A red cloth and mango leaves are tied to the 'tree'. Fresh cow's milk is poured over the 'tree' and a special worship is conducted. After having done this the bridegroom should not leave the house. the rite is repeated at the marriage proper.

The 'tree' symbolises spiritual understanding, healing powers of earth and fertility of the earth.

The next rite performed both in the homes of the bride and the bridegroom is called nalankul vaital. It is observed both for the bride and the bridegroom. The rite is performed by married women (cumankilis) in odd numbers. It is characterised by the rubbing of gingely oil, sandal wood paste and tumeric paste on the hands and shoulders. Then arrati (fire) which is placed on top of a cup of rice, and a grinding stone is waved around the head. This ceremony is held twice before the marriage and once of the time of the marriage. At the end of the second nalanku ceremony for the bride, the cumankilis would slip a few glass bangles into the hands of the bride. These bangles should be used by the bride until a few days after the wedding. These bangles should not break before the wedding, as it would mean bad luck for the bride.

A priest is hired for officiating the marriage ceremony. He arrives well before time and makes necessary preparation to conduct the rituals. All the necessary items used during the marriage ceremony will be provided by the priest, as he is paid by the bridegroom's family.

An hour before the marriage ceremony, the bride dresses up in the engagement sari and awaits for the

bridegroom's party. Three ladies from the bridegroom's family will come to the girls house. The ladies will take the bride to the place where the wedding is held. Among the Tamil Hindus, marriages are traditionally held in the home of the bridegroom. But thirty years ago, unlike the traditional practice of holding the marriage in private homes, the use of temples and public halls became more widespread.

The wedding ceremony starts with the bestman leading the bridegroom to the marriage booth. The bride's brother or any male relative will be the bestman. Both of them are made to sit in front of the marriage booth. The priest performs vignevara puja (invocation of Lord Ganesha). Cumankilis are invited to perform naunku ceremony for the bridegroom. The priest then ties the protective string called Kappu around the wrist of the bridegroom. At the next stage the planting of the 'marriage tree' (mukurtak-kal-natutal) takes place. The 'tree' is planted in a pail filled with sand. After the wedding ceremony, the 'tree' will be taken to the bridegroom's house and planted in the house compound. When this is over, the priest receives the bridegroom's wedding attire (a shirt and a silk dhoti) and hands it over to the bridegroom, who upon receiving it goes to the 'bridegroom's room' to change into it.

After this the bride and the bride's maid is called upon the marriage booth. The bridegroom's sister or any female relative will be the bride's maid. All the acts observed for the bridegroom are repeated for the bride.

In the next stage, the bridegroom returns to the marriage hall. At the entrance the bestman puts a ring on the second right toe of the bridegroom. This is called minci anital. In return the bridegroom presents a gold ring to the bestman. The bridegroom is then led to the marriage booth. The priest performs pujas to the Hindu principal deities. The first puja is performed for Lord Ganesha - remover of all obstacles - asking him to remove all obstacles for the smooth running of the ceremony. Pujas are then performed for other deities. The bridegroom is then directed to perform puja to the sacred marriage thread Tali (manklyo puja). The Tali is actually a yellow thread with a piece of gold attached to it in the center. The bride is now called upon to take her place beside the bridegroom in the marriage booth. The parents of the bride and bridegroom are called upon to sit down beside the couple, the bride's parents on her side and the bridegroom's parents on his side. The bride and bridegroom perform the pata puja to the respective parents.

While this is being done, the sacred Tali is shown around to the guests present so as to obtain their blessing. On

return of the Tali, the priest recites the mankalyo mantra and hands it over to the bridegroom. He ties the Tali around the neck of the bride by putting one knot, and the bride's sister, (a cumankili) puts two knots. The tying of the Tali is the most sacred of the marriage rites. Hence it is done with the accompaniment of the auspicious music (natasvaram) played on a high pitch (Ketti melam). At the same time, the bride's maid holds a ritual lamp on her palms and stands at the back of the bride. The guest sprinkle confitte of yellow rice, which symbolises fertility, on the married couple. The guest will then be given a feast while the ceremony continues.

In the next stage, the bridegroom holds the hand of the bride and both of them go around the fire pit (agni) They take 7 steps around the fire, the groom leading and the bride following. This seals the marriage contract and is has become a sacrament. The text repeated by the bridegroom to the bride while taking the seven steps are:

Take thou one step for acquirement of force,
take thou two steps for strength,
take thou three steps for increase of wealth,
take thou four steps for will being,
take thou five steps for offsprings,
take thou six steps for the season,
take thou seven steps as a friend,

be faithfully devoted to me, my we obtain
many sons and many they attain to a good old age.

Followed by this, the bridegroom puts the left leg of the bride on a grinding stone; signifying that she should henceforth possess a firm heart and be truthfull to him. At this juncture, the bridegroom, puts a ring into the second left toe of the bride (minci-anital). This marks the end of the wedding ceremony. After the ceremony the couple will be taken to the bridegroom's house.

CHAPTER 3: Marriage Today

3.1 Age at Marriage

3.2 Type of Marriage

3.3 Selection in Marriage

3.4 Relationship before marriage

3.5 Customs and Marriage today

3.1 Age at Marriage

It is said in the Bhagavad Gita, "Let his daughter be married when she is still a child and has not reached the age of puberty." This is a very old saying and it is still valid today. It is a good idea to marry a girl when she is still a child and has not reached the age of puberty. This is because she will be more obedient and will be more devoted to her husband. This is also a good idea because she will be more protected and will be more safe. This is a very good idea and it is still valid today.

It was common for the Hindus in the early days to marry at an early age. It was said that women are not fit to be independent at every stage in her life, she should be under the guidance of someone, her father, her husband or her son. The idea of marriage was the transference of the father's dominion over her to her husband. The transfer should hence take place before a girl reached the age when she might question it (M. M. Kapadia 1930: 29).

Marriage Today

In this chapter the writer discusses the findings on the women's attitude towards marriage, their age at marriage, type of marriage, criteria for selection in marriage, relationship with their spouse and his family members before and after marriage, and finally the customs and marriage today.

