

ATTITUDE TOWARDS MARRIAGE AMONG INDIANS
IN SEREMBAN ESTATE, NEGERI SEMBILAN

by

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SINOPSIS

Perkahwinan adalah suatu perbuatan universal yang dilakukan oleh semua manusia. Latihan ilmiah ini adalah satu percubaan untuk menerangkan sikap orang-orang India di estet (terutamanya di kalangan wanita-wanita India) terhadap perkahwinan. Kajian ini mengandungi lima bab.

Bab satu mempunyai maklumat-maklumat mengenai pengenalan, objektif dan skop kajian, metodologi kajian, masaalah kajian dan akhirnya kepentingan kajian ini.

Bab dua menyentuh atas teori-teori dengan merujuk kepada kehidupan orang-orang India dan peranan mereka didalam estet. Selain daripada ini beberapa konsep-konsep juga telah dilihat yang berkaitan dengan kajian ini misalnya, konsep-konsep perkahwinan, sikap, keluarga, dowri dan penceraian.

Bab tiga, latar belakang Estet Seremban yang termasuk lokasi dan latarbelakang sejarah, struktur penduduk, corak penempatan dan kemudahan, hirarki dan jenis-jenis pertanian diberi perhatian.

Bab empat menyentuh corak-corak perkahwinan di Estet Seremban. Berhubung dengan ini beberapa jenis corak keluarga dan upacara-upacara ditekankan. Misalnya, biodata responden, latar belakang perkahwinan mereka, perhubungan

dengan keluarga mereka sendiri, mertua dan ibu-bapa responden-responden, dowry, perkahwinan, upacara kelahiran anak dan upacara mencapai umur bagi gadis-gadis serta penceraian diberi keutamaan.

Dalam bab lima iaitu kesimpulan, suatu analisa bab-bab terdahulu telah diberikan. Suatu percubaan untuk menerangkan perubahan-perubahan dalam beberapa aspek perkahwinan dan kehidupan selepas perkahwinan juga akan dimasukkan.

SYNOPSIS

Marriage is an universal act performed by all human race. This graduation exercise is an attempt to explain the attitude of the estate Indians (especially among Indian women) towards marriage. This research consists of five chapters.

Chapter One, contains information on an introduction, objective and scope of research, research methodology, problems of research and finally the importance of this research.

Chapter Two, touches on theories with reference to the Indian's lifestyles and roles in an estate. Besides this, various concepts were also looked at in connection with this study. For example, concepts on marriage, attitude, family, dowry and divorce.

Chapter Three, the setting of Seremban Estate which included the location and historical background, demographic structure, settlement patterns and facilities, hierarchy and types of plantation were discussed.

Chapter Four, touches on the marriage patterns in Seremban Estate. In connection to this various family patterns and rituals were stressed. For example, the biodata of the respondents, their marriage background, relationship with

their own families, in-laws and parents, dowry, marriage, childbirth and puberty rituals and finally divorce were stressed.

In Chapter Five, that is the conclusion, an analysis of previous chapters will be given. An attempt to explain the changes in various aspects of marriage and life after marriage will also be included.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Marriage in general is a way of 'mating' which are tied with values, religion, norms, customs and tradition. The meaning of marriage differs from one society to another and so are matters concerning with marriage. For example, the types of marriage customs and rituals, marriage laws and so on. This is clearly depicted in our country where the Malays, Chinese, Indians and other races practise different types of marriages.

In Malaysia, Indians are considered as the third largest ethnic group. Generally many Indians migrated as labourers to work in rubber plantations during the 19th century. In fact a majority of the semi-educated labourers are Tamil Hindu's from Tamilnadu (South India) in India. Indian immigration into Malaya dated from the very first day of the foundation of Penang in 1786, but it became a significant feature in Malayan demography in the later half of the 19th century following the establishment of

the British paramourty in India and the consolidation of British power in Malaya. The modern Indian migrant came to Malaya to work for pittance on some plantation or Government project. Following the fact that many South Indians from India came to Malaya to work in plantations and reside here itself, I will give a brief definition on what is a plantation. According to the International Labour Organisation Committee of Work on Plantations, a plantation is,

"large scale agricultural units developing certain agricultural resources of tropical countries in accordance with the methods of western industry.... the institution is essentially a large scale enterprise depending on a large capital investment, a large supply of labour, extensive land areas, well developed management and specialization in production for the purpose of export"

(International Labour Organisation, p.p.5, 9)

To fulfill a large supply of labour, labourers were brought in mainly from India in large scales into Malaya to work in rubber estates. Indians who are mainly Tamils constitute approximately 80% of the labourers. As stated by Friedman,

"a common form of Indian local community in Malaya (is) a body of workers on an estate, housed and supervised by an industrial concern"

(Friedman 1960, p. 165)

It is essential to know that Indians who migrated to Malaya comprise both pre war immigrants from India and their children and grandchildren, the majority of whom who know only rubber estates in Malaya. For such people therefore, living and working on the estate is a matter of 'specialized adaptation' (Wolf, 1959). The Tamil Hindus' who migrated from India brought together with them the way of life, customs, traditions and values to Malaya. From this it is obvious that Indians in estates even practise marriage ceremonies which were brought from India and passed down from one generation to the other.

1.1 OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF RESEARCH

My main aim is first to determine what are the attitudes of the estate Indians towards marriage and then to test the hypothesis that 'the traditional aspects related to marriage is strictly followed by the Indian women in estates today.' To fulfill this, a research was carried out, based on a case study on Indian women in Seremban estate. I carefully carried out the research to see the

following aspects which would then help form a conclusion to determine the validity of truth in the hypothesis. The aspects were:-

- 1.1.1. Marriage background which covers the type of marriage, age at marriage, age difference between wife and husband and the choice of husband.
- 1.1.2. Relationship towards new family :- this includes the number of children, preference for boy or girl as their child, whether family planning is practised and finally who makes the decision concerning certain aspects in a household.
- 1.1.3. Relationship towards parents and in-laws :- do they keep in touch with one another or do they give financial aid to their family as well as in-laws. Also do the respondents prefer to have in-laws staying with them and what type of family system do they practise.
- 1.1.4. Dowry system :- do the estate people follow this system and if they do how do they practise it.
- 1.1.5. Rituals followed during a wedding ceremony. What other rituals are practised, for example childbirth and girls puberty rituals. Lastly do the estate people practise divorce in case of a rift between a husband and a wife.

Hence the scope of the research was focused on married Indian women in Seremban Estate. About fifty women between the ages of 20 and 60 were taken as respondents to represent the Indian women population in this estate. Indian women were chosen so that it would be easier for me to communicate with them (being an Indian myself). Furthermore language will not be a barrier. Respondents include both who were employed and unemployed. Under the aspects of marriage, the scopes covered were the customs followed and practised before, at the time of and after marriage. Besides this, ceremonies held at the birth of a first child and a girls first attainment of puberty were also covered. Another aspect in marriage that was given particular attention is divorce. From the aspect of household, scopes covered include role of a wife in a household, decision making and family planning. Under socio-economy, I focused on occupational structure as well as education among estate women.

1.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As said earlier I carried out a case study in Seremban Estate, Negeri Sembilan. This estate was preferred because it is situated not far from my place of residence. This made it convenient for me to travel every day to the estate. Before field work was carried out, a pilot survey

was conducted to find out the number of population, number of labourers and so forth to fulfill the needs to carry out my research. Field work was carried out from 22nd April to 22nd May. Usually the duty of meeting and interviewing the respondents were carried out in the afternoons and evenings from 2.00 pm onwards because only at this time, most of the estate people returned from work. For the first two weeks I interviewed the respondents while the following two weeks informal conversations with respondents as well as other estate people were carried out. Besides them, the estate Assistant Manager and clerks were also interviewed to collect necessary informations and datas concerning the estate background, wages, occupational structure and other relevant informations. Respondents were selected at snowball random, that is going from house to house to pick the required respondents. This was because the management did not have lists of the estate peoples' names and ages. Several methods were used to collect informations and among them were:-

1.2.1 QUESTIONNAIRES

50 pieces of questionnaires were prepared to interview the respondents. Both open-ended and close-ended questions were used. Open-ended questions are designed to permit a

free response from the subject rather than one limited to stated alternatives.¹ Besides this the respondents will have the opportunity to answer in their own terms as well as in their own frame of reference. A close-ended question is one in which the responses of the subject are limited to stated alternatives.² The format of questions focussed to the respondents were divided into 5 sections :-

- i) Biodata
- ii) History of Marriage
- iii) Relationship with Family Members
- iv) Dowry
- v) Divorce

In addition to this, I also prepared a list of additional questionnaires to cross-check certain informations given by the respondents. This was essential to assure that the answers given were correct.

1. Selltitz, Claires : Research Methods in Social Relations, Revised One - Volume Edition, NY 1959. p. 257

2. ibid. p. 256

1.2.2 PARTICIPATION / OBSERVATION

Besides having informal conversations with the estate people as I have said earlier, I also observed what were some of the daily activities carried out by them. In addition to this I even observed the activities in a creche, factory as well as the clinic and the environment of the estate.

1.2.3 RESEARCH IN LIBRARY

Referring to books in the library is essential as it gives extra information relevant to the research conducted and furthermore it adds to what I want to present. With regard to this I referred to several books on women and their involvement in several aspects of life such as economics, marriage and politics.

1.3 PROBLEMS FACED DURING RESEARCH

Although I managed to interview 50 respondents, there were many problems that I faced during the course of research. Some of the problems were :-

1.3.1 SUITABLE TIME

The biggest problem faced was finding a suitable time to carry out the interviews. In this estate a majority of

the women go out to work either in the estate or factories outside the estate. Those who work within the estate set out to work at 6.30 am and returned home between 12.00 to 2.00pm. So I had to start interviewing only after 2.00 pm. But the real problem was when at this time many of them either have their afternoon nap or watch Tamil movies on video. During this time they do not like to be disturbed. Besides this, some women had to do their household chores like cleaning the house, bathing the children, cook and others as soon as they came back from work. Therefore I found it difficult to make them spare a few minutes for interviewing. There were also a few respondents who at first were reluctant to be interviewed until after much persuasion.

1.3.2 THE WRITER'S IDENTITY

A few respondents at first did not cooperate with me thinking that I was a government officer coming to question or spy on them. Some even thought that I was a salesgirl coming to sell things from house to house. So they never entertained me at all. For instance, once when I asked a child whether his mother was in the house, he answered yes and went inside to call her. But after a few minutes the boy returned and told me that his mother was not in.

1.3.3 PRESENCE OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

There were a few respondents who while being interviewed were surrounded by some of their family members like their husbands and mother in laws. This made them feel uncomfortable to answer certain questions like their opinion on divorce, relationship with their in laws and so forth. Some of their answers were also influenced by their family members' presence. Many respondents denied allegations that their husbands were drunkards or wife beaters or both, to spare their husbands' feelings.

1.3.4 LACK OF UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS POSED TO THEM

This is one of the problems I faced whereby questions on family planning, divorce and such were not understood. I even faced problems translating certain words from Malay to Tamil to make the respondents understand what I was asking them. This was especially clear when faced with respondents who did not know how to speak or understand Malay at all.

Overall although I faced problems initially as stated above, I somehow managed to overcome most of them. This was further helped by the fact that a majority of the respondents were very cooperative.

1.4 IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Research and writings on Indian women in Malaysia are very few especially writings or articles that touch on certain aspects like marriage, politics and economics. However there are some books and articles which covers certain topics in general on women (Malays, Chinese and Indians), for example aspects on socio-economic, politics and family. Authors from India have written many books on Indian Women. For example, 'Indian Women' by Devaki Jain (1975), 'Marriage and Dowry in India' by P.T. Nair (1978), 'Marriage and Family in India' by K.M. Kapadia (1966) and others just to name a few. In Malaysia for example, K. Soosan Oorjitham has written an article on 'Indian Women in Urban Malaysia' in Women in Malaysia (1984). There are also graduation exercises done by past years students like Miss Karthyeni Sridaran who wrote on the socio-economy of Indian Women in an estate (1986/87) while Miss Vasanthi did a graduation exercise on women in a squatter area in Kuala Lumpur (1986/87) and many more. Following this, I decided to take an opportunity to carry out a study based on Indian women in an estate touching a topic on marriage. An attempt was made to discover to what extent marriage patterns in estate are influenced by industrialisation and urbanisation. My intentions was also to see family patterns and relationships after marriage.

Besides this, this study is also important as a graduation exercise to fulfill a part of my Anthropology and Sociology course.

As we all know, Indians in estates perform marriage ceremonies that have been passed down from generations to generations. They are known to maintain this traditional marriage system. From this statement, I feel it is important to know whether any changes have occurred in the traditional marriage customs among the Indians in estate.

CHAPTER 2

THEORIES AND CONCEPT

2.1 THEORIES

Indians in the plantation sector are a closed community who live within the estate environment. This does not mean that they are completely cut off from the outside world. What I mean here is since Indians make up a majority of the estate population they are able to maintain a close relationship among their own community. Traditions and customs concerning marriage and domestic life which were passed down from generations to generations are able to be kept intact within this society. Because of this they are also able to pass down their traditional values to the younger generations through socialization process. Lack of exposure to other ethnic groups like the Malays and the Chinese further enhances this traditional cultures to be kept enclosed within this society.

