
UNIT 1 MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: CHOOSING LIFE PARTNER

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the unit is to develop a deeper understanding of marriage and family. After studying the unit, you will be able to:

- Define marriage and family;
- Compare different types of relationship in family life;
- Explain the functions and purpose of marriage;
- Identify interest in acquiring more knowledge about marriage and family; and
- Apply this knowledge in your own life situations.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The family forms an essential part of human evolution, without which human existence would have been impossible. The human infant may be perhaps the most helpless creature at the time of birth. It needs a long period of protection by and association with parents. This itself points to the need and main purpose of a family.

The basic course has already explained the need and importance of Family Life Education. This unit explains the concept of marriage and the purpose and functions of marriage and family. A deeper

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understanding of the commitment involved in family life would help one to think more seriously about marriage and family.

This Unit has tried to highlight the points to be remembered in choosing a life partner. Who is to select the partner and how to select the partner are some usual questions that any young people may ask. The answers to these questions are discussed on the basis of social expectations and the social and psychological factors involved in the choice.

1.2 MEANING OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is a common term that we come across in our daily life. Have you ever thought of it seriously? What is the meaning of marriage? Is it a mere relationship between a man and woman to live together and have children? Is it a man-made institution? When did such an institution come into existence? It will be really interesting to ponder over the answers to the above questions – much more so about the meaning, scope, purpose and history of marriage.

The term ‘marriage’ has different meanings and connotations for different people. To some, marriage is a relationship between men and women for the propagation of the human species. Some people take it as a license for sex. Yet another group considers marriage as a means for companionship. Marriage comprises all these views and much more. It is a very complex institution which can not be defined in a sentence or two. Many sociologists and philosophers have given differing views about the meaning and scope of marriage.

Marriage is not an integral part of human nature, but it is a man-made custom or institution which was present even in prehistoric times. It is not a natural relationship but a conscious commitment between a man and a woman. With the advancement of civilization marriage became a social function with religious and legal sanction.

As stated earlier, marriage has different meanings and connotations. Let us look at some of them.

Marriage as a Relationship

Marriage is one of the deepest and most fulfilling of human relationships. It has existed in varying forms throughout the history of man, responding to the fundamental needs and social aspirations of each generation.

Marriage as an Institution

Marriage is a union of man and woman their bodies, minds and souls, emotions and desires. The essence of this union is love. Marriage is considered to be a primary relationship, because it is a personal relationship between the partners. Lin Yutan gives a beautiful explanation of marriage. He says “woman is water and man is clay and the clay holds the water and gives it substance in which water moves and lives and has its full being”.

The Biological Aspect of Marriage

The animal mates, but man marries. Looking from the biological point of view, we can say that mating is a biological matter, while marriage is a social affair. The sex instinct is one of the basic instincts for reproduction. In the case of man, however, from the beginning of society, this instinct has been subjected to distinct regulations and control. Marriage may be defined as the mechanism of regulation and control of biological reproduction.

In the animal kingdom there are no definite rules for mating because they have no society and social norms. But in human society there are various kinds of social controls, religious limitations and even laws of marriage. For human beings, the sex relations are allowed within certain permitted limits. Marriage is a holy sanctifying, life long, comprehensive, loving union of a man and a woman, leading to the procreation of children.

The Social Aspects of Marriage

We have seen that there are certain biological aspects of human marriage, while there are more social aspects in it. These social aspects are most important in human society. The basic factor in marriage is love. True love between the man and woman in marriage is a complete giving of one to another. There should be a union of the souls and minds. There should be a union of emotions and wills. All these imply complete, exclusive and lifelong giving of one's self to the other.

The Psychological Aspect of Marriage

Marriage is an integral part of human existence. In marriage man's basic longing for communication and completeness finds its natural culmination. Human beings find their fulfillment as men and women. Marriage is the means by which two persons seeking a more perfect life give themselves totally to each other.

The Legal Aspect of Marriage

The union between man and woman must be legitimate. So, marriage should get legal, social and civil acceptance. Legal sanction of marriage is based on prevailing social norms and customs. It varies from one society to another. The marriage can be legally contracted only by those who are able to perform the basic act of marriage. The legal minimum age for marriage in India is 18 years for girls and 21 years for boys.

Check Your Progress I

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is the meaning of marriage?