3.1 Age at marriage

It is said in the Baudhagana Dharmasutra, "Let him give his daughter while she still goes naked to a man who has not broken the chastity and possesses good qualities or even to one destitute of good qualities let him not keep this morden in his house after she has reached the age of puberty."

It was common for the Hindus in the early days to marry at an early age. It was said that women are not fit to be independent. At every stage in her life, she should be under the dominance of someone, her father, her husband or her son. The idea of marriage was the transference of the father's dominion over her in favour of her husband. The transfer should hence take place before a girl reached the age when she might question it (K.M. Kapadia 1958: 25).

This study reveals that only 16.7 percent of the married respondent got married before the age of 21 years, 23.3 percent between the age of 22 - 24 years, 46.7 percent married between the age of 25 - 27 years and only 13.3 percent married between the age 28 - 30 years. Thus majority of them were married between the age of 25 - 27 years.

Table 2

Age at marriage for married respondents

Age group	Frequency	Frequency %
< 21	5	16.7
22 - 24	7	23.3
25 - 27	14	46.7
28 - 30	4	13.3
Total	30	100

The majority of the single Indian working women respondents are in the age group of 22 - 25 years. Only a small percentage (23.3%) were above the age of 25 years. This shows that there are not many single women above the age of 25. In view of the singles and the married respondents, it is clear that the urban Indian working class women preferred to get married around the age of 25 years. This finding is similar to Tan Poo Chang's study conducted during 1981 - 1982 in Peninsular Malaysia (The Study of Marriage And Marital Dissolution In Peninsular Malaysia: 1986). She found that the majority of the female

Indian in Peninsular Malaysia (62.6%) preferred to marry around the age of 25 years.

The writer's findings contradicts with the practice of the Hindus in the early day. Early marriages was not favoured by the working class Tamil women in urban Seremban. Marriage before the age of puberty was least expected among these women. In Peninsular Malaysia, age at first marriage for female has risen during the past years. The mean age at marriage for Indian women in Peninsular Malaysia was 17.6 years in 1947, 17.9 years in 1957 and 21.7 years in 1970 (Lee Kok Huat 1981: 5). The mean age was expected to increase among the female in Paninsular Malaysia. One of the factor influencing the age at marriage is education.

80.3 percent of the women with low level of education married before the age of 25 years. Only one women from this group married rather late; at the age of 29 years. The majority of the women with higher level of education married between the age of 25 - 27 years (58.3%). Only 29.2 percent married before the age of 25 years (see Table 3). This proves that the majority of women with low level of education marries at an earlier age compared to the women with higher level of education. Thus, we can say that education influences the age at marriage among the Tamil working women in urban Seremban.

Table 3

Age at marriage and level of education

Age at marriage	Level of Education	
	Lower secondary (%)	Higher secondary (%)
< 21	33.3	12.5
22 - 24	50.0	16.7
25 - 27	-	58.3
28 - 30	16.7	12.5
Total	100	100

West Malaysia Family Survey Data 1966/67 (Lee Kok Huat: 1981:) reports that the factors influencing the age at marriage are ethnicity of a woman, her longest place of residence prior to marriage, her father's occupation, her education attainment and her premarital working experience. They said that education and working before marriage have relatively strong impacts on age at first marriage. Rise in the Indian female age at first marriage over the years appears to be mainly from the result of increase in educational and paid employment opportunities.

3.2 Type of marriage

Arranged marriage was common among the Indians in Malaysia. In an arranged marriage, the parents or family will do the selection. Very often individuals concerned have very little say. This trend has changed during the past years. A

great many individuals concerned in arranged marriage have a say in their marriage.

Respondents were asked their opinion regarding types of marriages and also the type of marriage they had or they preferred.

Table 4
Type of marriage

Type of marriage	Married respondents		Single respondents	
	Frequency	(%)	Frequency	(%)
Love marriage	20	(66.7)	11	(36.7)
Arranged marriage	10	(33.3)	17	(56.7)
Any type of marriage	-	-	2	(6.6)
Total	30	(100)	30	(100)

66.7 percent of the married respondents has love marriages, while 33.3 percent had arranged marriages. Among the single respondents the trend was different. Surprisingly the majority (56.77) were in favour of arranged marriage and only 36.7 percent favoured love marriage, while the rest 6.6 percent said that they did not mind any type of marriage. (See Table 4).

Working women have more opportunity to mix with the opposite sex. Women who had love marriages said that they selected their males within their friends or within their family

friends. The single women who favoured love marriage too wish to select their mate within their circle of friends. They felt that since it was essential for a women to know the character and the habits of the man. This was necessary in order to understand one another. The preferred to find their own mate as they felt that they could find a man whom they could best get along with. They also felt that if they got married to a stranger it would take some time to get know one another. If this failed it would bring about marital unhappiness or even divorce. All these problems could be avoided if they selected their own mate.

Women who had arranged marriage said that their parents selected their mates among family friends or through a marriage broker. Only one of the respondent's mate was selected by her parents among her relatives. The single women who favoured arranged marriage said that their parents would select a mate for them within the family friends or through a marriage broker. Only three of the respondents said their parents have already selected a mate for them among their relatives. These women who preferred arranged marriage felt more secure if their parents selected a mate for them. They felt that their parents are more experienced in matters regarding marriage and thus were more capable of selecting a good mate for them, rather than they finding a mate for themselves.

The writer feels that a few of the respondents "preferred" arranged marriage because it was something natural for them. As one single respondent says:

" I prefer arranged marriage because that's how it has been in my family. All my sister had their marriage arranged by my mother."

A few of the respondents also "preferred" arranged marriage because they were afraid to find a mate on their own, as they might not be approved by their parents. As a result, these women accepted arranged marriage.

Respondents were also asked their opinion regarding arranged marriage and love marriage in general (see Table 5).