Apart from just being a closed community the estate have a close economy system too wherein the lives of the people are mostly centred around rubber and oil palm cultivation. The working environment and the work itself is

exploitative in a sense that the people are so involved in their daily work that they cannot move out of the plantation environment. For example, men and women working in the estate get up as early as 4 or 5 in the morning to get themselves prepared for work. Women have to prepare breakfast for their husbands and children and sometimes lunch before setting out to work. Almost half the day for the men and women labourers are finished in the rubber and palm oil plantation. While in the afternoon most of the menfolk go out elsewhere to do part time jobs to earn extra income for their families, the women stay home and do all the household chores, cook lunch and dinner, bath the children and so on. In some households the eldest daughter or other elder women will do the housework. In the evenings the whole family will sometimes sit together and talk or watch television. Day in and day out this same routine is followed and this in turn becomes a mundane routine to them especially for the women who accept their daily routines without questioning. So this whole routine sort of keep the estate people within the estate from moving out.

Overall their lives can be seen as functional because it gives them a sense of security and an identity.

In accordance to this we will see what are the roles categorised for men and women in an estate household. But first what is a role and how does tradition (in this case

study) categorise a person's rôle especially among the Indians? Well to answer these questions first let us define what is rôle as defined by T.H. Newcomb,

"the ways of behaving which are expected of any individual who occupies a certain position constitute the rôle associated with that position."

(Micheal Banton, 1965, P.27)

Following this definition let us now see what are the rôles of men and women in an estate. For one, Indian women are always thought of and regarded as inferior to men. This is because of the sex rôle stereotypes where the male is always thought of as the dominant figure and has an occupational rôle. They are expected to have a job so that they can support their families. He is socialized into this rôle through transferring his identification from the mother to the father. Women on the other hand plays the rôle of a housewife who has to perform all the household chores, give emotional support to the husband and also to shower him with love and care. Women too were socialized to take the rôle of a wife and a mother since young as stated by Bates :-

"the wife-mother has one rôle as a housekeeper another as a supervisor of her children, another as sexual partner to her husband."

(Bates, 1975: P.97-104)

Following this also Irene Hanson and Sheila J. summed up that,

"drawing perhaps upon their biological roles related to childcare and nurturance, both human and primate females seem to demonstrate a greater number of nonverbal indications of liking or warmth than do males. Many of these cues, however are also indicators of lower status, which suggests that some manifestations of the stereotypical warmth and expressiveness of women are outgrowths of their submissive roles."

(Irene Hanson Frieze and Sheila J. Ramsey, 1976: P.137)

What Irene and Sheila stated can be seen in Indian women where they don't usually voice out their dissatisfaction to their husbands. Traditional role behaviour dictates that Indian women speak softly and politely and refrain from initiating prolonged eye contact with anyone outside the family circle.

Nowadays many women in plantation sector are involved in various economic activities. In this case women have to assume three roles as that of a wage earner, a wife and a mother. Working women in estates are still expected to come home from work and do their household chores. Hindu culture reveal that

"the internalization of some roles concerning household are so firmly established that the Hindu women find it hard to ignore their household

duties inspite of their newly assumed wage earner role."

(Prakash V.V. and N.Nandini Rao, 1975: P.194)

However there are men who do help their wives with household chores forgetting their male role. But the number involved is not very high. The functions that the family as an institution performs are divided among family members in the form of roles. For example, in the socialization function of the family, both parents have roles instructing and diciplining their children.

In conclusion even though women and men (Indians in this case study) are in their modern times now they still do practice their stereotype roles which has been followed for many years. This in turn influences their ways of life.

2.2 CONCEPTS

2.2.1 MARRIAGE

Marriage is an universal act and as Burgess and Locke have pointed out,

"the animal mates, but man marries."

(Robert F. Winch, 1963: P.544)

Marriage joins two different people together. Man lives in groups and have folkways, mores, customs, traditions and

cultures of their own. It is known that, marriage is in the mores which means that although the specification varies from culture to culture, the society determines who is eligible to marry whom and who is ineligible to marry who, should property be exchanged at marriage and from whom to whom. Along with this, society also lays down certain regulations on how many mates a man or woman may have. Marriage decides members of a family and lineage. It is also a deciding factor to form certain societies. Marriage gives legality for sexual intercourse to take place between a man and a woman. Following this children born from the woman is declared legal by religion and customs. According to Redcliffe Brown,

"Marriage is a rearrangement towards social structure which involves obligations and new rights to the people concerned."

Apart from the above, there also exists the relationship between the husband's family and the wife's family and the relationship between the two families together. The meaning of marriage differs from one society to the other in this world.

In analysing marriage, the problem which arises is a definition of marriage such that all societies can accept it. Westermack gave a definition on marriage whichs says that marriage is

"a relationship of one or more men to one or more women 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 the children born of it."

(Westermack, 1925: P.26-27)

A somewhat different definition was given by Miss Catherine Goh after her research in India. According to her

"marriage is a relationship between a women with one or more persons which gives the child born to the women in situations which are not sanctioned by rules of relationship a status equal to the members of her society."

From this it is clear that there are the common marriages between a woman and a man and also there are polyandry and women marriages. Nowadays there are homosexual and lesbian pairs too. In general there are 5 characteristics of marriage and they are ,

1. Marriage decides that the children born from the married couples are legal.
2. Gives social declaration towards sexual relationship.
3. Forming a harmonious relationship between the husband's and wife's families.
4. Forming equal rights of ownership by the married couple for their children and

5. Giving full or half the right to the husband towards his wife's domestic work and wealth and also gives full or half the right to the wife towards her husband's work and wealth.

All the characteristics and concepts discussed above can be applied in this case study concerning marriage among Indians. Before giving a concept on Hindu marriage, let us see the types of marriages in general. There are two most common types. The first type is known as monogamy wherein a woman marries a man at one time (most important factor is time) and not one after another at different times. The second type is polygamy which is divided into two that is polygyny - the marriage of one man to several women at one time and polyandry - the marriage of one woman to several men at one time.

The traditional Hindu concept of marriage is that of a sacrament which enables one to fulfill dharma (religious as well as social obligations towards the family, community and society), praja (progeny) and rati (pleasure).⁷ From this concept we can say that Hindu marriage is a religious and social act that joins together two human beings into eternal union. This has made people accept their marital situations ungrudgingly and not considering adjustments in marriage a problem. Kapadia while discussing the concept of the traditional Hindu marriage and family life, writes

that,

"marriage was a social duty towards the family and the community and there was little idea of individual interest. The social background provided by the authoritarian joint family, and caste with its domination in all spheres of life, afforded no scope for the recognition of any personal factor, individual interests and aspirations in the relations between husband and wife."

(Kapadia, 1958, p.169)

On account of this traditional concept of marriage, along with the view that marriage was not meant mainly for individual gratification, individual interest and aspirations, but was rather a social duty towards the family and community, every one was expected to do one's duty regardless of how one felt about it.

Ceremonies and rituals performed for marriage legalizes a Hindu marriage. This is to prove to the society that a couple is legally married. Patrilocal residence was essential after marriage among Hindu's. Arranged marriages (within same caste and status or higher) are the rule in most Indian communities. A Hindu husband cannot marry another woman as long as his previous marriage is still sustaining.

2.2.2 ATTITUDE

The term attitude refers to certain regularities of an individuals' feelings, thoughts and predispositions to act toward some aspect of his environment.² A person who shows a certain attitude towards something or someone is reacting to his feeling towards that thing rather than to its actual state. An attitude produces a consistent response. For example, a man who has a dislike attitude towards politicians will show dislike to most politicians he meets or hears about. In a more technical language attitudes are cognitive, affective and behavioural. As G.W. Allport defined,

"an attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individuals response to all objects and situations with which it is related."

(G.W. Allport, 1935, p. 810)

Most commonly held definition of an attitude towards any given object, idea or person is an enduring system with a cognitive component, a feeling component and an action tendency. The cognition component consists of beliefs about the attitude object, the feeling component is equivalent to affective component, which is to say that there is some emotional feeling connected with the beliefs

and the action tendency is readiness to response in a particular way to a certain situation.

Attitudes are closely related to opinions and also to prejudices. Prejudice is a rigidly fixed attitude. An attitude becomes a prejudice when the predisposition is so strong that a person will not change his opinion towards something even if there are evidence that might call for a changed reaction. Attitudes are formed as a result of some kind of learning experience or socialization from parents, teachers or friends. For example, a child may take on his parents prejudices about certain caste group of people and hold on to it because he was socialized that way. Growing up in a happy home may contribute to a favourable attitude towards marriage than a broken home. Places like schools, social centres, churches and mass media such as newspapers, television and radio can influence a person to build up certain attitudes.

Attitudes have a functional basis in that a specific opinion or belief may be developed and maintained to satisfy an important social need of the person.³ For the individual who holds an attitude allows him to order and give meaning on some aspect of the social environment in which he lives and moves about. In effect, social attitudes are a fundamental link to the persons' ability to understand, feel and learn and his continuing experience in a complex social environment. Although

usually it is difficult to change a person's attitude towards something or someone but if a message is very strong and persuasive, this in turn can effect and change an attitude. On the other hand if the message is not strong enough to convince a person, there will be no pressure on that person to change.

In conclusion, in addition to contributing to understanding an individual's behaviour, the concept of attitude is useful and essential in studying broad factors in society that mould attitude and behaviour in particular directions. Prior to this concept on attitude I will study what are the attitudes towards marriage.

2.2.3 FAMILY

Family is the most universal institution in the world and also an important aspect in a man's life which has the highest value but regarded as a normal process. G. Leslie once said that,

"the family is the cradle of human nature."

(G. Leslie, 1973, p. 3)

This means that a family moulds a person to be a member of society through socialization process. All the basic values held by any individual in a society arise from

family. A popular definition of family given by home economists is,

"a family is a group of people living together sharing affection, resources and goals over time."

(Barverly R. Dixon & Gary D. Bouma, 1981, p. 142)

According to this definition a family can be anyone that is not only couples with children but also married couples without children, single parents with or without children or even in this modern times homosexual and lesbian relationships. The important factor stressed here is sharing over time. Apart from this, a standard definition specifies that,

"family is a group of two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoption, who reside in a common household, interact and communicate with each other in their respective family roles and create and maintain a common culture."

The definition above gives a clearer picture of a family. It specifies that a family begins with marriage and children born to the married couple have blood ties with the parents. Apart from that childless couple who adopt children though do not have blood ties are still considered a family. Families consists of persons acting towards each other in certain expected ways. Although

every family is unique certain types predominate in various parts of the world and in various positions in each society. The most common or basic unit is the nuclear family, consisting of a married couple and their children. Besides this there is the extended family where two or more nuclear units live together in one home. An extended family consist of an older parent couple with their married sons and the sons' wives and children. Or it may consist of several brothers, their mother and their wives and children. Most extended families are patrilineal with the oldest male as the head of the family and patriachal descent is followed. Communal families include many different types, organised in a variety of ways, but committed to their groups and working together in some way. Nowadays there are many single parent families consisting of either a women with her children or a man with his children. This usually happens in a family where a husband and a wife are divorced or in a family where either the husband or the wife is dead. In Asian countries too single parent families exist.

In general a list of functions performed by families in various places and times includes love and affection, sex, reproduction, child rearing, education, religion, recreation, production, consumption and status-giving.

After seeing concept of family in general let us see what is the concept of a Hindu family. The Hindu family is

essentially monogamous (that is a man can only marry a woman at one time). After marriage, the daughters leave their parental household to live with their husbands. The Hindu traditional family is an extended family because it consists of a husband, wife and children, uncles, aunts and cousins and grandchildren. A nuclear family becomes a joint family when the sons marry and continue to live in their parental home with their wives and later with their children. They ate food cooked at one hearth, worshipped a common deity, participated in common religious ceremonies, held property in common and were indissolubly related to each other according to one of the several kinship systems prevailing in the ancient past.

Rights and duties as well as sentiments and authority constituted the inseparable of the family structure. Members of the family are mutually dependent on one another. Individuality was subordinated to collective unity. In conclusion, the family is the most fundamental social institution and plays an integral part of the Hindu society.

2.2.4 DOWRY

Dowry plays an important role in marriages as part of a familial or conjugal fund, which passes down from holder to heir and usually from the parents to the daughter. Dowry is the result of a bargain and has a specific

intention: that of linking the daughter (also her family) with a particularly desirable son-in-law.

Like in Sri Lanka and India these prestations are of valuable things like cows, house, land and money. In Malaysia, dowry usually consists of money, house, land, jewellery and other valuable items. On the whole dowry may consist of any property whatsoever. Among the Indians the amount of dowry given are discussed earlier before marriage. If either party does not come to an agreement then the marriage will not take place. Usually the amount of dowry depends on the social and economic standards of the men. The higher the standard and status of the men, more dowry should be given by the girls' side. This is especially clear in India where dowry is often associated with high status. This trend is also present among the Ceylonese in Malaysia. Besides high status, level of education also determines the amount of dowry, that is, if the man is highly educated and holds a good job then the girl is expected to give or pay a very high amount of dowry. Among the Ceylonese in Malaysia, dowry is given to the girls' future husband on the girls' name.