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1.3 THE FUNCTIONS AND PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE

Have you ever thought of the question why a person should get married? The first answer that comes to your mind may be for the propagation of the human species. Let us try to find the answer.

Marriage for Union and Procreation

What is the purpose of marriage? If it is only for procreation, marriage is not a must. Of course, one of the important purposes of marriage is union and procreation. The union in marriage is a medium of physical, psychological and spiritual communication of love and commitment of self.

Marriage for Sex

The natural end of sexual relationship is conception of children. Hence the procreation of children is an essential purpose of marriage. An equally important purpose is the union itself, the mutual love, pleasure and happiness of the husband and wife. Marriage, therefore, fosters mutual love and attachment. It provides for the legitimate expression of sexual satisfaction.

Marriage for Companionship and Friendship

The most important need of the human being is the intimacy in living with and making a commitment to another human being. What is friendship? According to Jenet Kid, "Friendship is having a privileged position in someone else's life and giving them a privileged position in our own. It is sharing ourselves with those we like".

Friendship is the cornerstone of marriage which lasts even when the sexual desire is over. It remains even after the children are grown up and settled. It only deepens with years. This is what is meant by companionship or friendship. It enriches man and woman by increasing unselfishness and by deepening his/her capacity for love, and sacrifice. Hence marriage is love, it is sex, it is family, but ultimately and essentially it is companionship or friendship.

Marriage for Socialization

Marriage is a means through which the socialization and growth of a person reach its fulfillment. It provides numerous opportunities to bring about security, co-operation and love. Another purpose of marriage is to create a family to provide the natural environment in which a person can realize himself/herself and reach out to others in an attitude of dedication and service. It gives society a firm base, and children a stable environment to grow.

Marriage for Matured Relationship

Still another purpose of marriage is attainment of maturity through the establishment of relationships in marriage. Rearing and educating the children also is a purpose of marriage. The parent-child relationship is an intimate relationship.

Some Practical Purposes or Utilitarian Aspects of Marriage

1. It ensures security to women who have to undergo long periods of pregnancy.
2. It provides security to the offspring.
3. It ensures the health life which gives stability to society.
4. It makes society more cohesive through relationships.
5. It simplifies blood relationships.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the main functions of marriage?

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1.4 THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MARRIAGE

It is interesting to study the historical development of marriage. When did it commence? How did it attain its present structure and status? It is not easy to get the facts about marriage in the prehistoric era. We have to depend upon the studies of anthropologists and other available details of folklore and traditions.

Even though the religious books mention marriage, we cannot conclude that marriage came into existence with the beginning of human life on earth. In the pre-historic ages people lived like animals and there were no social norms and rules to guide them. But gradually due to his superiority over the animals, man began to formulate some social patterns of behaviour.

In the early stages of human life, sexual life and procreation was a natural process. The earth was not owned by anybody. Nobody bothered to own the land. But gradually man began to cultivate the land and came to know about the productivity of the soil. This knowledge motivated him to own the land. This also led to many disputes and fights for the ownership of land. Finally, they reached an agreement with regard to some type of control or laws about the ownership of land. This is evident from social contract theory.

The desire of man to own the land, which is productive, led him to the idea of owning anything that is productive. Knowing that the woman can procreate children, men tried to own more women and thereby get more and more children. This also ended the conflicts and fights. Gradually restrictions and regulations came in procuring women. This finally culminated in the form of a social institution of marriage with all its laws and regulations and customs.

1.5 THE FAMILY

Just like marriage, family is also a very familiar term. We all come from families. We see families around us. Family is an integral part of our life. Can we answer these questions: What is a family? What is the need for a family? Who constitutes the family? Is it a mere union of parents and children? What is the relationship between the members in a family? Is the family a human invention or a natural evolution? Is it found among animals also? What are the forms of family in different ages and different cultures?

The Need for a Family

The family was a necessary precondition for human evolution, for without its human existence would not have been possible. The human infant is born helpless. It has a potential for physical and mental development. But it requires years to achieve its maturity. In the case of animals, their young ones are able to take care of themselves shortly after birth. But for human beings the long period of pregnancy and the prolonged helplessness in infancy and childhood, needs a long association of parents. This has resulted in the formation of a family.

