

Hindu Marriages

TIME FOR CHANGE?

The Hindu wedding ceremony requires a lot of preparations.

In olden days many months was spent on preparations. It was a communal occasion of grand proportions and a great deal of time, money and energy was necessary. In modern times, all those leisurely preparations have become an occasion to remember and some things to be proud of using the various wedding services that are hand these days to make the occasion that more special.

However in this era of professionalism and importance of material comforts, marriages in the western world end up in separation –mutual or otherwise.

A question often asked now by younger generation: Is marriage necessary?

Such a question was hardly raised in the past because there was nothing like consent marriage in the Hindu community as a whole. All details including the choice of a suitable bride or both partners were decided beforehand by their elders! The engaged couple's opinion meant little in those days. By and large such marriages simply left to chance, did remarkably well so far. Women suffered more than men in such marriages and the stability of our society was largely achieved by denying many choices to women.

The need for change has been realized by both youngsters and their parents. Forced marriages are far and few between these days. There is little room for such marriages in the changing social patterns which we see today in the Asian community. Parents and other relations involved have to take a generous attitude towards the wishes of the young because social and educational and cultural forces have greatly affected the ancient thinking.

The marriage ceremonies and rituals in any community differ but all entail various stages and with passage of time, from matchmaking to marriages have all undergone many changes. Parents and guardians used to find a match for their children and most still try to do but with the spread of education and social liberalization, this choice is very much left to the boy or girl and parents do not impose their will and decisions on the children anymore.

All these shifts are a welcome change but it is also increasingly difficult to find a suitable match these days which can sustain after marriage and the services of match-makers-marriage bureaus and their modern online version of matchmaking websites are increasingly coming to use.



But there are also men and women who do actually opt out of the marriage system in growing numbers too and marriage is not inevitable as it used to be.

One burning question which remains to be answered is – Will Hindu marriage survive in its present form?

The answer perhaps is that it ought to last with modest modifications in the same form. There is no alternative. There is a great deal of suffering and social disintegration as a result of increasing number of divorces. Husband and wife have got to work together as a team in order to achieve their own material goals in life these days. There cannot be love without responsibility. This is a fact of life and must be accepted as such. The Asian social and cultural continuity must be preserved in the western world.

Asian society today has accepted divorces as a sad reality in tiny minority of cases, although this is increasing now. Divorce cannot be allowed to be fashionable or common. Even in ancient times, divorce was possible on certain grounds, but it was rarely possible to divorce a marriage partner on some flimsy grounds, as it is the case today. Indeed marriage was considered an endurance test in our social life. It is sometimes hard to see how irreconcilable differences cannot be ironed out. But efforts must be made NOT to magnify small differences. Forces which have no direct bearing on an otherwise successful marriage often interfere with the personal matters of the married couple.

So what does the future hold?

A well thought out system of social check and balance must be worked out so that the society can be assured of a bright social and cultural future. It is possible to preserve some desirable traditions together with the modern ways of life and infact the younger generation are already doing this today. The Hindu way of life offers a great variety of experiences and opportunities.

The Asian society has pinned its hopes on a stable and fruitful married life. Our marriage system is part of the destiny and distinctive culture and community in general and there can be no future without our marriage system. In tune with changing times, the community must make adjustments, as a whole so that new ideas and ideals cherished by the younger generation can be accomodated.

Our ancient views and attitudes need to be changed in the western world of different social and cultural dimensions.

There is no doubt about the need for widening our social horizons – Caste system can never survive like the ancient times. The world is very wide indeed. If we do not allow young men and women to widen their social vision within the Hindu community, a social disaster may occur.

We must therefore preserve our social and cultural identity without risking stubborn adherence to aloofness – this multi-cultural society we live in today offers ample freedom to justify our existence as a social and cultural group.

This part of Hindu life has stood the test of time.