Table 5
Opinion on types of marriages

Type of marriage	Yes	(%)	No	(%)
Love marriage	14	(23.3)	3	(5)
Arranged marriage	3	(5)	14	(23.3)
Both marriage	43	(71.7)	-	
Total	60	(100)		

23.3 percent of the respondents agreed on love marriage only, whereas 5 percent agreed on arranged marriage only while 71.7% agreed on both types of marriages.

Women who agreed on love marriage only said that Indian women should break the tradition of having arranged marriage. They felt that Indian women should be more independent. For ages Indian women have been dominated by their families and these women too accepted their subordinate position. They felt that since working women had more opportunities to be independent from their families, they should decide in their own future and not rely on their families.

Women who agreed on arranged marriage only, were confident that parents will find a suitable partner for their daughters. These women also said that a woman who had arranged marriage can always get the help of her parents if she faced any marital problems, as they were the one who found the mate for her. They also felt that a woman who found her own mate cannot get the help of her parents if she faced any marital problems. Some of these women even said that it was not proper for the Indian women to select her own mate.

On the whole 71.7 percent of the women agreed that both types of marriage can be accepted. They said that every marriage has its advantages and disadvantages. Women had to face the consequences no matter which type of marriage they choose.

Respondents were also asked their opinion regarding selecting a mate through marriage agencies or through the media. A vast majority of these women totally disagreed with this method of selecting a mate. Many felt, that marriage agencies were only interested in money and not in selecting a good mate. These women were also totally against using media as a channel to select a mate. Only 5 percent of the respondents said that women can use marriage agencies or the media as a last resort.

3.3 Selection in marriage

Table 6
Criteria for selection of mate

Criteria	no. of married respondents (%)		no. of single respondents (%)	
Religion: Hindu	30	(100)	29	(96.7)
Any religion	-		1	(3.3)
Ethnic group: Tamil	28	(93.3)	24	(80.0)
Others/any	2	(6.7)	6	(20.0)
Varna (jati): same	23	(76.7)	13	(43.3)
others/any	7	(23.3)	17	(56.7)

Success in marriage is partly a matter of finding the right person and partly being the right person. Some of the important personality characteristics that go to make a right person in view of the Tamil working women are revealed in this study. (See Table 6).

Firstly we shall look at the married women. All the married respondents are married to Hindu spouses. A majority of 93.3 percent are married to Tamils while only 6.7 percent are married to Indians from a different ethnic group, namely ceylonese 76.7 percent are married to spouse of the same varna (jati) whereas 23.3 percent are married to spouse of a different varna. Among the singles, 96.7 percent preferred to marry a spouse who's a Hindu and only 3.3 percent said they did not mind marrying a spouse from a different religion. 80 percent of the singles women preferred to marry Tamils, while 20 percent did not mind marrying a spouse from any ethnic group, so long as they are Indians. The singles were not very particular about varna. A total of 56.7% said varna was not an important criteria for selection, while 43.3 percent said that they would marry a person of the same varna.

As we can see a vast majority preferred to marry within the prescribed caste restrictions and conventions. Many do so due to parental pressure. In arranged marriages parents find a mate of the same caste. In love marriages, women find a male of the same caste also as they do not want to go against their parents wishes. They are afraid that their parents might not approve if they found a mate from a different caste. Some of the women felt that inter-caste marriages add certain risk to marriage. More adjustment and understanding will be needed

to make an inter-caste marriage a success. As a result they preferred to marry within the caste.

Other reasons state as criteria for selection were occupation, income, ownership of property and the character of the man.

97 percent of the married women have spouses who have a better job and higher income than themselves. Only 3% were married to spouse who is earning less than the respondent. These respondents said that income is not an important criteria for selection for them. 73 percent of the respondents are married to government servants while only 27 percent are married to men attached to the private sector. Marrying a relative was not favoured by the majority. Only one of the respondent is married to a relative.

Among the singles all the respondents preferred to marry a man who has a better job and is earning more than themselves. 57% of the single respondents preferred to marry government servants. They say that it is important for the husband to have a secure job as he will be more responsible financially for his family, rather than his wife. They feel that a government job is more secure. 43% of the single respondents said that they did not mind if their spouse is a government servant or employed in the private sector, so long

as they have a job and is earning a reasonable income ie. enough to support a small family.

The single women were also asked regarding property as a criteria for choosing a mate. 60% of these women felt that it was important for their future husband to own some property. Their first choice is a house followed by a car. A place to live was felt by many to be most necessary. If they (husband and wife) had a house of their own, they would not feel insecure in their old age. Owning a car was also considered important as it would give the married couple a social standing. 40 percent of the single respondents said that it was not necessary for their future husband to own any property. These respondents felt that they could try to buy any property they wanted after getting married.

Regarding marriage to a relative, 90 % of the single respondents said that they did not want to marry a relative, they did not want to marry any person with whom they had blood relations. They considered marrying a relative as old fashion. Only 10% of the respondents said that they were going to marry a relative. All these respondents had arranged marriages. Marriage with a relative was often with mother's brother's son or with father's sister's son.

The character of a man was also stated as an important factor in selecting a mate. If the man is essentially good, the path to a happy married life is clear. Intelligence was also stated by some of the women as a criteria for selecting a mate. They felt that a person who is intelligent will do well in life. Looks were not stated by any of the respondents. This is probably a part of socialization process. This probably make the respondents say instinctively that a man's character is of greater worth than his looks.

3.4 Relationship Before marriage

Respondents in this study were asked about their relationship with their future husband and his family before marriage.

In this study there are ten women who had arranged marriage and twenty women who had love marriages. 40 percent of the women who had arranged marriage did not know their husbands before marriage. Marriage was arranged for these women by their parents and they accepted their parents' choice. These women did not get a chance to know their husband before marriage as their parents did not allow them to meet except for the engagement ceremony.

60 percent of the women who had arranged marriage knew their husband before marriage. Their husbands used to visit them in their parents home. Majority these women did not go out with their husband before marriage while only a few of them were allowed to go out by their parents.

Among the singles, respondents who preferred arranged marriage said that they wish to know their future husband before marriage. They wanted their future husband to visit them so that they can get to know one another.