The Evolution of the Family

The family as a group of parents and offspring existed even before the appearance of man upon this planet. Family like association is seen among birds and higher mammals. The chimpanzee is a highly social creature which lives in family groups. The family life of apes and human beings can be compared. There is a selection of a mate, interaction between male and female, levels of control among father, mother and children and a child is taken care of primarily by mother.

There is a great deal of difference between the family life of apes, mammals and birds and that of man. In the former case, the nature of family life throughout the world is the same in any given species. But in the case of man, family behaviour varies greatly from one society to another. In the animal family, the behaviour of the members is motivated by instinct, whereas in the human family it is motivated by culture. The animal family is largely biological in nature, while in the human family its structure and functions are shaped by culture.

According to many sociologists, man in course of his evolution might have developed one or another family form as determined by situational and historical factors. In short, we can say that geographic environment, economic conditions and culture rather than biological factors were the determinants of human family patterns. In man, the family is not only a biological group it is first and foremost a social institution.

The Definition of Family

We have seen that the structure and function of the family varies from place to place. So, it is difficult to give a definition of the term 'family'. However, the definition of the family must include that which is common to the great variety of human groups to which the term 'family' has been applied. There are certain characteristics that are common to the human family in all times and in all places that differentiate the family from other social groups. According to Ernest W Burgess and Harvey. J. Lock, these characteristics are:

1. The family is composed of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption. The bond between husband and wife is that of marriage, and the relationship between parents and children is generally that of blood and sometimes that of adoption.
2. The members of the family typically live together under one roof and constitute a single household. Sometimes, as in the past, the household is large consisting of three or four or even five generations. Today the household is small, consisting of the husband and wife with or without one or two children.

3. The family is a unity of interacting and intercommunicating persons. They play the roles of husband and wife, father and mother, son and daughter, brother and sister. These roles are defined by the community.
4. The family maintains a common culture derived mainly from the general culture. Usually, this culture is the outcome of the merging of the two cultures of the husband and wife.

On the basis of the above characteristics the family may be defined “as a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption, constituting a single household; interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social roles as husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister and creating and maintaining a common culture”.

A family is a community of people living together in an environment which is a centre of healing, a place where one can live, where one can admit one’s frustrations, stupidities and anger to people who do not retaliate. It is in the school of everyday family life, with all masks dropped and hypocrisies exposed, that man, woman and child acquire the potential to know what it is to be truly human, and fully human people have tried alternative arrangements for a family. But none of them are as efficient as a family. Children thrive best when they have a father and mother to love and protect them in a home. The parents also need the life long commitment in which love is proved.

The Indian Family

The family system all over the world are changing today and family relations are becoming weaker and weaker day by day. The influence of the family over the children is weakening due to the great social, political and economic changes. In the midst of these changes, India still has a time-tested heritage of stable family structure. It is still the basic unit of our society and the medium of cultural transmission. The family still holds its solidarity and plays an important role in the formation of values in our society.

In spite of the solidarity in the Indian families, a salient social transformation is taking place in the Indian families also. With the empowerment of women and the women getting more and more educated, the traditional family patterns are gradually disappearing. Modernization has its roots in westernization and it has questioned the traditional family values and structures. Parental influence is also weakening day by day. The religious and moral values present in the family are giving way to secular and pragmatic values.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What is the need for a family in the growth and development of a person?

1.6 TYPES OF FAMILY PATTERN

The three chief historical stages in the evolution of the family are:

- i) the large patriarchal family characteristic of ancient society;
- ii) the small patriarchal family which had its origin in the medieval period; and
- iii) the modern democratic or nuclear family which is the product of the industrial revolution and the economic and social changes that followed.

The large patriarchal family was prevalent in China, India and Japan. Here the senior male member was the head of the family. He lived with his children and grandchildren which came up to four or five generations. The patriarch, the head of the family, had supreme authority over all other members of the family. This type of family was a result of the agricultural and pastoral mode of existence.

The small patriarchal family was the second stage in the evolution of the family structure. It consisted of husband and wife and children and one or two grandparents and one or two unmarried brothers and sisters of the husband and wife. This type of family was mostly seen in urban areas where the members used to work in industries. Here also the senior male member had the supreme authority over the whole family.

The democratic or nuclear family consists of only the husband and wife and the children. This type of family system is more prevalent in modern society. Here the husband and wife share more responsibility and are more free. They can take their own decisions. Children can also join in the decision making consistent with the advancement in age.