For the rich, dowry system is not much of a burden for their daughters but among the poor who practice this system often their daughters marry late or do not marry at all because they cannot afford to pay the amount of dowry. Dowry in India and Sri Lanka stresses the notion of female

4

property ('stridhanam'). A daughter and her dowry become vehicles for setting up a relation of affinity between the bride's family and the husband's family - between the bride's parents and her husband's , between the husband and his wife's brother and so on. A woman upon marriage receives a marriage gift known as 'stridhan' (women's wealth) from her mother which she takes with her to her husband's home. These gifts usually comprises of such things like clothes, ornaments, kitchen utensils, furniture, etc. Although marriage with the dowry is the most common form in India as well as in Malaysia today, but marriage with brideprice is also found to exist. What is brideswealth? Brideswealth is given by the groom's family to the brides and clearly represents compensation for the loss of the girl. This system is usually practiced in societies which follows the patriarchal system. As Karve puts it,

"all over India there is a custom of giving brideprice among the poorer castes and of receiving dowry among the higher castes."

(Kane, 1953, p. 132)

Since the majority of Indians in Malaysia especially in the plantation sectors originally came from Tamilnadu (India), so I find it essential to see what are the

marriage gifts among some Tamilnadu groups. Following this then, a comparison can be made to see whether the Indians here have marriage gifts like the ones in India. According to Dumont, the most important feature of the marriage ceremonies of the South Indian groups was :

"the long series of alternate shifting of the couple from one place to the other and back again, which takes place from the marriage onwards and is accompanied by gifts in one direction and increased gifts in return. The chain of gifts/'prestations' and 'counter prestations' symbolises the alliance tie and is the most important feature of marriage ceremonies from the point of view of the relation between the two families."

(Jack Goody & S.J. Thambiah, 1973, p. 103)

There are two types of prestations according to Dumont:-

- i) 'external prestations' which are made between the families of the bride and bridegroom. It is also called 'cir' (if made in kind) and 'curul' (if made in money).
- ii) 'Internal prestations' which are money contributions given by the kin of each family. These prestations are called 'moy'.

Let us look at some of the marriage prestations in South India. (See Table 1)

Table 2.1 * Marriage Prestations in South India.External Prestations

a) Reversible Gifts - gifts like food, clothes, etc which are initiated by groom's side and usually returned 'multiplied' by the bride's side; the series is continued as the young couple visit their parents in turn back and forth, but always the bride's side returns the gifts more lavishly; in the case of some gifts there is exact reciprocity or equivalent value.

b) Gift's from groom's to bride's side.

i) Initial gift of money (pancam; curul), which may be utilised by the bride's parents for making jewellery for the bride. This money payment may be looked upon as 'bride price' channelled back as 'dowry'.

ii) 'Thali' is provided by the groom's family

c) Gifts from the bride's family to the married couple

All these gifts may be viewed as constituting 'dowry' (cidanam) :

i) Jewellery provided for bride amongst all groups.

(continued overleaf)

Table 2.1 (continuation)

ii) Pots, pans and household equipment when couple set up separate establishment.

iii) Among the 'Paganeri' and 'Ambalakkarar' land may also be given to bride.

Internal Prestations

'Moy'

Kin on both sides make gifts to parents of bride and groom. Parents reciprocate with symbolic gifts (This is absent among 'Mudukullatur and Ambulukkarar'. The mother's brother's gifts are the most important and they are 'oriented' while 'moy' among other kin is usually reversible.

Source: L. Dumont, Hierachy and Marriage Alliance in South Indian Kinship. , 1957. ⁵

Although dowry is practised widely among the Ceylonese in Malaysia but it is not clearly known whether Indians especially in the plantation sector still do practise this dowry system. To clear this doubt I conducted a survey in an estate among Indians to see whether they do practise the dowry system.

2.2.5 DIVORCE

The definition of divorce is the legal severing of marriage ties which a court recognises as having existed. The parties who were formerly married become exspouses. Divorce takes place in a family when the husband and wife cannot cope with each other anymore. Some of the reasons why a divorce takes place are adultery, wife battering, wife finds out that her husband is cheating on her or likewise, husband cannot support his wife and children and sterility.⁶ Goode in his extensive study of divorced found that divorces were preceded by a long period of conflict and the final action is the result of a decision and action process that lasts on the average about two years. On the other hand, Clifford Kirkpatrick points out that,

"divorce is not simple, inevitable consequence of maladjustment. There may be maladjustment without divorce, and persons may walk out an open door without extreme maladjustment."

(Robert R. Bell, 1967, p. 482)

Some married couple get divorced because they cannot see reasons together and always quarrel over matters. Divorce has a very hard effect on children whose parents are divorced. Divorced couple usually go through a court session to battle over their children's custody. In most

cases the ex-wife will have custody of the children. Historically, the right of divorce in most culture was given to the husband. Two common historical grounds used by the male in divorcing his wife were 'bareness' and 'adultery'. But nowadays as I have said earlier there are many grounds used for divorce.

The reactions of individuals to divorce are mostly determined by existing cultural values. As the statement below says that,

"All family systems have some kind of escape mechanisms built into them to permit individuals to survive the pressures of the system and one of these is divorce."

(Robert R. Bell, 1967, p. 484)

In some societies divorce has been viewed with a very casual social interest, while in others it is viewed with great concern. From one society to other the grounds or reason for divorce is different. For example Muslim men can divorce their wives by simply saying 'I divorce thee' three times. Stephen points out that,

"ground for divorce are seldom mere incompatibility of husband and wife."

(William M. Kephart, 1961, p. 76)

Besides divorce there is also separation whereby a husband

and wife live separately but their marriage still sustains. This happens when certain married couple who cannot cope with each other or always quarrel, believe that they should live separately for some time and when things get better between them, they then decide to get back together. This may take several days or weeks or even several months.

The general attitude towards divorce is clearly that it is regrettable, but often necessary. Civilised societies, employ a variety of stabilising devices, including religion, economic, legal and moral pressures to create impediments to divorce.

Divorce is unknown to customary Hindu law, because marriage is an indissoluble union between the husband and the wife. In ancient India the belief was such that men and women once united by God should not be separated. Incompatibility of temper, adultery, fornification, cruelty and incurable disease were not grounds for divorce. The Hindus believe that a husband and wife are bound to each other until the death of either of them; the wife is supposed to be bound to the husband even after his death.

Footnotes

1. K. S. Soosan Oorjitham - 'Indian Women In Urban Malaysia. 1984, p. 118
2. Paul F. Secord, Carl W. Backman - Social Psycology. Univ. of Nevada. Mcgraw Hill Book, 1964, p. 97
3. Leon Mann - Social Psycology. Harvard University. 1969, p. 113
4. Jack Goody & S.J. Thambiah - Brideswealth and Dowry. Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 64
5. Ibid p. 104
6. Robert R. Bell - Marriage and Family Interaction. Temple University. 1967, Revised Edition. p. 482

CHAPTER 3

THE SETTING: SEREMBAN ESTATE.

3.1 LOCATION AND HISTORY

Seremban Estate is situated in Negeri Sembilan about seven miles to the south east of Seremban town. It is divided into two divisions mainly:

- i) Seremban Estate (1st Division) and
- ii) New Seremban Estate (2nd Division)

The second division is about two miles away from the first division. There are no recorded information on the history of this estate but according to a long serving clerk a few labour lines existed in 1925. Therefore it was assumed that the estate was opened in the 1920's by the British who were also the administrators. The estate was then known as the Anglo Oriental Plantation. On the 1st of July 1967, the National Land Finance Cooperative Society Limited (NLFCS) bought over the Anglo Oriental Plantation and changed its name to Seremban Estate.

During the British administration this estate had more than 4000 acres of land, but NLFCS bought over only two divisions comprising of more or less 2000 acres of land.

The rest of the land was fragmentated. The administration of Seremban Estate is handled by the Plantation Agency in Penang who also handles any shipment or sale of rubber and palm oil produced in this estate.

3.2 DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE

Seremban Estate boosts a population of 1200 people (March 1987). The exact datas concerning the population by ethnic groups, age and sex were not given by the management. The management however revealed that there were a total number of 893 dependants (estate workers). Table 3.1 shows that Indians made up 93.84% of the total estate dependants followed by the Chinese (5.71%) and Malays (0.45%). All male dependants are retired.

Table 3.1 : Number of dependants until March 1987.

Races	Adults		Children		TOTAL	%
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Indians	9	49	384	396	838	93.84
Chinese	-	3	24	24	51	5.71
Malays	-	1	2	1	4	0.45
Total	9	53	410	421	893	100
%	1.01	5.94	45.91	47.14		

The highest distribution of percentage as shown in the table above suggests that Indians are the dominant ethnic group in the estate. Among them, females outnumbered males in both the adults and the childrens category. Overall the majority (93.05%) of the dependants are children and only 6.95% are adults. Women on the whole made up the majority of the estate population compared to men.

Tamil is the lingua franca of Seremban Estate, since it is widely used by all non-Tamils as well. A majority of the Indians are Hindus. Indians in plantations are largely Tamils, followed by the rest which includes Malayalees, Punjabis, Indian Muslims, Christians and Telugus. I came across only one Punjabi family and two Indian Muslim families who live in the first division. A large number of Indians were born in Malaya except for a few women from India who married kinsmen on Seremban Estate.

3.3 SETTLEMENT PATTERNS AND FACILITIES

Seremban Estate has its own houses, factory, provision shops, a clinic, temples and creches. The road leading to this estate is tarred and this road also happens to be the main road to Rantau. Buses, tractors, lorries and other light vehicles use this road. People in this estate have an easy access of transport by bus because the Rantau bus (No. 56) passes this estate once every half an hour from

Seremban to Rantau. The main source of transportation for the estate people is bus except for a handful of tohem who have their own cars or motorcycles or bicycles.

The main office is situated behind the estate's rubber factory's store house in the first division. It is a wooden building divided into 3 rooms of almost equal sizes. The first room is occupied by the Manager while the second room is occupied by a chief clerk and two clerks cum typists. The third room is where the Assistant Manager's office is. The Manager is a Chinese man who has been managing this estate for the past two years. Beside the office is the store room where all the paraquats, pesticides, tapping instrument, buckets and other tools are kept. Behind the office are houses allocated for the staff members (store clerk, Assistant Manager and conductors) provided by the management. Besides this the staffs are also given a free supply of electricity and water as well as furnitures. These houses are bigger in size compared to the labour lines. All the labour lines in this estate existed since the British Administration except for 18 new semi detached brick houses built by the management recently in 1981 in the 1st division. These houses have two rooms each, a hall and a kitchen. Residents of these houses are expected to pay for it on a monthly basis (deducted from their pay) until the total cost of the house is paid completely and only then can

they become the owner of the house. Labourers in the 1st and 2nd division are given free housing by the management. The old labour lines in the first and second division are wooden houses. There are 184 units of labour houses in the first division and they were built according to three structures :-

- i) 1 block with 2 units
- ii) 1 block with 4 units and
- iii) 1 block with 6 units

In the second division there are only 81 units of houses which has 1 block with 10 unit structures. The labour lines have a small room and a kitchen. Although the wooden labour lines have a bathroom to bath but the houses are not equipped with toilets. Instead bucket system toilets are built outside the labour lines. According to the estate people at times the person who is responsible for emptying the bucket never does it and this causes the spread of foul smell in the area.

Since the labour lines are not spacious, a majority of the estate people extended their houses by building extra rooms and kitchen. This is done illegally without getting the consent from the management. Even so many estate folks keep their houses in a good condition.

The Manager's bungalow is situated in the centre of first and second division. He is provided with a car, a driver,

furniture set, water and electricity supply. According to a staff, every once in a year a labour officer comes to this estate to inspect the conditions of the areas, houses and toilets.

3.4 AMENITIES

i) WATER AND ELECTRICITY

Water is supplied free to all the houses from the estate's own reservoir. Except for the new houses which have pipes inside the houses, the rest of the people living in the labour lines have to use pipes which were built by the management outside the lines. Besides pipes, the people also make use of the tube wells which were also built by the management. During the dry spells the wells dry up so water is sent by a lorry to the estate people. People queue up to fetch water in their pails and tanks. Washing clothes are done by the women at a nearby river.

While water is supplied free, electricity on the other hand is charged a fee of \$4.50 a month. Only the first division gets electricity supply from the National Electricity Board (NEB) in Seremban while second division is not supplied with electricity at all. This is due to the fact that the wooden houses are too old and are easily prone to fire. Applications made by the management to the Electricity Board has been rejected so far. So

instead of electricity, most of them use either car batteries or generators for their homes as source of power. The management on the other hand are also considering to rebuild the old wooden houses in both the first and second divisions but they are faced with financial problem.

ii) CLINIC

According to the Malaysian Labour Law,

"it is the responsibility of the management to make necessary preparations to avoid Malaria sickness, provide medical facilities (hospital), to send sick labourers to the hospital and inspection on labourers who are helped by the dresser and other responsible persons."