Regarding relationship with the family before marriage, 46.7 percent of the married respondents knew their husband's family before marriage. Most of them knew their husband's parents, while only a few of them knew their husband's brothers and sisters. 53.3% of these married respondents did not have any relationship with their husband's family before marriage. 40 percent of the married respondents husband know the respondent's family before marriage.

3.5 Custom and marriage today

Marriage is given the most important place in the structure of any social group and of all the Hindu sacraments, it is the most important. The marriage ritual among the Hindu

has retained its basic form and content through the ages, as the change in the concept of Hindu marriage has been minimal in the last three thousand years (Khanna: 1978).

All the customs in the Hindu marriage are followed strictly. Every couple who wants to get married follow the customs that were discussed in the earlier chapter without fail. The wedding ceremony itself has not gone through any changes since thirty years ago. Only one ceremony before marriage has gone through some changes, that is the engagement ceremony. Due to western influence and modernization, changes have been brought about in the engagement ceremony. Besides the exchange of trays between the boy's father and the girl's father, there is also an exchange of rings between the boy and the girl. The exchanges of rings will take place when the girl come to the hall dressed in the engagement sari. The boy will first slip a gold ring into the fourth finger of the right hand and then the girl will do likewise. This is the only major difference in the ceremonies before marriage.

Ceremonies

Many couple these day do not go through all the ceremonies leading to marriage. They gave various reasons for not going through all the ceremonies (See Table 7).

Table 7

Ceremonies

Ceremonies	no. of people who went through the ceremonies (%)			
	Arranged marriage		Love marriage	
'To see' the bride	8	(80)	11	(55)
Agreement	10	(100)	19	(95)
Engagement	10	(100)	17	(85)
Traditional wedding	10	(100)	20	(100)
Registration of marriage	10	(100)	20	(100)

Among the respondent who had arranged marriage, only eighty percent went through "to see" the bride ceremony. 20 percent did not go through this ceremony as the bridegroom and his family knew the bride or had already seen the bride earlier. All the respondents who had arranged marriages went through the rest of the ceremonies.

Among the respondents who had love marriage the trend was different. They did not go through all the ceremonies before marriage. Only 55 percent went through "to see" the bride ceremony. 45 percent did not go through this ceremony as the boy's parents had already seen the girl. 95 percent had the agreement ceremony while 85 percent had the engagement ceremony. All of the respondents had the traditional wedding ceremony and also had their marriage registered.

Dowry

The giving of dowry by the bride's parents is a common practice among the Tamil (see Table 8). When dowry is paid, wealth is not transferred in one direction and women in the other, for both wealth and women travel in the same direction. Men do not receive dowries from their wives' families, nor do not parents themselves receive the dowry on behalf of their sons and then use it for their own purpose. Dowry is property given to the daughter to take with her into marriage. Technically it is her property and in her own control though the husband usually has rights of management.

Table 8

Giving of dowry by the girl's parents

Dowry	no. of married respondents (%)		no. of single respondents (%)	
Yes	15	(50)	17	(57)
No	15	(50)	13	(43)
Total	30	(100)	30	(100)

The Tamil in Malaysia are not in the habit of giving dowry in the form of money. Parents give dowry in the form of jewellery and a bedroom set, while some even give cooking utensils. Among the Tamil, the giving of dowry is not a must. Some of the people do give dowry while some do not. It is up

to the girl's parents if they want to do so, but in some cases it is asked by the boy's parents.

In this study the writer found that 50 percent of the married respondents parents gave dowry, while the other 50 percent did not give any. Among the single 57 percent wanted their parents to give dowry when they got married. These women felt that dowry ought to be given to help the married couple start a new life. 43 percent of the single respondents said that they did not want their parents to give dowry. They feel that since they were working they could buy the necessary things they wanted to start a new life and not depend on their parents anymore. Some of the girl's parents did give dowry as they do not want their daughters to be looked down upon by her in-laws.

Place of wedding

Table 9

Place of wedding

Place of wedding	no. of married respondents (%)		no. of single respondents (%)	
Temple	17	(57)	20	(66.7)
Hall	9	(30)	8	(26.7)
House	4	(13)	-	
Not sure	-		2	(6.6)
Total	30	(100)	30	(100)

Among the married respondents, 57 percent had their wedding in the temple, 30 percent had it in a public hall while 13 percent had the wedding in the house. Among the single, 66.7 respondent would like to have their wedding in temple, 26.7 percent would like to have it in a public hall while 6.6 percent said that they were not sure of the place.

Hindu weddings are usually held in temples, but many people have their weddings in public hall or even in houses. People have their weddings in the temple because it is much cheaper than to rent a public hall. Public halls are usually quite expensive to rent, but it is convenient for people of all races to attend.

Wedding expenses

Table 10

Wedding expenses

Expenses borne by	no. of married respondents (%)		no. of single respondents (%)	
Boy and family	6	(20)	3	(10)
Girl and family	3	(10)	—	—
Boy and girl	12	(40)	18	(60)
Boy's family and girl family	9	(30)	9	(30)
Total	30	(100)	30	(100)

In the traditional Hindu wedding, the wedding expenses will be borne by the boy and his family. This has changed in recent years. The mode of sharing the wedding expenses between the couple who is getting married has become common. In this study 20 percent of the married respondents wedding expenses were borne by the boy and his family, while 10 percent of the respondents borne the wedding expenses with her family. A majority of 40 percent shared the wedding expenses with their husbands, while 30 percent of the married respondent's wedding expenses were shared by the boy's family and the respondent's family.

In Tamil weddings, only in rare cases do the girl and her family pay the whole wedding expenses. This happens when the girl is an only child or an only daughter or comes from a rich family while her husband is poor.

The wedding rituals have not gone through any change but other matter relating to marriage have had some changes. These changes were brought about by the young generation. They did not follow everything as it was traditionally but made a few changes to suit themselves in these modern times. Western education and influence have also contributed to the changes. But it is clear that traditional values still primarily predominate in the behaviour of the women towards marriage.

Their attitudes towards marriage still conform to the traditional framework.