Functions of the Family

The family is the basic unit of society. Today's family faces lot of problems due to the social changes. In spite of the problems in the family, it continues to exist because it meets the needs of children, adults and society at large. The family:

- provides for the reproduction of the race;
- passes on the cultural heritage of the group;
- provides physical security, protection and the material opportunities for living and growth;

- meets the deep emotional needs of both children and adults and provides for their social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development;
- develops in its members socially desirable character traits and acceptable moral standards;
- develops an orderly system of living among its members with provision for eating, sleeping, school, work, etc., and
- develops sound relationships among members of the family and between them and their neighbours.

The family thus meets the basic physiological and psychological needs of its members.

The Social Role of the Family

Apart from the above functions the family has a social role also. The family, being the basic unit of society, has a vital and organic link with society. It is from the family that the citizens come and it is within the family that they find the first school of social virtues. The family is the bridge between the child and society. In the family, the child learns mutual respect, concern for others, generous service, deep solidarity, personal responsibility etc. These are the basic steps of social life. The family is thus the most effective means of humanizing and personalizing society. The family is the custodian and transmitter of values.

Society should also respect and foster the family. The family is the very first cell in the social structure and the very first social union, which is indispensable. The so-called developed countries have now realized the fact that their broken families are heading towards a great social disaster so they are exhorting the parents to strengthen the family ties. “Marriage and family are a union for which there is no substitute. Nothing can take their place. You can even say: as the families are, so will mankind be”.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Briefly explain the functions of the family.

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1.7 CHOOSING A PARTNER

Now that you have learned so much about marriage and family, you will be in a position to answer the question “How will you choose your partner for life”? Marriage is a life-long commitment and relationship and hence the selection of a partner is very important. The choice of an ideal partner is one of the basic requirements for a successful marriage.

Suppose you are going for a journey. You would like to have a companion who is agreeable to you in all respects. So, what about your companion, who is to travel with you through your whole life, till death? Marriage is one of the three great events in life along with birth and death. Birth just happens and death is beyond our control. Marriage is however something which can be decided. We can decide whom to marry and when to marry.

There is a common saying among the Arabs “If you want to select a horse, select from among hundred horses. If it is a friend it should be one among thousand. But if it is a wife, it should be from thousands”. This implies the importance of choosing a partner in marriage. It should not be a casual or careless selection. It should be a long thought out process.

Very few people are inclined to analyse the factors that are to be looked into in selecting a partner. There is a common belief that marriages are made in heaven or it is fate, luck or providence. But this issue of choice of spouse is not something to be completely left to fate or luck. A scientific approach is necessary in the selection. There are certain determinants for mate selection.

The patterns of arrangement for the selection of the mate differ from culture to culture. In certain cultures, marriage is primarily a social and economic arrangement between two families. Here the choice of the mate is still the responsibility of the parents. Parents select the bride or bridegroom for their children. The young couple have little choice in this matter. They may not have the opportunity to become acquainted before the wedding. This type of marriage is known as arranged marriage.

Arranged marriages are now giving way to selection by the young people themselves. Both procedures have their advantages and disadvantages. Mate selection, when arranged by parents, stressed social and economic considerations. They minimized or even ignored the sentiments of love and interpersonal relations of the young people. The youngsters make the choice on the basis of compatibility and personal attraction. They may not conform to parental standards like caste, religion, economic security etc.

The best pattern is to let the young people find out their own mates with the guidance and consent of the parents. This pattern is known as guided choice. Anyway, parents should guide their children without showing too much worry or haste. Allow the young people to decide on their partners as far as they can.

But in every case, their elders should be the controlling factor. At the same time, parents should not give the impression that they have a readymade decision in their minds. Youngsters on their part should rely on their parents, recognizing their experience and their sincere desire for the good of their children.

As said earlier, marriage is a life-long relationship and commitment. There are certain qualities or social expectations that are commonly appreciated in a partner. There should be compatibility between the partners in maturity, health, behaviour patterns or character, caste and religion, economic status, education and intelligence, attitudes, and values or the basic orientation to life etc. Let us consider them one by one.

Maturity

Under 'maturity' come physical maturity, emotional maturity and social and intellectual maturity. Maturity is a term which comprises many things. When we say that the partner should have the maturity for a married life, it means the ability to take up the full responsibility of a family.