To fulfil this requirements a clinic was built in this estate. It is situated a few feet away from the Manager's bungalow. It is a small building by itself and was built during the british administration. Medicines are obtained from a pharmacy in Seremban. The clinic is equipped with only one bed for examining patients. A Visiting Medical Officer (VMO) comes to this clinic twice a month and he is paid monthly by the management. Besides the VMO, a hospital attendant is employed to look after the clinic and handle cases which are not serious like fever and

minor injuries. Serious cases like accidents and delivering babies are referred to the General Hospital in Seremban or a clinic in Rantau. But most serious cases are referred to the hospital in Seremban. The management provides free transportation for patients going to the hospital. Although the treatment in this clinic is free of charge, there are a few people who prefer to go to a private clinic in a town or to a hospital. Medical leave with or without pay is obtained from this clinic.

iii) TEMPLES

There are two temples, one in each division. Both temples are 'Mariamman Temples'. Temples are a social centre for the estate community where almost all the people gather for prayers. A priest is employed by the management to take care and perform any temple ceremonies. The priest is a non-brahmin man and he too resides in this estate. A temple ceremony is held once every year to pray to Lord Mariamma. For these occasions, committee members (to make necessary arrangements) among the estate people are elected before a meeting which will be held in the temple itself.

For this grand ceremony the management gives two days holiday for the people to celebrate. In the first division, this ceremony is held on the month of August

while in the second division it is celebrated in the month of June. People in the second division will get their holidays first (June) followed by people in the first division (August). Besides giving holidays, the management also provides free bags of rice. Usually people from neighbouring estates will attend this ceremony. Other than this ceremony, festivals like 'Karthigai', 'Ponggal', 'Saraswathy Pooja' and others just to name a few are also celebrated in this temple.

iv) SUNDRY SHOPS

There are two sundry shops in the estate. One, in the first division and the other in the second division. The management collects rent (land rent) every month from the shop owners. The sundry shop in the first division is run by an Indian Muslim family while the sundry shop in the second division is partly a coffee shop and run by an Indian family. In addition to the sundry shops, in each division, there is also a coffee shop. These coffee shops also sell alcohol like beer but samsu and other cheap hard liquors are forbidden by the management to be sold here. But many of the estate folks still manage to buy these cheap liquors from Seremban town. Men and youths gather here in the late evenings to have drinks and to talk. Goods for the sundry shops are bought from Seremban

town. A van delivers these goods to the shops. Other than dry goods, fresh vegetables, fish, prawns and others are sold here in the morning. Prices of things here are slightly more expensive because according to the shopowner in the first division, they have to give credit to many customers who cannot afford to pay in cash. Almost all the essential items are sold in these shops. Although many estate folks get their provisions from these shops but there are some who prefer to get their provisions from the town since the town is not very far.

v) CRECHE

Parents who go out to work in estate leave their babies and children in the creche. This is mostly done among parents who do not have any older family members in their houses to look after their children. The estate has two creches, one in each division. Compared to the creche in the first division, the creche in the second division is not very big. A women ('ayah') is employed for each creche to look after the children. The first division creche has around 25 children while the second division creche has 18 children. Children from new born babies up to those that are 4 years old are looked after here. Babies are made to sleep in a 'buaian' (made of a sarung) while older children sleep and play on plank platforms. The management

supplies free milk and biscuits for the children. During school holidays many of the primary school children come to the creche to be looked after. This makes the place crowded.

vi) KINDERGARTENS AND SCHOOLS

Children from the ages of four to six attend kindergartens built in the estate. There is one in each division. Teachers are employed by the management and they are also provided with houses. These teachers are fully trained from colleges. A fee of \$3/- is charged for each child sent here (deducted from the parent's wage). According to the management the fee collected is spent on buying milk and biscuits for the children. Previously the children here were given porridge and green peas but since most of them did not like it, this has been stopped.

Labour code of 1923 stipulated that,

"a school be established on every estate with ten or more children of school age."

(Wong and Ee, 1971)

Prior to this, there is a primary tamil school which is situated in the first division. At the beginning this school was owned by the management but over the years the

government took over the school. Nevertheless almost all the estate children attend this tamil school. After completing primary education a majority of this children attend secondary schools either in Seremban or Rantau. Parents who can afford usually send their children to school by a school bus which comes to the estate while others take the Rantau bus. Only a handful of the estate people's children reach a high level of education, for example, SPM, STPM AND University compared to many who drop out after the SRP examinations. Some quite well to do families send their children who have dropped out from school, to some private school or institution to continue their education.

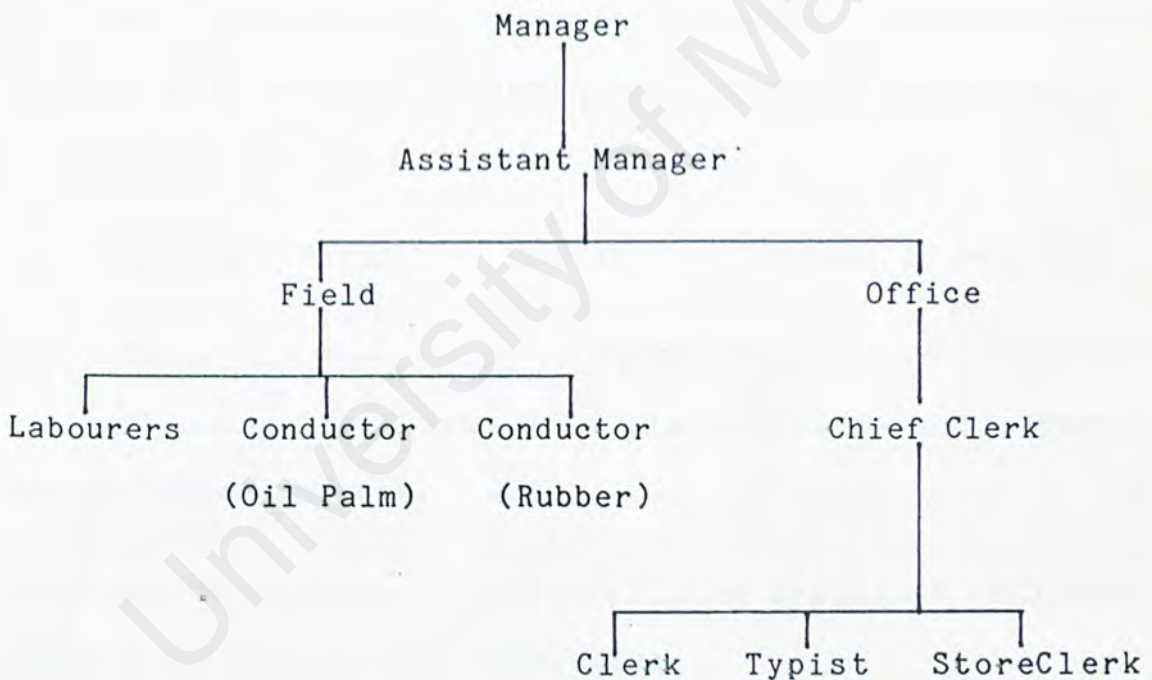
vii) OTHER FACILITIES

In the first division there is a football field where every evening boys go over to play. Besides this there are two public phone booths installed in the second division. Most of the time the phones are out of order. A majority of the estate people own at least a furniture set, radio and television. Video and colour television seem to be necessary items in every household. Some well to do families even own a car and van. On the whole the estate people here enjoy the facilities provided by the management.

3.5 HIERARCHY IN SEREMBAN ESTATE

There are two main structures in these category. First, the management which comprises of a Manager, an Assistant Manager, a chief clerk, two clerks cum typist and a store clerk. The second, are the labourers. The hierarchy of Seremban estate are as shown in Figure 3.1 :-

Figure 3.1 : Hierachy in Seremban Estate.



The Manager is at the top of the hierachy, followed by the Assistant Manager. There are two categories under the Assistant Manager :- field and office. Under the field category there are the estate labourers and the two field conductors while under the office category there are a

chief clerk, typists and a store clerk. The following are some of the duties performed by the Manager and others in the estate.

i) Manager:- his job is to manage and see to all the management in the estate. He performs a wide range of administrative functions related to the coordination of work. In his daily work routine, he divides his time between field and office. In the morning he does his rounds in the field inspecting the workers while in the afternoon he does his office duties. Apart from this the Manager also settles quarrels and gives advice to estate workers and children who approach him.

ii) Assistant Manager:- assists the Manager in his work.

iii) Chief Clerk:- his responsibilities include administering the estate and also in charge of payment and all money matters.

iv) Typists/clerks:- does all the typing of official letters and assists the chief clerk.

v) Store Clerk:- his job is to keep a record of equipment used in the estate. He also supplies new tapping knives, buckets or weeding equipment to the estate workers. His other responsibilities include to check that all chemicals are returned to the store room after use.

vi) Conductors:- they are the first in line supervisors of all labourers. In the morning all the labourers gather before their 'Kanganies' and the Senoir Conductor inspects the labourers while the 'Kanganies' report any absentees. There are about 235 labourers who work in this estate. Table 3.2 in the following page shows the labour force in Seremban Estate until March 1987.

Table 3.2 : Seremban Estate Labour Force at March 1987.

	Indians	Chinese	Malays	Total	%
Tapping Kanganies	3	-	-	3	1.28
Tappers - Male	39	-	-	39	16.59
- Female	132	6	-	138	58.72
Weeder - Kangany	1	-	-	1	0.43
Weeder - Male	6	-	-	6	2.55
- Female	20	-	-	20	8.51
Linesweeper					
- Male	1	-	-	1	0.43
Gardener - Male	1	-	-	1	0.43
Creche 'ayah'					
- Female	2	-	-	2	0.85
Factory Workers					
- Male	5	-	-	5	2.13
- Female	3	-	-	3	1.28
Electrcal Attendant					
- Male	1	-	-	1	0.43
Water pump Attendant					
- Male	1	-	-	1	0.43
Guard - Male	1	-	-	1	0.43
Auxilliary Police					
- Male	4	-	1	5	2.13
Drivers - Male	4	1	-	5	2.13
Teachers - Female	3	-	-	3	1.28
TOTAL	227	7	1	235	100
PERCENTAGE	96.59	2.98	0.43		

As shown in the preceeding page, it is obvious that tappers account for the majority (75.31%) of the estate workers. The highest distribution shows that more than half the number of labour force are involved in rubber tapping. Female tappers outnumber male tappers by a big margin. In addition to this, female tappers also make up more than half the total number of labour force in this estate. Indians are involved as rubber tappers, weeders, linesweepers, creche 'ayah', factory workers, electical and water pump attendants, guards, auxilliary police, drivers and teachers. Chinese on the other hand are involved in tapping and driving while a small number of Malays are involved only as auxilliary police.

A gardener's and a weeder's duty are to see that the estate compound is kept clean and not overgrown with grass and weeds. There are 4 male auxilliary policemen who are in charge of the general security of the estate.

In general 96.59% of the labour force in Seremban Estate are Indians followed by Chinese (2.98%) and then Malays (0.43%). All the labourers are members of the National Union of Plantation Workers (NUPW). Apart from the labourers there are quite a number of estate people who work outside the estate. For example, many young women and men go to work in factories in Senawang. Senawang is an industrial area which is situated not very far from Seremban Estate (approximately 4 miles). Furthermore a

factory bus comes to this estate which makes it convenient for the people to go to work in Senawang. Many youths today do not follow their parents footsteps into becoming a tapper ora harvester but seek out jobs outside the estate. Although many of them secure jobs outside the estate, not many of them migrate to other places or towns. Overall the relationship between the workers and the manager is good and according to a clerk there have not been any cases of labour unrest.

3.6 RUBBER AND OIL PALM PLANTATION.

Rubber cultivation appears to be the main source of income. Besides this there is also oil palm cultivation. Rubber trees and oil palm trees can be seen along the east as we go along to the first and second divisions. Rubber plantation covers an area of 526 hectares while oil palm is planted in an area of 160 hectares. From this it is obvious that rubber is the most cultivated plantation.

The most important tasks of rubber cultivation are tapping, weeding and processing the rubber. Tapping of the rubber trees are mostly done by women (see Table 3.2). They begin their work as early as 6.30 am . Before setting out to work/tap, the tappers must report themselves to the conductor who is in charge. He (the conductor) will assign certain number of trees to tap for each tapper as well as

the area they are assigned to. Some will walk to the place assigned to them if it is near but if the area is far away (for example 2 miles) then a lorry will take them to their respective places. There are also a few women who depend on their husbands to send them to their assigned worksite by motorcycles.

Tapping usually goes on until 12.00 to 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Within this time the tappers are expected to finish tapping all the trees assigned to them.

The main objective of weeding is to keep the weeds from competing with the young rubber plants or oil palm trees for the soil nutrients. Rubber processing factory is situated just opposite the office. Here all the rubber processing machines are found such as the continuous sheeting battery and coagulation pits. Latex are kept in the coagulation pits for one to two days. In this section rubber is processed into 'SMR L'. Latex which are not useful ('cup-lumps' left over from previous tapping) are processed where a machine breaks them into small pieces and are made into 'SMR 10'. The processed rubber are packed in kept in a store house ready to be taken by lorries for shipment.

As for the oil palm cultivation, the main task involved is harvesting the fruits and they are all done by male labourers. There are no factories in this estate to process palm oil fruits. Palm oil fruits are sold locally

in the country. After harvesting, the fruits are piled up at the roadside to make it easier for the lorries to load them.

3.7 WAGES

Wages are paid according to an agreement with the Malayan Agricultural Producers Association (MAPA). Women and men are paid equal wages for equal work done. A rubber tapper gets about \$9.30 per day. This depends upon how much latex a person can produce for the day. Besides this, a tappers wage also depends on the rubber prices in the market. Therefore the actual wages for tappers are not fixed. But according to some tappers, they can earn up to \$14/- per day if they produce more latex than usual.