CHAPTER 4: Married Life

- 4.1 Type of family
- 4.2 Family planning
- 4.3 Size of family
- 4.4 Authority patterns in family
- 4.5 Housework
- 4.6 Divorce

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER 4: Married Life

4.1 Type of family

4.2 Family planning

4.3 Size of family

4.4 Authority patterns in family

4.5 Housework

4.6 Divorce

4.1 Type of family

After marriage, the Indian woman moves to her husband's home. If the husband is working and staying in a different town, she goes with him to live where he works. If the woman is working, she has to change her place of work in order to live with her husband. If the husband is living with his parents in a joint family then she moves into that household. In both cases the wife enters the husband's environment. Only in exceptional cases does the husband stay in the wife's parental home. This happens occasionally when the wife is the only child of her parents or when the son-in-law enters his father-in-law's business. But, as an usual instance, the woman moves into her husband's house, the adjustment she

Married Life

In every marriage, the first years after marriage are the most crucial time in determining whether the marriage partnership will work, whether the women will adjust to her new environment, whether emotionally she is prepared to live through the marriage partnership, whether the couple is temperamentally and sexually compatible, whether the wife can adjust with the other family members and if she has the scope to pursue her individual interests in the new set up.

4.1 Type of family

After marriage the Indian women moves to her husband's home. If the husband is working and staying in a different town, she goes with him to live where he works. If the women is working, she has to change her place of work in order to live with her husband. If the husband is living with his parents in a joint family then she moves into that household. In both case the wife enters the husband's environment. Only in exceptional cases does the husband stay in the wife's parental home. This happens occasionally when the wife is the only child of her parents or when the son-in-law enters his father-in-law's business. But as in most instances the woman moves into her husband's house, the adjustment she

makes after marriage is much greater than what he has to make. She moves into a new home and a new environment.

In this study, the writer found that to 70 percent of the married respondents moved into their husband's house after marriage. while 30 percent moved into their in-law's home. Among the singles 80 percent preferred to stay alone with their husbands while 20 percent preferred to stay with their in-laws in a joint family. (see Table 11)

Table 11
Place of stay after marriage

Place	no. of married respondents (%)		no. of single respondents (%)	
Husbands house	21	(70.0)	24	(80.0)
In-laws house	9	(30.0)	6	(20.0)
total	30	(100)	30	(100)

The married respondents who stayed alone with their husband stated that they choose to do so because it gave them more privacy. They did not want their in-laws to interfere in their lives. Some of these women did not stay with their in-laws because their husbands had already settled in another place due to their work. The singles who preferred to stay

alone with their husbands stated that they wanted to be independent. They wanted to start a new life with their husbands without much interference from the in-laws. These women also felt that they could have a better relationship with their in-laws if they stayed away from them. If they were staying together, it could often lead to quarrels between mother-in-laws and daughter-in-laws. Newly married women had to make a lot of adjustments in their lives. Moving in with the in-laws meant they had to make much greater adjustment, like moving into a new family environment and having with people they hardly know.

30 percent of the married respondents stayed with their in-laws as their husbands had to take care of their parents. These women had adjusted themselves to a joint family. At first it was difficult for some of them as they come from a small family but gradually they adjusted. All these women had to make some adjustments to the new environment and living with new people. 20 percent of the single respondents had to stay with their in-laws after marriage. Three of the respondents had to live with their in-laws because their future husbands had to take care of their aged parents and also their unmarried brothers and sisters. The rest of the respondents wanted to stay with the in-laws because they liked living in a big family.

On the whole, the writer found that a great majority preferred to stay alone with their husbands as to avoid trouble with the in-laws. Women had to make some adjustments in their lives after marriage whether it was a nuclear or joint family. In the nuclear family, adjustments are slightly easier because women face less interference from the in-laws. The wife has greater freedom to function on her own. She has greater privacy with her husband and gets to know him quicker. As the husband's parents are not staying in the same house, the wife does not have to tackle the generation gap. When a girl does not enter into a joint family, she is able to continue the life she was used to before marriage. Thus, there is no need for any major adjustment.

4.2 Family Planning

Table 12

Attitudes of Respondents Towards Family Planning

Family Planning	no. of married respondents (%)		no. of single respondents (%)	
Yes	7	(23.3)	17	(56.7)
No	20	(76.7)	-	
Not sure	-		13	(43.3)
total	30	(100)	30	(100)

In this study, the writer found that only 23.3 percent of the married respondents were practicing family planning, while 76.7 percent were not. Among the single 56.7 percent wanted to practice family planning when they got married while 43.3 percent said they were not sure. Married women adopted the family planning techniques either to space the arrival of the next child or to stop further child birth. Some of the married respondents who did not practice family planning were favourable towards family planning, but they were not very well informed about the methods. They had heard about family planning and had reasons for limiting the number of children but did not know how to go about it. Their husbands did not seem as much concerned as they were about this problems. These women were from the lower level of education group. A few of the married respondents who did not favour family planning felt that it was harmful to their health. A great majority of them adopted a passive attitude towards family planning.

The singles were more favourable towards family planning. They were quite well informed about the methods through reading books, magazines and from discussions with their friends.

4.3 Size of family

All the respondents who were interviewed had a small family or wanted to have a small family. The number of children they had or wanted varied from two to four. Many of the married respondents had three children, one respondents had four children while the rest were young married women who were just starting a family. Small families were favoured by all the respondents. They feel that they can give better care, love and education to a few children. They will also have more time to devote to each child and also their husband. A small family reduces overcrowding of the house and is also less expensive to maintain. (See Table 13)

Table 13

Preferred number of children

Nombur of children	no. of married respondents (%)		no. of single respondents (%)	
2	6	(20.0)	9	(30.0)
3	23	(76.7)	21	(70.0)
4	1	(3.3)	-	
total	30	(100)	30	(100)

4.4 Authority patterns in the family

Authority refers to norms regarding who 'ought to' control different situations in marriage. Authority patterns in the family for this study are in terms of who makes the major decisions in a number of areas of family life. The dominance in making decision is closely linked with the role expectations of husbands and wives within a family. This dominance can be male centred, female centred or equitarian. The areas of decision making focused in this study are: family purchases, family property, family planning and child socialization. The single respondents were asked regarding who ought to make the decisions in their future married life. (See Table 14)