Age is one important factor that comes under physical maturity. According to the Indian Marriage Act, the minimum age for marriage for woman is 18 and for man is 21. But from practical experience it is seen that the ideal age for woman is 21 to 24 and for man is 25 to 30. By that time, they are physically mature and emotionally stable. If the man or woman lacks physical maturity, he/she may find it difficult to make marital adjustments and to take up the responsibility as husband and wife and as parents.

What should be the age difference between the partners? Who should be older? The social expectation is that the man should be older and there should not be much difference of age between the partners. But for so many practical reasons, it may not be possible to strictly adhere to this. Still, it is always good to stick on to these expectations to avoid further complications later on. One of the reasons for marital breakdown is the great or wide disparity of age between husband and wife.

Emotional Maturity

It consists of the ability to control one's emotions and passions. Emotional maturity helps to develop self-restraint and the attitude of self-sacrifice. These are the essential requisites for a happy married life. Emotional maturity can be tested only at the times of crisis. He will adapt his course of action, overcome obstacles and accept the inevitable with grace and calmness. To an immature person, any frustration may bring about temper tantrums.

An emotionally matured person is able to avoid frequent bad mood and has the ability to establish and maintain personal relationships. He is able to endure normal discomforts and disappointments and to overcome suspicion and jealousy. In short, he has the ability to give and receive that is ability to love.

Empathy is another characteristic of an emotionally matured persons. It is ability to perceive the feelings of others. It involves the willingness to

recognize the needs of others and to assume the responsibility of meeting them. Getting married means taking up a responsibility for a life time. The partners have to meet each other's needs, bring up children, support the family financially and look after the members of the family. Lifelong commitment is one feature of the responsibility of marriage. It is related to the stability that comes with maturity.

A clear sign of emotional maturity is the ability to reflect before speaking and the readiness to talk with others. This is highly essential in husband/wife relationship.

An emotionally mature person has, first of all, insight and foresight in his thinking. He can evaluate himself as well as the world around him in a realistic manner. He can also face the facts of life realistically and anticipate the results of his action. He develops a sense of independence. He is able to make his own judgments and decisions.

The maturity which marriage requires is not the achievement of one day. Emotional maturity can be achieved only by the satisfaction of the various needs of the child at each stage of development. Proper disciplining of emotions is necessary during the childhood for attaining emotional maturity, which results in self-confidence, self-control and affectional maturity.

What is affectional maturity? It may be an unfamiliar term for you. It is the capacity to relate with people of different groups. The infant is at first interested in himself/herself or his/her mother. This interest is then shifted to playmates of his own sex during school age and to the opposite sex during adolescence. When the person comes to maturity, the affectional maturity is towards his partner. One who is ready for marriage should have this affectional maturity so as to develop a good husband wife relationship. This is basic requirement for marital harmony.

Social Maturity

Social maturity is evident when one can relate oneself to others in a selfless and responsible way. One should not think only in terms of immediate wish fulfillments or satisfaction or personal desires. The main signs of social maturity are respect for others, honesty, frankness, courage and the ability to provide whatever a family needs.

An emotionally mature person need not necessarily be socially mature if he has not experienced a social life. Social maturity comes from the fulfillment of one's quota of premarital living. Every boy and girl should have an experience of social life before marriage. Usually after completing this education, youngsters are employed and they have a 'free' time to assume the responsibilities of life and mingle with people. During this time, they may come across persons of other sex, whom they may choose as their partners in life. This is a time of fantasy. Anyway, this free time before marriage is essential for acquiring social maturity.

After exploring for a partner, they finally settle down, and are ready for marriage. One characteristic of social maturity is one's willingness to

disregard unknown potential marriage partners in their fantasy. They will be ready to commit themselves to build up a relationship with a particular person.

It is also important to be independent for a while. Having just become free from parents, it is too early to take on the bonds of matrimony. Spare time can be used as one may deem fit. Jobs can be changed. Travels can be made according to the availability of money and time. Nobody else's wishes have to be consulted, nor moods catered to.

Since they were more closely supervised than boys during childhood and adolescence, they have yet to achieve a full sense of personal identity. Usually many girls in India, especially in the rural areas, do not get this free time for socialization and acquiring social maturity. This is because they are married immediately after their schooling or graduation. Most of them are not permitted to work outside their homes. This is a real drawback as far as marriage is concerned.