As for palm oil, the average wage is \$12/- for harvesting the fruits. Compared to rubber the wages for oil palm harvesting is higher because of the hard work involved. Gardeners, weeders and linesweepers get a fixed amount of wage that is \$9.80 per day.

Wages are paid twice a month for labourers, while the management staffs get their pay on a monthly basis. For the labourers the first wage is called the advance payment and it is paid between the 18th and 20th of each month. The rest of the pay is given together with bonus between the 5th and 7th of each month. Vacation paid leave is given to those who have given their service to the

estate for more than a year. Besides this they are also eligible for 14 days leave with pay. As for labourers who have given their service for more than 5 years, they are eligible for 16 days leave with pay. A majority of the estate people find that they cannot manage their household expenditure with the wages they get. That is why there are at least two to three members in one household who go out to work either in or outside the estate to make ends meet.

MAP OF NEGRI SEMBILANSHOWING AN APPROXIMATE LOCATION OF SEREMBAN ESTATE.

CHAPTER 4

MARRIAGE PATTERNS IN SEREMBAN ESTATE.

4.1 RESPONDENTS BACKGROUND

In this chapter I will discuss the findings and datas of Seremban Estate. As said earlier in the first chapter, 50 respondents were interviewed and all are married women. 94% of the respondents interviewed were Hindus, 4% Indian Muslims and 2% Malayalees. This clearly shows that the Hindus are the majority linguistic group in the estate.

The majority of the women interviewed (26%) were in their late twenties (26 to 30 years) and followed closely by women between the ages of 36 and 40 (24%). An average age of a respondent was 36. The ages of the women interviewed are shown in Table 4.1 in the following page.

Table 4.1: Age Range Respondents.

Ages	Number	Percentage
15 and below	-	-
16 - 20	-	-
21 - 25	5	10
26 - 30	13	26
31 - 35	7	14
36 - 40	12	24
41 - 45	7	14
46 - 50	4	8
51 and above	2	4
TOTAL	50	100

Women in this estate are involved in tapping hoeing and weeding. Besides this they also work in factories. Table 4.2 (next page) shows the involvement of respondents in different types of work.

Table 4.2: Occupational Structure of Respondents.

Occupation	Number	Percentage
Rubber Tappers	34	68
Housewives	5	10
Hoeing	4	8
Factory Workers	4	8
Weeders	1	2
Shopkeeper	1	2
Retired	1	2
TOTAL	50	100

From the table above it is obvious that a majority of the women (68%) are involved in tapping. Out of a total number of 50 respondents, only 5 are housewives. All these working women work within the estate except for a few factory workers who work in factories outside the estate for example, factories in Senawang (which is not very far from the estate). Overall the percentage of working women is very high (88%). There are many reasons given for this and among them are,

- 1) to supplement the family income.
- 2) to have an independent income of their own so that they do not have to depend wholly on their husbands.
- 3) used to the working way of life even after marriage.

Women are given equal wages as men in this estate as stated in Chapter 3. An average wage earned by a tapper, weeder and others among the respondents are as shown below,

Tappers	-	\$175/- per month
Hoeing	-	\$140/- per month
Weeders	-	\$100/- per month
Factory workers	-	\$210/- per month

Women who are on maternity leave are also paid. Although more than half the population of women go out to work in this estate, they have also been able to combine their role of a wage earner with that of a wife and a mother successfully. As stated by Montague,

"for a married woman to be gainfully employed outside the home is no way incompatible with her being a good wife and a good mother; millions of married working women constitute living proof of the contrary."

(Montague, 1954; p. 166)

4.2 EDUCATION

Table 4.3 shows the level of education achieved by the respondents. From the table, I found out that 76% of them received education either up to Primary school level or Secondary. A majority of the women (68%) have had education up to Primary school level (Tamil school)

where else only 10% possess an education up to Secondary school level. Even after reaching Secondary level most of them dropped out after the SRP examinations. One exceptional case whereby a respondent had an education up to Form 5 level. Although 24% of the women have had no education from a school but they still do know how to read and write some Tamil. This is because they were taught by their parents at home.

Table 4.3: Level of Education Achieved by Respondents.

Level of Education		Number	%
Tamil School	Standard 1	-	-
	Standard 2	2	4
	Standard 3	4	8
	Standard 4	6	12
	Standard 5	5	10
	Standard 6	16	32
Non Tamil School	Form 1	-	-
	Form 2	1	2
	Form 3	3	6
	Form 4	-	-
	Form 5	1	2
Not Educated at all		12	24
Total		50	100

The table in the previous page indicates that the highest percentage (32%) have had education up to Standard 6 level. Why is the level of education among women in estate very low? Several reasons were given for this low achievement and among them are:-

- i) Parents could not support to educate them.
- ii) Poor environment to study.
- iii) Some of them had to stay home and look after their younger brothers or sisters while their parents go off to work.
- iv) Not interested.
- v) Stopped schooling to get married to a man of their parents or own choice.

Since they have a low standard of education, most of them can only work in the estate or factories while a number of them marry and settle down as housewives.

4.3 MARRIAGE BACKGROUND

Marriage is a very important event for every Indian woman. As the famous Laws of Manu (basic source of law in Hindu society) stated,

"a woman should never be independent. Her father has authority over her in childhood, her husband has authority over her in youth and in her old age her son has authority over her."

(Jackson, 1963, p. 473)

Marriage is an indispensable event of Hindu life and the person who is unmarried is considered unholy. Considering all the respondents taken were married women, I will now discuss the history of their marriages. Table 4.4 shows the ages of respondents and their husbands at the time of marriage.

Table 4.4: Age of Respondents and Husbands at Marriage

AGE	Wife		Husband	
	Number	%	Number	%
10 - 15	4	8	-	-
16 - 20	24	48	6	12
21 - 25	19	38	25	50
26 - 30	2	4	16	32
31 - 35	1	2	3	6
Total	50	100	50	100

As shown in the table above the highest percentage (48%) of the respondents under survey got married in their late teens (16 - 20 years old). As for the men the highest percentage got married between the ages of 21 and 25. There were four interesting cases in which, two women got married when they were only 14 years old and 2 other women got married at the age of 15. Anyhow as the table

indicates a majority of the men and women got married at a very young age. But compared to men a very high number of women got married at a very young age. Why do women in the estates get married at a very young age? Firstly, since they do not possess a very high level of education, most of them stay at home. A family considers a girl of a marriageable age staying at home, a burden to the family. That is why to lessen their burden, parents get their daughters married off as soon as possible. Secondly, there is the fear that once a woman gets old (here above 25 years of age), it will be difficult to get a partner or husband. Third, a woman is considered productive biologically when she is very young. Finally, pressures from family members, relatives and society to marry off a girl who has attained puberty as soon as possible.

In accordance to the age of marriage, I find it essential to find out the age difference that is the years apart from a husband and a wife at the time of marriage. Table 4.5 shows the age difference between the respondents and their husbands.

Table 4.5: Age Difference Between Husband and wife.

Age Difference in Years	Number	%
No Difference	6	12
Husband older than wife by 1 - 3	19	38
4 - 6	12	24
7 - 9	7	14
10 - 12	2	4
13 - 15	2	4
16 - 18	1	2
19 - 21	-	-
Wife older than husband by 1 - 3	1	2
TOTAL	50	100

From the table above I discovered that that the highest that is 38% was of husbands and wives who had an age difference of one to three years. Usually an Indian woman gets married to a man who is older to her. Incidentally there was an interesting case where a respondent got married to a man who was two years younger than her. In conclusion I find that an absolute number (in this case 86%) still get married to men who are senior to them in age. This has some connection with the traditional Hindu values and norms.

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7 - 9	7	14
10 - 12	2	4
13 - 15	2	4
16 - 18	1	2
19 - 21	-	-
Wife older than husband by 1 - 3	1	2
TOTAL	50	100

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94% of the respondents got married in Malaysia to a man from the same estate or other estates in Malaysia. 6% of the women who are of Indian Nationality got married in India and followed their husbands to Malaysia, that is the men went to India to marry them. An important thing here is, an Indian woman follows her husband to his home after marriage because of the traditional patriachal system followed by the Indians. This system is still being followed today. As for the husbands only 6% are of Indian Nationality while the rest are Malaysian citizens.

Choices of marriage partners were done or chosen by their parents, but there were also a few cases of love marriages. Indians in estate still do arrange marriages for their children in order to preserve caste requirements, economic status and also to preserve their identity in estate. Furthermore Indian men and women do not mix freely among themselves in the estate. From my survey, 88% of the respondents went through arranged marriages wherelse only 12% had love marriages. From these 12% , only one woman had no objection from her parents while the rest (10%) faced objections at the beginning but a few years after they were married, their parents came to accept their daughter's choice. About 32% of the respondents felt that choosing their own marriage partner is better because this can make the lives of both the husband and wife happier and they can also understand each

other better. Although this is true, some 68% of the women did not agree to this. They prefer arranged marriages. Several reasons were given to support this view and among them were,

- i) if there was a financial or marital problem in a family, they can always turn to their parents for help or seek advice, but if its a love marriage especially the ones objected by their parents, possibilities are the parents would not help them at all.
- ii) they do not want to hurt their parents feelings.
- iii) they know that their parents are doing it for their own good.

In conclusion, the attitude towards arranged marriage is still very much liked and it is also practised widely. This is not to say that there are not any love marriages. Although the number of love marriages are few, they are slowly increasing in the estates. According to 90% of the respondents, they would prefer to choose suitable marriage partners for their children.

Among many groups in South India, marriage is preferred between certain relatives. This is also followed here in the estates among the Indians. Among most South Indian caste, the marriage of a boy with his mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter is allowed. However marriage with any other type of relative is not allowed.

Suprisingly in Seremban Estate only 32% of the respondents'husbands were related to them (either close relative or distant relative) while 68% Of the respondents are not related to them at all. Among those whose marriages were arranged by the parents especially between friend's son, claimed that the first time they ever met and spoke to theirhusbands were on the day of their wedding. But there were some women who have met and sometimes spoken to their future husbands when they came over to their houses as visitors. Respondents who chose their own marriage partners met them at the same working place as theirs like for example in the factories.

The high percentage (68%) among respondents shows that the traditional trend of choosing a marriage partner among close or distant relatives has become less among estate people.

4.4 RELATIONSHIP IN FAMILIES

In the traditional Indian family, children were considered an asset because the more children a family has, the more helping hands the family will have in the fields. Birth of a male child was rejoiced as he is heir the to the family's wealth. Today since a majority of the estate people are poor, they do not have any big properties or wealth to give their children especially male. That is why

many of them do not wish particularly for a son. Females are also entitled to inherit wealth or properties among Indians today.

Following this, a number of questions were put forward regarding the number of children and whether the respondents and their husbands would prefer a boy or a girl as their child. Table 4.6 (next page) shows the number of children belonging to each respondents. From the table it is obvious that the highest number of respondents (58%) had between 3 to 5 children. Indians in estate are generally known to have many children. In my study I found out that only 10 women have between 6 to 11 children. The high number of children for these women were due to the fact that,

- i) Lack of education or knowledge of family planning.
- ii) Never planned how many children they would like to have when they newly married.
- iii) Some women were quoted as saying that 'they will give birth to as many children as God gives them.'

Among the 50 respondents, 76% decided together with their husbands on how many children they would like to have for a family. 12% husbands decided on this and 12% wives decided. There were quite a number of cases among women who very much earlier decided to have an ideal family comprising of 2 to 4 children (for example a boy and a girl or two boys and two girls and so forth), but ended up

having all 2 girls or all 4 boys or likewise. While a number of them gave up, some women decided to have another child hoping that this time they might give birth to a child of their preference. So because of this, many women have children more than what they have planned earlier.

Table 4.6: Number of Children of the Respondent

Number of Children	Number	Percentage
0 - 2	11	22
3 - 5	29	58
6 - 8	8	16
9 - 11	2	4
Total	50	100

After finding out the number of children, I asked the respondents if they would consider having any more children. To this, only 18% said they might consider and would like to have more children. These women are married and do not have a child yet or mothers who have only one or two kids. 88% did not want to have any more children and their reasons were,

- i) Cannot afford to feed and clothe another child in the family.
- ii) Some were too old to have any more children. Besides

that they themselves (who are in their mid 40's) have children who were married with kids.

iii) 4% of the respondents are widows.

iv) Many of them have more than enough number of children.

As said earlier traditionally in Indian families boys were preferred to girls. Boys were looked upon as the breadwinner of a family once they started working. They were socialized into this role since young. But, nowadays girls too start working once they leave school. Following this, I asked the respondents whether they prefer boys to girls or both. 50% of them claimed that it did not matter much whether the children were boys or girls. However 11% preferred girls to boys because girls tend to love, take care and support their parents more than boys who were considered 'naughty'. The remaining 39% prefer boys to girls because firstly, boys can support their parents when they are old. Secondly, some respondents like to have daughter-in-laws. Thirdly, boys can look after themselves. Finally, girls once married will leave their parents home to stay with their husbands family.

As for the husbands, 58% prefer both boys and girls, 10% prefer girls to boys and 32% prefer boys to girls. Their reasons were almost similar to their wives. Here the highest percentage (50 among the respondents and 58 among the husbands) shows that both boys and girls were

preferred among estate people. Today, girls like boys too go out to work and can support their parents as well as inherit any properties from their family.