Table 14

Decision making patterns in the family (major trends)

Areas	Decision making		
	Joint	Husband	Wife
a) Marketing	+		-
Groceries	+		-
Luxury items	+	-	
b) Jewellery	-		+
House	+	-	
Land	+	-	
c) Family planning	+		
Number of children	+		
d) Offences at home	+		-
Offences outside the home	+	-	
Formal education	+		
Future plans	+		

+ highest percentage

75

- second highest percentage worth reporting

In this study, a great majority emphasised joint decision making regarding all matters. This might be due to women's newly assumed wage-earner role. The right of sharing responsibilities has become a reality for these women. The traditional male dominance does not exist among the majority.

a) decisions related to family purchase

The commodities that a family buys may be sub-divided into three categories ie marketing goods, groceries and luxury items. A great many emphasised on joint decision making due to the fact that both husband and wife are working. Thus the traditional wife dominance in purchasing marketing goods and groceries has reduced. Only in 22 percent of the homes did the wives make the major decisions regarding purchasing of marketing goods and in 25 percent of the homes wives made the major decisions regarding purchase of groceries. Authority in these homes are still in the hands of wives. Decisions related to purchasing of marketing goods is closely tied in with the decision related to cooking. And since wives do the cooking, they have more claim to making decisions over the purchase of items for daily food preparation. However there are husbands who make the major decisions in both these areas. This might be due to husbands planning the family budget or because their wives do not have the time to do it.

In the area of purchasing luxury items ie television sets, video, radio cassetts, husbands made the major decisions in 20 percent of the homes, while none of the wives made this decision on their own. Authority in this contex has an inclination towards male dominance probably because they are thought to have greater knowledge in this area of purchase and have many more frequent dealings with the larger society. Women really decide on their own when larger items have to be bought, and if they decid it is done in conjunction with their husbands. 80 percent of the respondents emphasised joint decision making in purchase of luxury items.

a) Decision related to major purchase of property

Questions regarding property were divided into 3 categories ie house, land and jewellery.

In the area of purchasing jewellery wives made the decision in 80 percent of the homes, while decisions were made on a joint basis in 20 percent of the homes Wives were the principal decision makers in majority of the homes. The conception of owning jewellery may be crucial factor here. Jewellery for the working class Indian women often sybolizes status and beauty. Women seem to be greatly involved in the selection of the kind of jewellery they would like to have.

Major decisions are therefore left in the hands of wives, because the items involved is also for her own status enhancement and personal adornment.

Regarding the purchase of house and land, husbands made the decision in 40 percent of the homes. Male dominance is shown in certain homes. This decision making power may be based on greater familiarity with the outside world. This would imply that wives have probably less knowledge on the transactions involved in the purchase of land and house when compared with their husbands.

c) Decisions related to family planning

Questions in this area were divided into 2 categories ie. method of family planning used and the number of children they wanted to have. Almost all the respondents emphasised joint decision making in these areas. Only two of the respondents stated that they will make the decision regarding the family planning method used and also on the number of children they wanted to have.

d) Decisions related to child socialization

In this area 3 sub-divisions were divided ie.

decisions related to disciplining of children, formal education of children and the future plans of their children.

Children in any family interact within the family and outside the family. Therefore there may be likelihood that due to contrasting environments conflicts may arise among the children. This study focused on the major decisions regarding discipline of children within and outside of the home. A great many emphasised joint decision making in both the areas. In 37 percent of the homes, wives took the responsibility of punishing the children for offences committed within the family circle. While in 40 percent of the homes, husbands took responsibility as disciplinarians of the children for offences committed outside the home. The main offences stated by the respondents are disobedience, lying and fighting. A majority of the husbands would give bodily punishment especially caning for all three offences. Most wives would generally only scold the child for any offence committed in the house, while only a small number resorted to caning.

Regarding the children's formal education, all the respondents emphasised joint decision making. In the field of children's further education, respondents emphasised joint decision making i.e. husband, wife and child. These respondents felt that the child concerned should also be consulted as it is the child's future.

Summary

A great many emphasised joint decision making, while there were still male and female dominance in certain areas. Men usually play the instrumental role of providing finance and take on themselves the main responsibility in making final decisions concerning major family problems. But as the status of women changes by their being more educated and getting employed, they are made to play a greater role in decision making, hence, definitely many have a say in family matters.

4.5 Housework

The role of family members tend to be determined according to sex, age and other factors peculiar to the cultural patterns of a particular group. Work in and about the house is done more often by women and girls than by men and boy.

In this study the writer found that housework is still considered a women's job. But due to the fact that women are employed, men are beginning to take on some responsibilities in the house 36.7 percent of the married respondents stated that their husbands always helped them with the housework. These men take on jobs like cooking, washing of

plates and cleaning up the house. 40 percent stated that their husbands helped with the housework only when they are ill, worked overtime or are too tired to do all the housework by themselves. These men helped with the cooking, a few of them helped with cleaning the house. 23 percent of the married respondents stated that their husbands did not help with housework at all. A few of these women were living in joint families and thus had the help of their in-laws. The rest of them had grown-up daughters who helped with the daily housework.

Among the singles all the respondents felt that their future husbands should help with the housework. On the whole, many of the respondents could afford modern amenities like washing machine, vacuum cleaner and food processors, these things made the housework less tedious for them.

4.6 Divorce

Divorce was not heard of in traditional Hindu families. It was a belief that men and women once united by God should not be separated. With growing individualism one thinks of what is acceptable to oneself, not in terms of what is acceptable to society. This attitude obviously makes room for divorce. A divorce is a legal process a couple goes

through in order to change their obligations and privileges towards one another and which restores the freedom to remarry.

Questions in this area was divided into 2. Firstly respondents were asked their opinion on divorce and secondly they were asked if they would divorce their husbands if they faced any marital problems.