Intellectual Maturity

Intellectual maturity lies in the ability to understand persons, events, situations and problems. It is the capacity to formulate one's ideas, opinions and judgments without depending on others.

For developing intellectual maturity, one must have a certain level of education according to his/her social status. One must be able to give a meaning and purpose to his/her life, if he/she is intellectually mature.

As we grow up, we gradually learn to understand and evaluate ourselves better. We come to know of our own strengths and weaknesses, our abilities and disabilities. We gain insight into our feelings, thinking and behaviour. We also develop foresight. We learn to face realistically the facts of life and to anticipate the results of our action. We learn to foresee the possible consequences of our behaviour. We no longer permit our desires to dominate completely our thinking or action.

Mature thinking and feeling express themselves in mature action and behaviour. We show control and flexibility in our behaviour. We are neither rigid nor compulsive but adapt our actions according to the situation. We can accept authority and discipline as well as responsibility and power. We learn to co-operate with the people and make the necessary adjustments and adaptation in life.

An individual should show these signs of intellectual maturity before he/she plans to marry. It is essential for promotion of desirable personality development and adjustments in marriage. Self realization is essential to understand the behaviour of others. "Know thyself" is an important principle in mental health. For good marital adjustments, knowledge of self is an essential factor.

Only an intellectually matured person can know the limitations of others. A person who aims at an unattainable goal meets with frustrations. Intellectual maturity is essential for having 'frustration tolerance'. The married partners

need high frustration tolerance to face problem situations wisely and to make wise decisions.

Now we have seen how important maturity in selecting a mate is. Only a person having all the above types of maturation will be a good partner in married life. Often it is not easy to evaluate correctly, the herself in the best high, hiding the negative aspects on his/her personality. Therefore in mate selection, it is necessary to go beyond the external appearance and behaviour. You will have to closely observe the behaviour of the person in different situation and circumstances. How a person acts in a crisis or a critical situation will show his/her real self and maturity.

Health and Physical Structure

A happy married life is very closely related to the health of the partners. So this is an important factor to be looked into in selecting a mate. The parents should be healthy to have children of good health. In some western countries, the partners have to produce a medical certificate before marriage. This is ideal, especially to eliminate people with hereditary diseases.

It is advisable not to have marriage relations between person having a close blood relationship. The children born from such couples may have hereditary diseases of both the families. It is also necessary to look out for the RH factor of the blood. If the husband and wife have different RH groups i.e positive and negative, it may affect the children. So, care should be taken to see that the partners has compatible blood groups.

HIV testing also should be done before marriage, wherever scope for doubt exists, to avoid future problems and breakdowns. The presence of a health defect in a person may not prevent one from marrying, but it is necessary that both know about it and are ready to face its consequences together.

Physical structure is another factor in the selection of mate. There should not be much disparity in physical structure (height, weight etc. colour and general appearance). However, physical attraction or physical expectation in the Indian context is that the husband should have a bigger structure than the wife. Regarding general beauty, the usual practice is that woman's beauty is more looked into than a man's. In a man, "manliness" is the usual criteria that is looked for.

Physical appearance and beauty are relative terms and vary according to cultures. This is not a very important factor in selecting a mate. Anyway, beauty should not be the main criteria for selection. There is a Chinese proverb "Marrying a woman only on the basis of her beauty is like buying a building merely by looking at the outside painting". Young people give too much importance to these criteria which is not wise.

Behaviour Patterns or Character and Conduct

If you want to enroll for any course, you need a character or conduct certificate. In order to enter into a profession also, very often you need a conduct certificate, but to get married do you produce any conduct certificate?

Unfortunately, many persons do not give enough importance to this aspect, which is one of the most important criteria for mate selection. Even if your partner has all the other physical qualities, economic and social status and education, if his character is not satisfactory, married life will be a real hell. At the same time even if there is disparity in age, caste, religion, education etc. and the partner has good character the marriage will still work.

Character in married life means good will, sense of humor, the ability to love, honesty, responsibility, concern for others, give and take attitudes, cheerfulness, discipline, faith in God, fidelity openness, values in life, etc. The couple has a long life before them to spend together. Much of their happiness will depend upon their ability to share, to agree and to work together. All this presuppose in them the presence of strong similarities with regard to basic concepts of life. There is no doubt that a certain number of differences can be useful to enrich the partners. But ultimately the person who shows more similarities should be considered as the best make.