4.5 FAMILY PLANNING

"The main aim of family planning is to reduce fertility in families so as to reduce the income disparities, improve conditions of living, improvement of human settlement and proper management of the environment, to improve the health and welfare of the family and finally to break poverty cycle."

(Nor Laily Aziz, Datin, 1979, p. 15)

In accordance to the statement above, I asked the respondents their opinion regarding family planning. Although all of them agreed that family planning was very good considering our country's present economic situation, but only 14% claimed that they practised family planning while a total of 86% did not. This women have little knowledge on family planning. Besides this, among some of the women who knew what family planning is all about, never gave it a thought on practising it because as said earlier they have an attitude of 'receiving children as God gives them.'

All the same there were quite a number of women in this estate who went through an operation to stop either pregnancy or live birth. This is known as 'tubal ligation'

and the usual method is the tying of the 'fallopian tubes'. This is done to prevent further pregnancies. But many of them feared that after this operation they would become too weak to go out to work. That is why these women tend to put off the idea of going through with the operation. Besides this some women were also advised by their doctors not to go through with this operation as they were too weak.

In conclusion, the very low percentage of women practising family planning were those women who were from the younger generation whereas the older generation never practised it and furthermore never gave it much thought.

4.6 DECISION MAKING

Decision making in a family can be divided into three areas:- (i) purchases, which include marketing items, groceries, luxury items and others. , (ii) socialization, concerning schooling and discipline. and (iii) wages which include money matters. According to Kapur,

"In the social structure of the traditionally oriented family, the typical pattern of husband-wife relationships is male dominance and female dependence. According to the traditional norms, the husband is an authoritarian figure whose will should always dominate the scene."

(Kapur, 1978, p. 127 & 128)

i) Decisions Concerning Purchases

In this estate almost all the womenfolk decide on purchasing marketing goods. Since women are the ones who decide on what to cook for the family, they write down the list of marketing items they need to buy. Purchasing of grocery items (items which consists durable and storable food purchased on monthly basis) are sometimes done by the husbands in some families or wives or even in-laws. In this estate, purchasing of grocery items were done mostly by the wives (36%) followed by husbands (32%). In-laws (20%) also made decisions concerning this. Only 12% decided on a joint basis (by husband and wife). Purchasing of luxurious items like house, land, furniture and others were done by the husbands in most of the household who show more authority in this area. But there were also couples who decided on a joint basis. Women are still the majority decision makers concerning the purchase of jewellery.

ii) Socialization of Children

Disciplining of children in an Indian household are mostly in the hands of the eldest. For example, in a joint family usually the grandmother or grandfather will handle the socialization of children. On the other hand in nuclear families usually the husbands will take the role of disciplining the children although women do take part as

well. Today since many estate folk (men and women) go out to work, the socialization process is taken over by institutions like the creche and kindergartens in the estate itself.

Besides disciplining their children (respondents), I asked them further as to who makes the decision concerning children's education (schooling). 64% decided on a joint basis, 22% husbands made the decision, 6% wives made the decision and one case of an in-law who made the decision. In conclusion, contrary to expectations women did have a say in the decision making process unlike the traditional view where only men made the decisions. In fact from this study, I found that purchasing of grocery items, marketing goods (day to day expenditures) were done mostly by the women but decisions concerning socialization of children on the whole decided on a joint basis by husbands and wives. Besides this, husbands still make decisions concerning purchasing of luxurious items in a household although there are a few women who make decisions in this area. Women in most cases consult their husbands where items of high cost are involved. Domestic income overall were handled by the respondents.

4.7 RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS FAMILY AND IN-LAWS

The traditional Hindu family is a joint family where 2 or 3 or more generations on the husbands side live together in a house. The joint family usually comprises of a husband, wife, children, his parents, brothers and sisters together with their families, living and cooking together. Pannikkar in relevance to this said that,

"the joint family is the bed-rock on which Hindu social organisation is built. It provided an organised life, by establishing a principle of social obedience."

(Pannikkar, 1955: 19)

No doubt this is true, nuclear families (a husband, wife and children) are also apparent in Hindu societies today. According to my survey, there were 25 nuclear families and 25 joint families among the respondents in the estate. This is shown in Table 4.7 in the following page.

Table 4.7: Total Number of Family Members in a Family.

Number of Members		Number	Percentage
Nuclear Family:	1 - 5	9	18
	6 - 10	16	32
	11 - 15	-	-
Joint Family	1 - 5	1	2
	6 - 10	15	30
	11 - 15	9	18
Total		50	100

The highest number of members in a nuclear family as well as in a joint family was between 6 to 10. The table above shows that there are equal number of joint and nuclear families. This shows that the traditional joint family system is not practised widely and is slowly being taken over by nuclear family system in the estate.

The traditional joint family system was maintained to secure the family's property like for example land. But in estates a majority of the people are poor and do not own land or other properties. So nuclear family was formed in the same estate to lessen financial problem. Apart from this, the labour lines are too small in size and this further discouraged big family.

Patrilocal residence still exists to this day. Among the Indians traditionally, a woman once married moves into her husbands household to start a family. A majority of the joint families mentioned above practice a patrilocal residence. There were four deviant cases where the husbands stay in the wifes parental home after marriage. This happened when the husband did not have a family or relatives or the husband sometimes allows his wife to bring in some of her family members into the nuclear home to be supported by them.

The relationship between a wife and her in-laws depends mostly on how attached she is with the in-laws especially her mother-in-law. Table 4.8 and 4.9 shows the attitude of respondents towards their in-laws and their own families.

Table 4.8: Attitude Towards In-Laws.

Relationship	Number	Percentage
Very Good	18	37.50
Good	19	39.58
Not Very Good	11	22.92
Total	48	100

Note: 2 respondents do not have in-laws.

Table 4.9: Attitude Towards Own Family.

Relationship	Number	Percentage
Very Good	20	40
Good	24	48
Not Very Good	6	12
Total	50	100

Both tables show that the highest percentage (39.58% in Table 4.8 and 48% in Table 4.9) of respondents had good relationship with their in-laws and own family. Distance between the respondents home and her family or in-laws place of residence plays an important role in judging a relationship. If the husband's parents or her parents home is situated in the same estate, then they have contacts with each other. But if it is situated elsewhere like in a different estate or state then relationship will only be established when they visit each other or when they correspond with each other.

The respondents were also queried on financial aid for their in-laws as well as their own families. only 30% of the respondents gave financial aid to their in-laws and 16% to their own families. This very low percentage suggests that many estate people face financial problem in

their own family so they cannot afford to help their parents or in-laws.

In most families a wife does not like to stay in her husband's parental home, fearing that a quarrel or misunderstanding may arise between them especially with her mother-in-law. This is quite common but does not necessarily happen in all the families. To a question posed what were their attitudes towards their in-laws with whom they were staying with or if the in-laws come to stay with them, 38% did not like it at all because they were/will not be happy living with them. Economic condition at home further discourage this because they could not afford to support them. 62% of the respondents liked to have their in-laws staying with them because they believed that this would bring a good name to their own parents as well as their in-laws. Some desired to have in-laws look after their children while they go off to work. Besides the respondents, the husbands were also asked about their opinion if the wives parents were to stay with them. 32% of them did not like the idea at all where else 68% liked the idea.

4.8 INTERCASTE AND INTER-RACE MARRIAGE

In Hindu families marriages have to be arranged in order to preserve caste requirements. Marriage has not only to be within the same caste, but very often preferably within

certain sub-castes. If young men and women were allowed a free choice in marriage it would be impossible to maintain caste endogamy. Although now intercaste marriages are recognised, but still Indian marriages has not shown any radical changes. traditionally a woman from a higher caste is forbidden to marry a man from a lower caste because a child born into this marriage would be of low caste (this is due to the patrilineal system). But a man from a higher caste is allowed to marry a woman from a lower caste because the child born into it will still be of higher caste. According to M.S. Gore ;

"only marriages within the 'jati' (sub-castes) is sanctioned by religion. Intermarriages between castes are strongly condemned, though hypergamous marriages, have been practised by many groups. Marriage outside one's religion, of course inadmissible."

(M.S. Gore, , p. 225)

Set against this, I inquired about the respondents' opinion on intercaste marriages. As expected 70% of them were against it. According to them, they would prefer to marry someone of the same caste as theirs or from higher castes. They also expressed their intention to give their children in marriage to someone of the same caste as theirs. As for the irhusbands' opinion, 68% were against intercaste marriages. This shows that Indians are still particular

about castes when it comes to marriages. According to a clerk in this estate, the Indians in this estate hold strongly to caste when it comes to marriage. But in other aspects, they do not usually consider caste as a factor.

Only a small percentage did not object to intercaste marriages. This was because they had the idea that choosing a marriage partner depended on a person's preferences and not caste. This usually happens in love marriages where caste is not considered as a factor for marriage although there will be objections from the family or the surrounding people. Even so nowadays in estates a girl or a boy who faces objections from parents to marry someone of their own choice threatens to commit suicide or elope. There was a case of a young man who committed suicide a few years ago in this estate. So parents who feared that their children might also do this, left it to their children to marry someone of their own choice.

All this indicates the significance of caste in Indian society is still very strong. Although marriages occasionally do take place between a man and a woman of different castes, the majority of marriages preferred are the ones which take place within the prescribed caste. Families rarely arrange an intercaste marriage. In connection to this, Fick was quoted as saying that,

"Marriage within one's 'jati' (caste) was the rule. Everywhere in the 'jatakas' we meet with the effort to

keep the family pure through marriage confined to people of one's own standing and profession and not to allow it to degenerate through mixture with lower elements. When the parents desire to marry their son they seek a maiden of the same caste for him."

(Fick, p. 51 - 53)

Marriages between certain racial groups for example, Malays, Chinese and other races rarely or never take place among Indians in the estate. There was one interesting case where an Indian man was engaged to be married to a Chinese girl despite objections from his parents. To see if Indians agreed to inter-racial marriage, I put forward a question regarding this. 64% were against inter-racial marriages and only 36% agreed or supported this. The highest percentage showed the negative attitude of the Indian people towards inter-racial marriages. They would prefer as far as possible to get their children married off to someone of their own race and caste.

4.9 DOWRY PRACTISES IN THE ESTATE

In India the most important feature in wedding is the giving of dowry by the bride's side to the bridegroom's side. A dowry is as said earlier any property or valuable security given either directly or indirectly by a party to a marriage to the other party to the marriage. Indians in

South India (where a majority of the estate Indians came from) still do practise the dowry system widely. Although Indians in this estate do practise the dowry system but not as elaborately as the South Indians or the Ceylonese. Dowry in the estates are not connected with land or house and the transaction of prestations does not occur only from the girl's side to the boy's side. Dowry herewas practised as a form of security to both the newly married couple. For example most of the jewellery given to a bride on her wedding was pawned for cash money when her family was facing financial problems.

Both parties come to an agreement first on what prestations they are going to give each other during proposal of marriage. Usually the bride's party will put all the necessary jewellery for the girl. In addition to this the groom's side also puts some jewellery (worth \$500 to \$5000) on the girl as a form of gift. One very interesting feature of dowry in this estate, the giving of jewellery by the groom is not compulsory nor is the bride's party. Sometimes the groom might only bring a 'thali' for the bride because he cannot afford to give jewellery.

In Seremban Estate a survey of all the respondents showed that, all of them do practise the dowry system but not as strictly or widely as the Ceylonese community in Malaysia. Indians involved in marriage in estate come to an

agreement on what to give for the bride and groom as well as the marriage expenses. The essential items usually agreed to be bought by the bridegroom for the bride are jewellery and sarees (two sarees, one for the engagement ceremony and the other for the wedding). These sarees cost approximately \$100 to \$600 each. According to my survey, all 50 respondents recieved gifts of some sort (for example jewellery like gold chains, bangles or bracelets, earrings, rings, necklace and others just to name a few). The value of this prestations varies every year. For example the price of gold was cheaper say 10 years ago than today. Asked about the value of jewellery and sarees recieved, a majority of the respondents (more than 70%) were unable to give because they could not remember the exact value. Besides this some of them refused to give the value of the prestations recieved as they were embarassed or shy to tell the value. Usually the amount and value of prestations given by both parties reflect their status.

An average value of the jewellery and sarees recieved by some of the respondents are as shown below:-

5 'paun' chain	- \$600/-
Chain, bangles, ring and saree	- \$2100/-
Saree	- \$1300/-
Jewellery and saree	- \$5500/-

As for the grooms, they too were given prestations of valuable items like rings or chain, watches and others

(depended on how much the bride's party can afford to give). Usually the amount and value of jewellery brought by the bridegroom is not laid down strictly by the bride's party. Traditionally a few days after the wedding, when the bride leaves her parents house to her husband's home, the bride's mother will give her items like new clothes, cooking utensils, a furniture set and other household items. In Seremban Estate a majority of them still practise this. It is essential among the Indians to give away some household items (may it be big or small) to their married daughters upon their departure to their husband's house.

In conclusion, Indians in this estate do practise the dowry system but theirs was more of exchange of gifts as well as an act of security. Girls were not forced to give a certain amount of jewellery or properties to the bride like the actual dowry system. Here prestations were exchanged in accordance to what they can afford to give.