41.7 percent of the respondents were favourable towards divorce if they married couple were not compatible with one another. These respondents gave numerous reasons for which a divorce could be justified. Some of the reasons are severe in-laws problems which makes a girl's life miserable; a cruel and aggressive husband; husband's failure to support his wife and children; and when the husband deserts his wife.

58.3 percent of the respondents do not favour divorce. They felt there was a need to preserve a marriage against all odds. Man and women cannot break up a home and leave the children in the lurch. Women who are dependent on their husbands will have no place to go if their marriage breaks up. A woman who leaves one man will never be able to settle down with another if she has any children. Divorce is just not acceptable to the Indian way of life. As a woman always make greater adjustment she should preserve the marriage partnership without magnifying little problems.

Regarding if one would divorce one's husband if she faced any mental problems, only 10% of the respondents said they would divorce their husbands, while 90% were against the idea. 70% of the respondents favoured divorce if conditions of married life are not congenial. They feel that it is not worth while to waste a life time if married life becomes unhappy. 90% of the respondents were not favourable towards divorce under any circumstances. The primary reason for this might be financial dependency of the female on the male. If they are separated the family will suffer. A great majority of these women did not favour divorce because of their children. They feel that the care of the children will be hampered. Indian women in general are more concerned about the children rather than their own interest. A divorced Indian woman is not accepted by the Indian society. The girl will be a burden on her family again, which is not a good situation in the eye of the Indian society. They will look down upon her and her family. Her unmarried sisters will face difficulties in finding mates, as the failure of one's marriage not only reflect upon oneself but also upon her family. So, the Indian women are expected to suppress their griefs and stay with their husbands for the prestige of the family and also to conform to society's expectations.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

Having compared the position and attitudes of the Tamil working women in urban Seremban with the traditional role it is clear that the role of Indian women have undergone a gradual change. Women were kept in bonds, solely a begetter of children and a housekeeper. Man in return provided her with protection and economic support: thus her economic and social freedom become progressively jeopardised. Discrimination on the basis of sex became the order of the day. Repression started with the general notion that certain characteristic were considered a monopoly of the male. She was even conditioned to look down on herself and submit herself to the acknowledged superiority of the male. She was led to underestimate her own potential and submit herself totally to the demands of her family.

Increase in education and employment opportunities for women brought about a lot of changes. With education they could seek employment outside the home. This represents a major role-innovation for married women. This is apparently associated with the change in the traditional norms for the male - female division of role responsibilities for instance, employment of wives are associated with a decline in

patriarchal authority patterns and with the emergence of equalitarian authority patterns. Since money was brought to the house by the women, they commanded more respect, attention and consideration than was customarily meted to Indian women. Thus the increased economic contribution of the employed women to her family also may alter her status and power relations with her spouse.

The attitudes of these Indian working women have considerably changed, particularly with regard to marriage and their own status. Deep and vital changes has taken place in the economic condition and personal status of women. The number of Indian women who believe in the concept that marriage is a sacrament solemnized primarily for fulfillment of one's religious and social duty and for the good of the family was decreasing. On the other hand the number who believed that marriage is a social contract, which is entered into primarily for the good of the individual and for her personal happiness and satisfaction was found to be increasing. More and more women consider self-respect and the development of personality as necessary goals of life. The two old pillars of the Hindu society viz sacramental marriage and joint family are weakening as revealed in this study.

Arranged marriage is still common among the Tamil women in urban Seremban today. In these marriages, parents

selected the mates for their daughters but the girl involved did have the final say. They were not forced into marrying a stranger. Love marriage too was becoming popular among the Tamil women. A large number of married women had love marriages. As they are working and probably better educated than housewives, their outlook on marriage changes because they have greater opportunity to meet men at the place of work. Many women who prefer love marriage feel there would be greater understanding in love marriage. It was surprising to note in this study that majority of the single Tamil women seemed to prefer arranged marriage. They are willing to let their parents find a male for them but they insist on having the final say whether or not to accept the mate selected by their parents.

Whether it is love marriage or arranged marriage personal consideration were found to be predominant. A large majority desired to have a relation of co-partnership with their husbands. They expect a large measure of happiness out of their married life. They put more emphasis on their privileges than on their obligation this indicates a definite and vital change in their attitude towards marriage.

Educated women, and more so the working women are in less hurry to get married. The preferred age at marriage in this study is 25 to 27 years. Working women become more

selective. They conform less easily to traditional patterns. They prefer to marry only if they approve of a person, even if the elders have already made the selection. These women would prefer to wait for the right man to come along rather than marry merely for the sake of getting married. Women with low level of education married at a younger age, while women with higher level of education married later. This proves that education does influence the age at marriage.

Most Indian marriages are caste endogamous. Though marriages occasionally do occur between a man and a woman of different jati and ethnic group, the vast majority still had endogamous marriage. Even though these women are educated and working they still select a male within the caste restrictions.

Other criteria for selection of a mate are the character of the man, occupation and earning and the ownership of property. It was interesting to note that character of the man was considered important. A woman's concern about the character of the male is not only due to the fact that in her upbringing she had repeatedly heard that character is what she should look for in a male, but because of her psychological make-up she needs emotional security. She wants to be sure that her husband will be a man who will truthfully abide by the obligations and responsibilities of a marriage. Occupation and earning, were also stated as important. These women feel that

it is important for the man to have a secure job as he will be responsible for his family, rather than a woman.

Choosing the right man is important but if a woman is determined to make marriage a success she can, whatever may be the environmental factors. She must enter marriage willingly with the positive view of making a happy home with the man she marries.

After marriage the girl leaves her parental home to become part and parcel of her new home with her husband and in-laws. In many instances it is she who maintains the stability and harmony of married life by her tolerance, willingness to adjust, compromise and sacrifice. After marriage, the Indian female undergoes a complete transformation in order to fit into her new role as wife. She is prepared to live with a new set of people, and spend the rest of her life with her husband.