According to the perspectives in psychology, a person's character is formed during his/her early years of life. So, his/her family is mainly responsible for character formation. As in the case of maturity, it is very difficult to assess the character of a person with whom we do not have an intimate personal relationship. In choosing a partner this is not always possible. His/her family relationships and the life of the family can be taken as one of the important sources for assessing the character. Persons brought up in unhappy, insecure, and broken families may have many personality disorders and peculiar behaviour patterns.

Some parents consider marriage as a solution for the behaviour problems of their children, especially sons. A drunkard, a drug addict or a criminal may marry a poor girl having low socio-economic status. The poor girl is supposed to 'change the prodigal son'. Usually this ends up with a marital breakdown and lot of misery for the girl. The innocent girl becomes a scapegoat.

Caste and Religion

When the selection of the bride or bridegroom is made by parents they insist on caste and religion. But when the selection comes to youngster, we come across many inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Many of them are successful. These types of marriages are good for social and national integration – and harmony among different castes and religions. But there are many practical problems of adjustments in such marriages. In India marriages are between two families. The families may not accept such marriages and interfere with each one's customs and life-style.

When two persons from two different castes or religions marry, they must be willing to accept and respect each other's faith and values. Usually, the problem comes with the birth of a child. Both the parents will consciously or unconsciously try to practice his/her own customs and values which result in a conflict for the children. If both parents are strictly secular, such problems can be eliminated to some extent.

It is safer to choose a mate from the same caste, religion and culture. Even in the developed countries, where mate selection is done mostly by couples, preferences are for mates from the same race, religion and culture.

Social and Economic Status

The partners should have as far as possible, the same economic and social status. The family should have a stable income to pull on. Today dowry has become a great social problem in India. Men are demanding huge amounts of money from the wife's home. Many bride burnings are due to the problems of dowry. Of course, the girl should have an equal share of her father's wealth. Usually this share is handed over to the boy at the time of marriage. In many cases, the wife has no say about the dowry money, and it is considered as the property of the husband and his family. In many marriages, dowry is the main criteria for selecting the wife. This is very unfortunate.

The partners should have the financial stability to establish and run a family. But the whole financial assistance should not be expected from the wife's family. As far as possible the wife also should have an independent income. Marrying a person who is very much above or below the economic and social status may cause many adjustment problems for both the partners. In many love marriages, economic disparity may not be looked into which may result in marital problems later on. It is very difficult for love to flourish in a 'poor' circumstance.

Education and Intelligence

There should not be much disparity in these factors. In Indian villages, most women are still illiterate, men do not consider literacy as a pre-requisite for marriage. This is very sad state of affairs. Women should be educated to be intelligent wives and efficient home managers. An educated mother is the best insurance for the education of her children. As in the case of physical structure, men in India prefer partners with equal or a little lower level of education. If the wife is more educated, the husband may develop an inferiority complex.

Regarding intelligence, both the partners should be intelligent enough to manage a home. Intellectual companionship between the partners is a very important factor which is not given adequate emphasis in Indian marriages.

It is not advisable to marry persons who are mentally retarded. The intelligence of the parents will be inherited by children to a very large extent. So, intelligence is an important factor in mate selection.

Attitudes and Values – Basic Orientation to Life

Areas where strong similarity is required are attitudes and values and the basic orientation to life. These include goals, values, religious convictions and general ideas about justice, honesty, truth etc. A simple tolerance of other's beliefs or conceptions is not enough to establish a lifelong partnership.

The partners should fully agree with the idea of marriage, its meaning and purpose. It is very important for them to have the same concept about fidelity,

reciprocal roles in the family, sex, children and in-laws. It is good to have a spontaneous agreement in fields such as entertainment, participation in cultural, social and political activity, religious practices and community life.

Temperamental compatibility of the mates prevents problems in marriages. Temperament means the physiological activity level and response patterns of the individual. The behaviour controlling glands of one individual may be different from that of another individual. Such biological differences help to explain many of the conflicts in marriage. For example, why one spouse is always active and the other inactive. To avoid all these problems, temperamental compatibility should be given due importance in mate selection.