4.10 MARRIAGE EXPENSES

Marriage expenses were mostly met by both parties among the respondents. The expenses were usually discussed at the engagement ceremony. There were a few cases where only the bridegroom's party or the bride's party managed the wedding expenses. This was because one of the parties

could not afford to pay for the wedding. There was an interesting case where a couple met their own marriage expenses because both their parents were too poor. About 38% of the respondents' marriage expenses were met by both parties, 14% by the husband's party only, 6% by the wife's party only and 4% by others (for example uncles). The sum involved varied according to years that is if the marriage took place twenty years ago, then the expenses came to approximately \$700/- to \$1000/- . But if it took place a few years ago (for example 5 years ago) then it came up to \$2000/- to \$7000/- . Today marriages are held in a grand scale even among the estate people. So marriage expenses usually exceed \$10,000/- . The amount involved in a marriage usually varied from one family to the other depending on how much they can afford to spend.

4.11 MARRIAGE RITUALS

According to Rajoo,

"the ideals of Hindu marriage have come down from vedic times and are preserved in the various rituals which are in force even today."

(Rajoo, 1975)

Rituals concerning marriage are very much followed traditionally except for a few changes in some of the

procedures. In accordance to this I will give an account of a traditional estate wedding.

As soon as a suitable estate girl or boy is found (suitable in the sense that the person is from a suitable caste, status, good family background and so forth), the horoscope of the girl and boy is obtained to see if this couple will be suited for each other. An astrologer will be consulted to see if the girl's and boy's horoscope matches. An astrologer plays an important role in Hindu weddings because he fixes the day as well as the time of marriage. All bad signs are carefully observed by him since any negligence might later cause unhappiness for the couple. It is believed that the success of a marriage is highly dependent on horoscopes of the couple. Even in a love marriage horoscope is considered.

If the horoscope of the boy and the girl concerned matches, necessary arrangements are made for the proposal ceremony ('niccayam') to finalise that the boy is for the girl and likewise. This is held at the bride's house where only the elders (parents and close relatives of both parties) are present. Betel leaves are exchanged and a day for the engagement ceremony ('paricam') is fixed. Besides this, the amount of jewellery to be given and other necessary expenditure are discussed together.

The engagement ceremony (performed in a traditional way) which will be held before the wedding ceremony is carried

out to fix the date of wedding and to give prestations to the bride. The engagement ceremony can also be carried out on the day of the wedding before the wedding ceremony. This is to save time and expenses of travelling. According to survey, 90% of the respondents went through a traditional engagement ceremony while 10% did not have an engagement ceremony at all because theirs were love marriages and therefore faced objections from both parties. They only exchanged rings after registration and got married in a temple. For those who had a traditional ceremony this were the rituals followed.

The boy's party usually arrives at the girl's house with 5 married women carrying presentations on trays like saree, blouse, and jewellery, garland, flowers, coconut, fruits, sweets and cosmetics. The engagement ceremony is carried out by the male members of both parties. The bridegroom does not follow his party to the girl's house. Women just sit around and watch the ceremony taking place. Ritual exchange of betel leaves takes place first and the giving of prestations follows respectively. (see Appendix B). After this , the bride gets her parents-in-law's blessing and then goes off to put on the saree and jewellery given by the groom's party. She then comes out again to get blessings from her in-laws.

Ideally the girl's uncle also (mother's brother) plays an important role in exchanging prestations. traditionally

there were not any exchange of rings between the bride and bridegroom but today among the Hindu's the practise of exchanging rings has become part of the engagement ceremony. Usually at the end of the engagement ceremony the participants are given a feast by the bride's party. Invitation cards for the marriage containing all the necessary information are printed in Tamil as well as in English and sent to the relatives and friends at both parties. This is usually charged to the groom's account. In this estate, though a majority of the respondents held their marriages in the groom's house but there were a few of them who had theirs in a temple. A marriage ceremony held in a temple is less expensive. Furthermore this is suitable for men whose parents are dead or who lives far away from the bride's place of residence. Traditionally a marriage should be held in the bridegroom's house but at present many of them prefer to hold a marriage in a temple or public halls for the above reasons. Friday is generally considered as not a good day for performing any auspicious ceremony among the estate Indians. That is why marriages are usually avoided on this day. The month of 'Ati' (July to August) is also believed to be a very inauspicious month to hold a wedding.

On the day of the wedding, the first rituals for the bride and bridegroom are held separately although within the same marriage place. During this rituals neither the bride

nor the groom put on their wedding ceremonial costumes which are brought to the ceremonial place in two separate trays. The new clothes and garland for the bridegroom are given by the bride's father, while the costume that is the saree and the jewellery for the bride are the ones given by the groom's party during the engagement ceremony. As soon as the separate ritual is over, the bride's brother leads the bridegroom to change into the ceremonial costumes while the bridegroom's sister leads the bride off to change. After that the bride and bridegroom are led into the marriage place and the remaining rituals are carried out.

A priest ('pucari') conducts the wedding and chants certain mantras. The final ceremony is the tying of the gold marriage badge known as 'thali' around the bride's neck by putting three knots by the bridegroom.

The first knot is put by bridegroom while the second and third knot are put by the bridegroom's eldest sister who must be married. This the most important and the most sacred of the marriage rites. The tying of 'thali' is done with the accompaniment of traditional music while guests throw rice at the couple which symbolises fertility. After this the couple exchange garlands and walk seven times around the fire pit holding hands. (see Appendix B). This is a symbolical expression of union that is friendship. The seven rounds each

represent a particular blessing namely food, strength, wealth, happiness, progeny, cattle and devotion.² As soon as this ritual is over the bridegroom puts the right leg of the bride on to a grinding stone. and puts a ring into the second left toe of the bride signifying that she should have a firm heart and be truthful to her husband.(see Appendix B). Finally a ritual called 'Aruntati parttal' (seeing the pole star) is observed. This is done following a belief :- Aruntati was said to be a chaste who became worthy of worship. She was a paragon of conjugal excellence, a model housewife, a perfect cook, etc. Following this, the bride is expected to be a good housewife like Aruntati.

After the wedding ceremony is over, usually the bridegroom's family will treat all those who were present to a feast. The following day, the newly wed couple goes over to the bride's home and stays there for three days. After the third day, the husband's party will once again come over to the bride's house to fetch the couple to their home. Upon her departure the bride's mother will give her clothes, cooking utensils, furniture set, mat and others according to how much the mother can afford to give her daughter.

Overall, this traditional type of wedding is still being followed by the estate Indians except for a few small changes in the engagement ceremony. Indian Muslims in this

estate go through a traditional Malay ceremony.

4.12 REGISTERING A MARRIAGE

Every marriage in Malaysia must be registered in accordance with the Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act 1976.⁴

The law applying to the non-muslims on marriage and divorce stated that by Section 9 a marriage may be solemnised only by a Registrar.⁵ However Section 24 provides for the appointment of clergymen, ministers or priests of churches or temples to act as Assistant Registrar of Marriages who may solemnise any marriages if the parties to the marriage or either of them profess the religion to which the church or temple belong in accordance with the rites and ceremonies of that religion.⁶

Following the above, I asked the respondents if they registered their marriages. To this most of them claimed that they have not or did not register either before or after marriage. 28% of them have not registered at all while 32% of them registered either recently (after being married for many years) or before the marriages. Today however, many new couples get registered first before having a traditional wedding.

Finally once the marriage is registered in compliance with the Act, it will be a legal and binding monogamous

marriage which will continue until either one of them dies or a divorce or nullity decree is granted by the court.⁷

4.13 'THALI' (MARRIAGE BADGE)

Tying of a 'thali' (the heart shaped marriage badge of the Dravidians) on the neck of the girl is essential in a marriage performed by most of the castes of South India. This is still followed and performed here in Malaysia by the Indians. 'Thali' is a symbol to show that a woman is married. Besides 'thali' another symbol to show that a woman is married is the red dot (in Tamil 'pottu') which is put on the forehead. This is also still practised today. All married women in this estate do wear 'thali' except for widows. It was said that a woman should not take out her 'thali' as long as her husband is still alive. There are a few Indian Muslim married women who wear 'thali' but do not put 'pottu' on their forehead.

'Thali' is actually a small gold locket which is tied to 9 or 11 thin yellow strings (usually odd numbers of strings are used) during the marriage ceremony. Three knots in a 'thali' symbolises that a wife throughout her lifetime should be obedient to her family, then to her husband and finally to her sons.

Hindus believe that one must not conceive a child during

the month of 'Ati' . that is why traditionally among the Tamils the newly married wife go to their parents house during this month. In connection to this a ceremony known as 'thali pirrittupottal' (separation of 'thali' ceremony) is conducted. In this ceremony the 'thali' is separated from the strings and tied to a new thick yellow string or for those who could afford it, the 'thali' is tied to a gold chain.

Today this ceremony can be held in the girl's in-law's home depending on the distance between the girl's new home and her parental home.

According to a few respondents in the estate, on the death of a woman's husband, the 'thali' is separated from her. The 'thali'loket is kept after the burial or cremation of her husband but the yellow 'thali' string is thrown into her dead husband's coffin. The 'thali' then is sometimes kept and prayed or can be melted and made into some other type of jewellery like for example a ring. The widow's 'thali' should not be given to her daughter but if it's made into a ring then it can be given to her sons.

In conclusion, the tying of 'thali' on a married woman is very much followed by all the Indians. It symbolises as I have said earlier that a woman is married.

4.14 OTHER RITUALS PERFORMED IN THE ESTATE

4.14.1 CHILDBIRTH RITUAL

This ritual done by most of the estate people is known as 'valayam kappu' (gold bracelet) and it is associated with marriage and the birth of the first child. This ritual is held to protect the child in a mother's womb from noxious spirits. According to the respondents this ritual is done during a woman's seventh month of pregnancy. Gold bracelets and glass bangles are given to a mother-to-be by her mother. This ceremony for the first child, traditionally should take place at the bride's parental home. The girl's mother will take care of all expenses. The mother-to-be will be dressed as a bride and all the relatives are invited. The invited relatives will put on the bangles on the hands of the seated girl. This ceremony is usually followed by a feast given by the girl's parents.

Today this ritual in estates are slowly dying down because many estate women are involved in work and they don't have the time to go through this traditional ceremony. Besides this some of their parent's home is situated very far from theirs and this further discourages these women to take leave from their work and go to their parent's home for this ritual.

A first child for a woman traditionally should be given

birth in her parental home. This is not followed today since most women go to hospitals to have their babies delivered. On the ninth day after a child is born, a ceremony is held to remove bad luck. On this day the mother and her child are bathed with 'campirani' smoke (styrax benzoin). Friends and relatives who come to visit the mother and her child give presents like clothes and other useful items for the baby. Close relatives like the child's uncle or grandparents give gifts like jewellery for example ring or chain, clothes and cradle just to name a few.

In Seremban Estate according to my survey, 70.83% of the respondents held a small ceremony on the birth of their first child, while 29.17% did not perform any ceremony at all because they could not afford it (4% out of 29.17% don't have a child yet). For women who held a ceremony claimed that some of their family members as well as their in-laws gave gifts for their child. Some of the gifts given were new clothes, cradle and jewellery (which may include ring or chain). Very often this enhances economic contributions by relatives and friends by way of returnable gifts which is usually cash money.

A mother who has given birth should stay in her mother's house for at least 3 months. Today since a majority of them go out to work in the estate, they can only stay away from work for a month. Even the name giving ceremony which

was traditionally held on the 30th day after a child is born has ceased. This is because since women in estate give birth to their children in hospital, they have to submit their children's name for the birth certificates. Prior to this, women just take their children to the temple on the 30th day to have their children blessed.

4.14.2 GIRLS PUBERTY RITUAL IN ESTATE

Among the respondents who performed the puberty ritual for their daughters or who went through one themselves gave a brief account on what were the traditional rituals they followed. When a girl first starts her menstruation, she informs her mother who in turn gives word to her brother (the girl's uncle) to come over (this is seldom done today). As a tradition the girl's uncle ('tay-maman') will build a small hut made of palm leaf for the girl to stay in until her period is over. This hut may be built inside the house (living room) or outside the house. Nowadays the erection of small hut is no longer observed. Instead the girl is separated for about three to seven days but otherwise most of the rituals concerning pollution (menstruation is considered pollution) and purification are followed except that many of them prefer to hold the ritual within their family members.

Everyday during this period the girl is given raw eggs and

gingerly oil to drink. The girl's parents consult an astrologer to fix a date for the 'tiratti' and to read her fortune. The attainment of puberty brings changes in the personal life of the girl concerned. Indians consider that the time and day a girl first attains menstruation has great influence on her future life. For example, the time of her first puberty is considered for matrimonial compatibility when it's time for her to get married.

During this period the girl is not allowed to come out of her hut except for toilet purposes (to ward off evil spirits) and also not allowed to touch anything in the house (this is to prevent pollution). Also the girl concerned is not allowed to look at any boys. Only vegetarian food is cooked by the relatives and given to the girl and her family. The girl is to have her meals in the separated room. She is however dressed in new clothes and jewellery. After the 17th day the hut together with the mat, pillow, cup and plate are burnt to remove pollution. Today many of them don't do this. The 'tiratti' ceremony is then held where usually the girl's uncle would bring saree, comb, mirror, garland, 'kunkumam' and cosmetics for her. Her relatives too bring gifts of similar items. After giving of gifts are over, 'nalanku' ceremony is held where the girl is bathed and dressed like a bride. Friends and relatives invited give her a small sum of money or gifts.