The in-law problem is an important factor in marital adjustment. In spite of all the advantages of a traditional joint family system, the majority of the Indian women in this study preferred nuclear family. They feel that one loses freedom and independence in a joint family. Mother-in-law sometimes treat daughter-in-law with so much vengeance, that they make the latter's lives miserable. But we cannot deny the fact that there are mother-in-law who treat their

doughter-in-law just like their own daughter. None the less young women today avoid forming a joint family. This is to avoid trouble in the future. There are some women who have to stay with their in-laws as their husbands had to take care of their parents. These women had no choice but to adjust to joint family.

A women makes a greater biological contribution to a marriage partnership as she gives birth to and nurtures the child. So her attitude to family planning assumes great significance. In this study, a large majority of the married women did not practice family planning. Some women felt that family planning was harmful to health, while the rest did not practice it because they were not well informed about the methods.

Sometimes women might not be in favour of raising more children. Imposing on them more responsibilities than they can handle is unfair. Producing too many children without being able to give them adequate protection and care is cruel and is a real injustice to them. Instead of spending valuable human resources in taking care of children with an inadequate budget, the same could be invested in the more productive developments of individuals. The practice of family planning has far-reaching effects. Apart from the interest of the

individual, it should also be practised in the larger interest of the family.

The management of the traditional joint family is primarily the wife's duty. She runs the household and helps the husband by contributing her labour as much as possible. Although both husbands and wives have to make adjustments, wives adjust more than husbands. Wives fit more easily into the institutional requirements of marriage, in that the home and children are more easily the centre of their lives.

Today's married couples, especially in nuclear families, are learning the meaning of shared home-making. Both men and women find companionship and mutual understanding in this new pattern of partnership. A significant change in the division of labour within the family is apparent among the Indian families in urban Seremban. More women are going out to work. They earn part of the family income. They participate in making decisions for the family. The husbands share some of the household chores with the wife, thus reducing the wife's burden.

Since the wife is considered to be the person for making adjustments in marriage, she is also considered as the cause if there is a divorce. Due to this, the majority of the Indian women do not favour divorce. An Indian woman who wants

to consider divorce, has to think of the future of her children and her unmarried sisters as her doings will reffect upon her family. The Indian society does not accept a divorced women.

The modern Indian male's attitude to women has also altered, and this has created a favourable climate for change in the status of women. Man had exploited woman's dependency on them for his own good and for the betterment of his house and family, but today with his education, urban culture and dependence on his wife in a nuclear family, he has undergone a tremendous change. The modern educated male is not satisfied with the prospect of a woman as a mere housewife. He wants an intelligent companion who will share his varied interest in life. Man has come to realise that a better position for women in society elevates the status of the entire household, family and community. This change in the attitude of the Indian male has encouraged women to break the shackles of social discrimination.

Multitude of factors have influenced the great change in women's role today ie education, employment, attitude of man and the awareness among woman herself. The present study reveals that there is a significant change in women's attitude towards marriage, family, size of family anf her position in the family.

The Indian woman though conditioned by tradition, custom, and society is showing a remarkable change. Women today have acquired a multitude of new functions while retaining quite a few old ones. The change in women has been remarkable though not revolutionary. It is good that she has not undergone a revolutionary change. This would have had the disadvantage of uprooting tested values and practices without offering a workable substitute.

The Hindu Law maker, Manu stated that "a woman must be her father's shadow in childhood, her husband's in her youth, her son's in old age". This famous dictum is dying fast. Indian women realise she is on level with man, his equal and not his subordinate. It appears Indian women are moving towards an ideal balance of traditional and progressive values.

PICTURE



(1)

Cumankilis bringing presentations for the bride



(2)

Some of the presentations



(3)

Bridegroom's father giving the presentations to the bride's father



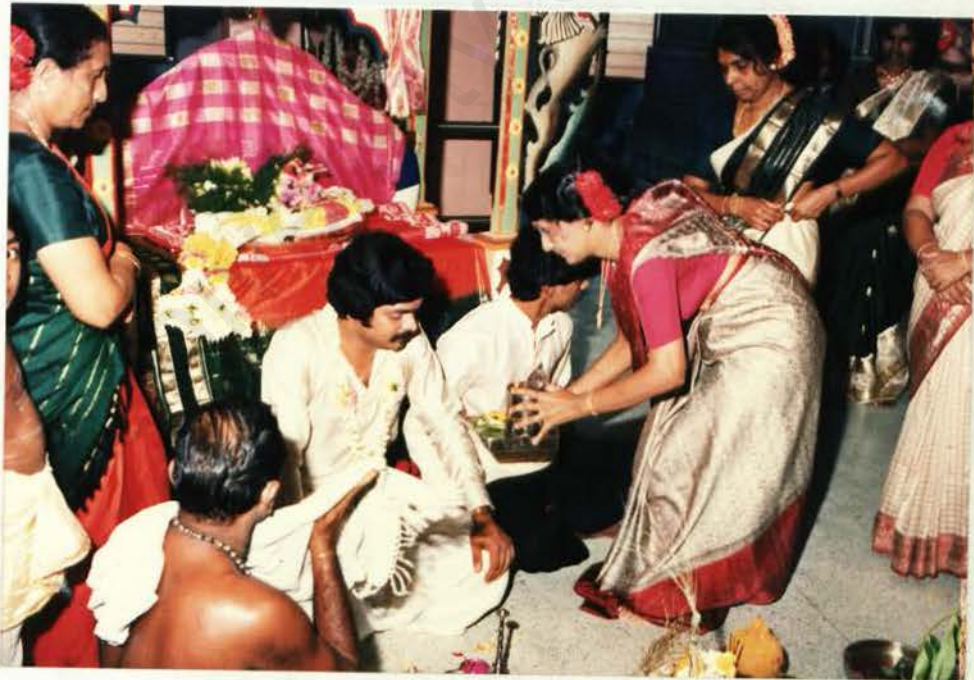
(4)

The exchange of ring between the bridegroom and bride



(5)

Nalankul ceremony performed for the bridegroom in his house



(6)

Nalankul ceremony performed for the bridegroom just before the wedding



(7)

Nalankul ceremony performed for the bride just before the wedding



(8)

The bridegroom tying the Tali around the neck of the bride

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