Compatibility of needs is another factor which should be looked into the choice of the mate. There is evidence that persons seek a mate who will compliment their strengths and deficiencies. Person with complimentary needs tend to marry. Many boys and girls are attracted to each other because each satisfies the other's need. The need so satisfied may be the need for love, affection, sympathy, understanding etc.

Now we have seen some of the important qualities that are to be looked for in a mate. The selection of partner is not an easy process. It is an ongoing process which requires time and experience. It is better for the partners to have an opportunity to become well acquainted with each other. This called courtship. It provides the two persons the opportunity to test each other's feelings, ideas and orientations to life. This may help them to decide whether a life together will possible. It also provides them occasions to reveal to each other the different sides of their temperaments.

Inspite of the above advantages of courtship, it is generally not followed or accepted in Indian marriages. But it is a must in western countries. Anyway, it is good to have some acquaintance with the partner before marriage.

One may not get a partner who can satisfy all the above criteria of mate selection. Some compromises have to be made in some aspects. But once the selection is made, one should accept his/her partner totally. 'Accept toto' is a key word in marital success. Since it is not easy to change the behaviour of an adult the only way is to accept your partner with his/her merits and demerits and adjust accordingly.

There is no 'I' or 'You' in a marriage relationship, but only the 'We'. The husband and wife should become one and at the same time keep their own identities and individualities. The new Mathematics of marriage is 1+1 should be 'big one'; it should never be a -2- or a -11- where the partners proceed in two parallel lines which never meet.

Check Your Progress V

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the

end of this unit.

1) What are the main criteria in selecting a partner?

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1.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt about marriage, and family and the criteria for choosing a partner. Marriage is a lifelong conscious commitment between a man and a woman. It is a contract, a union and an institution. Marriage has many biological, social, psychological and legal aspects also. The main functions and purposes of marriage are, union and procreation, companionship and sex and socialization of the individual.

Family is one of the oldest social institutions. The human being is the most helpless creature at birth. It needs a long association with parents for its growth and development. This resulted in the evolution of the family. A family has certain distinct characteristics. It is a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood relation or adoption. They live together under one roof. The family members interact with each other in different roles as father, mother, husband, wife, children etc., it has a common culture also.

In India the family system is still stable and has solidarity. There are three types of families in India, the Joint Family, the Nuclear Family and the Extended Family. Each type has its own advantages and disadvantages.

The family has many functions. It meets the needs of children, adults and society. It provides for the reproduction of the race, physical security, protection etc. The family meets the physical, emotional, psychological, social and spiritual needs of all the members. It is the basic unit of our society.

The selection of a partner in marriage is very important, because it is a lifelong commitment. The choice can be made by parents, by self or jointly by both. There are certain social expectations that are commonly appreciated in a partner. There should be between the partners in all aspects of life. Some of these aspects are maturity: physical, emotional, social and intellectual; character, caste and religion; economic status, education, attitudes and values and orientation to life.

1.9 KEY WORDS

Compatibility : The capability of husband and wife to adjust with each other in all areas of life.

Courtship : The time before marriage, when a boy and girl try to win the

affection of each other. In western countries there is usually a period of courtship between the couples before marriage. During this period, they can know each other very intimately.

1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

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1.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) The term marriage has different meanings for different people. Marriage is a relationship. It is one of the deepest and most fulfilling of human relationships. For some people marriage is an institution. Marriage is described as a freely made contract between psychological aspect and a legal aspect as well.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Marriage has many purpose and functions. One of the most important purpose of marriage is union and procreation. Marriage is also for sex and companionship. It also helps for the socialization of the individual. Marriage creates a family to provide the natural environment in which a person can have full growth and development.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) The human infant is born helpless. It requires years to achieve physical and mental maturity. So, the child needs a long association with parents. Hence the human being needs a family for its growth and development.

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) Family has many functions in society like reproduction of the race, passing the cultural heritage and providing physical security and protection. Family contributes to the emotional, social and spiritual development of its members. Apart from these family has social functions also.

Check Your Progress V

- 1) There should be compatibility between the partners in maturity: Physical, emotional, social and intellectual; health, behaviour patterns, caste, religion, economic status, education and intelligence, attitude and values or the basic orientation to life. The partners should have the same concept about the purpose and functions of their marriage and family.