The girl's puberty ritual should be done by all Indians before a girl gets married. Today most of the rites are not performed because lack of time and money. According to my survey only 20% performed or went through this ritual. 12% did it the traditional way while 8% did it on a small scale). The rest 78% did not perform this at all. This is because most of the girls are schooling and so it is inconvenient to have this ritual. Instead nowadays many of them have this ritual before a girl's marriage to save time and expenses. Some respondents keep their daughters away from school for at least three days to observe pollution. For most women in this estate it will be convenient for a girl to get her first menstruation during the school holidays where at least some rituals can be carried out. Among a girl's uncle or other relatives who can afford, gives the girl jewellery (like chain, ring or bangles) and new clothes. Some of the parents too give jewellery and new clothes.

Among the Indians in estate, the attainment of puberty for a girl is important to show that they have a daughter who is ready for marriage. According to some respondents, a part of the marriage ceremony is over when you perform the puberty ritual for a girl. This is especially true since the majority of the women who don't perform this ritual when a girl first gets her menstruation, do the 'nalanku' ceremony a few days or a day before the girl's

marriage. Puberty ritual clearly symbolises a role or status changing for a girl. Today the traditional ritual of the ceremony is slowly fading but most rites pertaining to this ritual are still maintained.

4.15 SUITABLE AGES FOR MARRIAGE

Since in this estate a large number of women (respondents) got married at a young age, I asked them in turn of their opinion regarding suitable ages for a boy and a girl to get married today. Table 4.10 shows the suitable ages suggested by respondents for a boy and a girl to get married.

Table 4.10 Suitable Ages at Marriage

SUITABLE AGE	Boys		Girls	
	Number	%	Number	%
15 - 19	1	2	10	20
20 - 24	10	20	36	72
25 - 29	36	72	4	8
30 and above	3	6	-	-
Total	50	100	50	100

From the table above, a majority of the respondents said a suitable age for a boy to get married is between the ages

of 25 and 29 (72%) while for the girls between the ages of 20 and 24 years were thought to be suitable. Women in this estates gave several reasons on why they don't like a girl to get married above the age of 25 and among them are,

- i) if a girl marries at a young age, she will be more responsible towards her in-laws and her own family.
- ii) it will be difficult to get a suitable husband once age catches up with the girl.
- iii) girls especially eldest in the family should marry early to give way for her younger sisters and brothers to get married.

According to Hindus, the eldest daughter in a family should marry first before her younger sisters or brothers or even the eldest brother. So far in this estate there have been a few cases of younger sisters or brothers who got married first before their eldest sister. In this case society look down upon the eldest sister and spread bad rumours about the girl. Compared to the actual ages at marriage among respondents and the ideal ages suggested by the respondents, there is a great difference. Majority of the respondents got married between the ages of 16 and 21 but majority of these women felt that girls today should get married after completing their education that is between the ages of 20 and 24. As for men, the actual age they got married were between 21 and 25 but majority of the respondents find that a suitable age for a man of

today to get married is between 25 and 29. According to these women men should complete their education and get an established career before getting married. They further pointed out that a boy who gets married at a young age will not have a responsible attitude towards his wife and his family.

4.16 DIVORCE

In ancient India, the belief was such that once a man and a woman are united by God, they should not be separated. According to the Hindu religion, a husband should not take another wife as long as his first wife is still alive. Indian Muslims on the other hand are also strict about divorce. According to an Indian Muslim woman in this estate, a husband should not utter the words "I divorce thee" three times. If so, then the Indian Muslim couple is divorced.

In Seremban Estate, so far there have not been any cases of divorce, but there have been a number of cases concerning separation by a husband and a wife. Separations in a family occur when a wife can't get along or quarrel with her husband or otherwise. These women go to live with their parents together with their children for a period of time and then return to their husbands. A few deviant cases were found in this estate where husbands leave their

wives and children for another woman. Women who are separated from their husbands don't usually tell out. I found out that a particular woman in this estate is separated from her husband who has another woman as his wife. Estate Indians look down upon this couple.

Anyway all the respondents I talked to still do follow what the religion says about divorce. They never contemplate divorce. Asked about their opinions on divorce, 72% of them claimed that divorce is very bad for a family and they dislike it. Divorce is bad in a sense that it brings bad name to the husbands' and the wives' families. Apart from that the society will look down upon them. The word 'divorce' is like a taboo to the estate people.

38% of the respondents felt that if a couple always quarrelled or have problems and cannot solve any problems between them, then it would be better to divorce than to live in misery. During heated arguments or quarrels in families, 4% of respondents have threatened to divorce their husbands while 96% of them never thought or uttered these words. As for the husbands all of them according to their wives never threatened to divorce them.

Women in this estate pointed out that the best solution to avoid divorce or even separation is to try and solve any problems between a husband and a wife. Furthermore they should not make small matters into a big issue that could

lead to divorce or separation. Estate women are loyal to their husbands. There have been a number of cases on wife battery as well as child abuse but none of the respondents said anything about this. Their important principle is that a wife should be obedient to her husband, must not do anything which might displease him and remain faithful to his memory after his death. Indian women should not think of or marry another man after the husband dies. As the Hindu Law Manu once said,

"Let mutual fidelity continue till death, this may be considered as the summary of the highest dharma of husband and wife."

(Nilakshi Sengupta, 1965, p. 142)

CASE STUDIES: On Separation

Case 1:

'A' has been married for more than 19 years. She has 9 children (2 others died a few years ago). She is a rubber tapper in this estate and has been working in this estate for some time now. Her husband was also a rubber tapper in this same estate. Most of his wages were spent on

liquor and he doesn't bring home any money. So 'A' has to manage the household expenditure on her own income. She tolerated her husband for a long time until one day she decided to leave her husband and take her 9 children with her. She stayed in her mother's house which is situated in the same estate and she raised her children with the help of her mother. After 11 years of living separately from her husband, she took him in into her home just two months ago out of pity when he came to her. Her husband still drinks liquor but not as much as he used to before. 'A' gives him money to buy liquor once a week. Until today 'A' admits that she doesn't like her husband and doesn't care much with what he does with his life.

Case 2:

'B' was married to a Punjabi man. Her life was full of misery since the day she got married to him. Her husband was an alcoholic and used to come home drunk almost everyday and beat her up. She wanted to leave her husband and take her three children to her mother's house but her husband refused to let her go. Furthermore she

had to think of her children's welfare and her family's reputation. One day when she went to visit her brother with her children, her husband committed suicide by drinking paraquat. When 'B' returned home, she found her husband dead. Now 'B' lives with her three children and works as a rubber tapper in this estate to support her children. She admitted that although she is facing financial difficulties since her husband died, but she is very much happier now than when her husband was alive.

The cases above show that Indian women are still afraid to or do not contemplate divorce although some of their husbands are cruel to them. Indians fear that this would bring a bad name and reputation to their families as well as their in-laws. In addition to this most of them are dependent on their husbands. The furthest a woman would do is live separately from her husband for a certain period of time and then later reunite with her husband.

Footnotes

1. Devaki Jain - Indian Women Publications Div. Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India (19751), p. 85.
2. Rajoo, R. - Patterns of Hindu Religious Beliefs and Practices Among the People of Tamil Origin in West Malaysia. M.A. Thesis, U.M., Kuala Lumpur. (1975)
3. Ibid
4. Article Persatuan Wanita Universiti - Seminar Undang-Undang Keluarga. 15 & 16 August 1987, p. 2
5. Mr. S. S. Ludhor, Advocate and Solicitor - Article Seminar on Family Law. - Marriage and Divorce (The Law Applying to Non-Muslims) 15th August 1987, p. 3
6. Ibid p. 9
7. Article Persatuan Wanita Universiti - Seminar Undang-Undang Keluarga. 15 & 16 August 1987, p. 2

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This study was set to find out the attitude towards marriage among Indians in the plantation. After a few months of research which included interviews and library research, I have come to the following conclusions.

From my study I found out that 88% of the women respondents belong to the working class. Women in the estate get into employment because of economic insufficiency and also for various other motivations. Although a majority of the estate women go out to work they are still able to combine their role of awage-earner, wife and mother sucessfully. Women in this estate possess a low level of education. With this, they can only work within the estate or factories outside the estate.

Concerning marriage, most women got married in their late teens (16-20 years old) while a majority of the men got married between the ages of 21 to 25 . An absolute number of women get married to men who are senior to them in age. This is followed according to the traditional Hindu values and norms. Love marriages are slowly on the rise in the estate today. This is encouraged by some parents who have

a positive attitude towards love marriages and who have come to accept their children's choice of life partner. But still a large number of them have negative attitude towards love marriages. In contrast to love marriages, arranged marriage is still strong among the estate Indians today. Compared to the traditional type, there has been a lot of changes in the arranged marriage. It has become more informal where there is more interaction between the bride and the bridegroom-to-be. For example, this occurs when the bridegroom-to-be comes over to the bride's house as a visitor.

In the case of intercaste and inter-race marriage, Indians still have negative attitude towards them. Indians in estates are a closed community who hold strongly to their own castes and race. That is why caste and race plays an important role in deciding a marriage partner. As far as the people are concerned, these practices are strictly forbidden. They would want as far as possible to have an endogamous marriage which is along the same caste and race. Rituals concerning marriage are basically still maintained according to religious rites, except for a few changes in some of the procedures. For example, today most of the engagement ceremony is followed by the exchange of rings by both the bride and the bridegroom-to-be. Some couples do not even go through the engagement ceremony and instead, after registration, a small wedding ceremony is

held in the temple. Venue of marriages has also differed where traditionally a marriage would be held in bridegroom's home but today most of them hold weddings in public halls or temples to save time and expenses. Some of the reasons for these changes to take place are;

- i) The size of their labour lines in the estate are too small to hold a wedding.
- ii) Most Indians in estates are too poor and they can't afford to spend much for weddings.

The tying of thali is one of the aspects of marriage which has been observed for a long time. It is a symbol to show that a woman is married and performed by all Indians may they be from the estate or town even until today.

Other rituals like for example childbirth is slowly dying down. This is due to the fact that many women are involved in the labour market which do not allow them to allocate time for ceremonies of this nature. Furthermore, since all married women in the estate give birth in hospitals, the traditional childbirth ritual is not followed. The same can be said about girls' puberty ritual which has been performed elaborately in the estates by Indians before, is slowly becoming a practice of the past. This is because most estate girls are schooling and that is why it is inconvenient to perform this ritual. Besides this, to save time and money, this ritual is conducted before a girl's marriage. In spite of all this, most rites

pertaining to it are still maintained.

Another aspect related to marriage is dowry. In estates there is still the concept of dowry but there has been a lot of changes in it. Dowry is not practiced as widely as the Ceylonese community in Malaysia. Estate people are poor and they don't really own properties like houses or land. So, items which they can give are like jewellery, furniture set and cooking utensils. This kind of exchanges cannot really be seen as dowry but more as exchanges of gifts. Jewellery worth approximately \$500-\$5000 are the most common form of dowry given by both the brides' and the bridegrooms' party. One interesting aspect here is, it's not compulsory for both parties especially the bridegrooms' party to give jewellery or any other form of dowry.

Estate community have negative attitude towards divorce. As far as they are concerned, divorce is a very bad thing to do. Regarding divorce estate Indians follow the Hindu religion strictly whereby a man should not take a second wife as long as his first wife is alive. Although today there are one or two cases of separation between a husband and a wife, there have not been any cases of divorce even if the husbands mistreat their wives. Widow remarriage is unheard of in this estate but there have been a small number of cases where men got married to another woman upon the death of their first wife.

Patrilocal residence still dominates place of residence among married couples. But neolocal residence is slowly growing in number today in estate. This is apparent among nuclear families. Both nuclear families as well as joint families are present in this estate. Nuclear family is easier to manage considering the economic status of a family and the size of the estate houses provided by the employer which consists of two small rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom. Some who can afford it expand kitchen and rooms but without the managements' knowledge because they don't allow such things to take place.

In an estate Indian household, where men being the sole breadwinner, made all the decisions concerning purchasing, socialization and money matters. Today, women too make decisions either on their own or jointly with their husbands on certain household aspects. Women make decisions concerning purchasing items on a day to day basis while socialisation of children is done on a joint basis(husband and wife make the decision together). Purchasing of luxurious items are still made or dominated by the husbands. Only in certain households (a very low percentage) where in-laws make major decisions at home. This is because very few in-laws stay with their sons and daughters in-law today.

Respondents on the whole have good relationship with their in-laws as well as their own parents. Since nuclear family

is on the rise in estate, the relationship between in-laws/own parents is determined by the distance of their homes and their in-laws/parents residence. Besides this, relationships are further decided by how frequent they visit or correspond to each other.

Since the majority of the estate folk face financial problem in their households, they cannot afford to give financial help to their parents or their in-laws.

Finally, besides the aspects above in an Indian household, family planning is one area where only a few married women in this estate practice, while a large number of them never or do not practice it at all. This is due to lack of knowledge on family planning among these women. The concept of family planning is only present among some women of the younger generations.

Overall marriage among estate Indians have gone through some changes, for example aspects concerning marriage rituals, types of marriages (is it arranged marriages or love marriages), dowry and others. Even aspects concerning household and family have gone through some changes. In spite of these changes which has taken place, women in this estate still play an important role in maintaining the traditional aspects of marriage as well as other aspects concerning everyday life after marriage. She is the one who attends to births as well as marriages in a family.

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