

Spouse Selection Practices in India: A Spatial View

Nivedita Paul¹ and Bhaswati Das

Abstract: Marriages in India are part and parcel of kinship and cultural practices. Some regions, cultures, and socio-demographic factors give opportunities to choose one's spouse, whereas some allow only parents to decide. This article studies the spouse selection practices of women in India using the IHDS 2(2011-12) dataset to show the spouse selection variations and how the socio-demographic factors affect her marriage type. The majority of women in India have semi-arranged marriages, followed by family-arranged ones. Most of them meet their husband on the wedding day without prior acquaintance before marriage. Factors like age at marriage, education and urbanisation play a positive role in decision-making for spouse selection. However, the mapping results based on Karve's kinship systems show that while arranged marriage with parents' consent is the dominant form of marriage in all four regions, the relative participation of the women and their parents varies across regions. Therefore, kinship patterns explain the difference in spouse selection patterns.

Keywords: Women, Kinship, Relative involvement, Spouse selection, India

Date of submission: 02.05.2022

Date of review: 14.07.2022

Date of acceptance: 26.07.2022

Introduction

Marriage or wedlock is a social institution that binds two individuals in a legal and social contract to stay together and have children. Arranged marriages, where parents find grooms/brides for their children, remain the dominant form of marriage in India. However, adults are still finding new ways to negotiate with the general cultural expectations more persuasively by participating in the spouse selection process and with their family members.

Marriage is one of life's most important decisions, and having a say in marriage and choosing a spouse for marriage is important. Hence, women who choose their partner or have more say, even in arranged marriages, enter into the marriage on more or less equal ground to their male counterparts. We may expect that such women also have better reproductive rights, fewer/no domestic violence, higher proficiency in household resource allocation, better communication possibilities with their husbands and relatively healthy married life [and many other such possibilities and expectations inherent in the decision of how, when and whom to marry] (Banerjee, 1999, 2006; Rapp et al., 2012).

Marriage and marital practices intertwine kinship studies in India (Karve, 1953; Trautmann, 1981). In India, marriage practices and customs differ because of significant cross-regional diversities in social relations. Social relations have evolved due to causal relationships between space and culture. The two binaries are so intricately linked that geography becomes one explanation for why spouse selection is an incidence of various factors like caste, age, gender, predefined social relations, kinship patterns and cultural practices.

The present article deals with the spouse selection patterns of women in India, the factors affecting such spouse selection patterns and the spatial and regional variations in these patterns. Since spouse selection results from many socio-demographic factors, previous literature emphasised

¹ Corresponding Author

kinship and cultural practices to delineate the amount of say in spouse selection. However, with modernisation and other developments, women increasingly participate in spouse selection. Therefore, the article explores how some factors affect women's participation in spouse selection. The study also tries to show the spatial and regional patterns in spouse selection that can be explained in the context of kinship patterns (Karve,1953).

The Rationale for the study

Most previous studies on marriage have been based on age at the wedding. Therefore, studying decision-making regarding spouse selection is essential because the age at marriage is still low in India, and women find it challenging to build consent and maturity for marriage at such a young age. Marriage-related decision-making mainly concerns the exercise of agency or the amount of say a woman has in choosing her partner for marriage. The agency is a dimension of power that allows an individual to make sure strategic choices through bargaining, negotiation, deception, manipulation, subversion or resistance. This means, for example, when parents choose spouses for their daughters in South Asia, it is not an exhibition of power or agency but adherence to an established norm or rule that has been continuing in the society for years (Kabeer,1999). On the contrary, if daughters exercise a say in finding a spouse for themselves, they seem to exercise agency as they are making a life choice for themselves that may be against the norm of society. Kishor (1997) has defined the intention of having a say in choosing or finalising a marriage partner as control over key aspects of their life (or empowerment) since all do not have equal resources to exercise choice. In the post-colonial setting, a choice to go for arranged marriage is not simply following the dictates of patriarchal norms; but finding ways to negotiate with prevalent norms.

The customs prevalent regarding marriage favour kinds of marriage in which a girl is decorated and given away by her father to a man chosen by him. This theory of marriage, discussed in the *Dharmasutras* (Sanskrit texts on proper conduct), gave little or no opportunity for the girl to have a say in choosing her partner. Even now, the extent of choice is guided more by past social conventions and the amount of dowry being paid by her, which has experienced insignificant changes over the years (Kapadia, 1955). In countries like Nepal with a history of arranged marriage, those with better education participate in spouse choice and have a better marital quality (Allendorf and Ghimire, 2013). A study by Jeejebhoy(2000) found that though the age at marriage has little or inconsistent effects on women's autonomy in Uttar Pradesh, it leads to a decrease in marital violence and threat, better use of contraceptives and family planning measures(Jeejebhoy, 2000).

Research Questions

Based on the study and analysis, the following research questions have been raised:

- What are the patterns of spouse selection in India?
- How does the spouse selection pattern vary according to kinship practices?
- What are some of the factors affecting spouse selection patterns?

Database and Methodology

The sample for the study has been taken from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) II. IHDS is a nationally representative multi-topic survey which covers 41,554 households. Being a longitudinal survey, IHDS II re-interviewed 83% of the households covered in the round I (2004-05). For the present study, only currently married women aged 15-49 in their first marriage are taken as part of the sample. Marriages that took place before 1970 have been excluded to remove truncation errors. The total sample that has been taken is 32,912 women.

In the survey, women were asked who chose their husbands. The responses have been recorded in four categories: (a) The respondent herself (b)The respondent and the

parents/relatives together(c)The parents and other relatives alone (d) Others, which includes other members of the family, chose the spouse or played a role in choosing the spouse.

For categories c and d above, the next question that followed was if the respondent had any say in choosing the spouse, to which the response was recorded as either 'yes' or 'no'. Hence, three marriage categories have been carved out of it.

1. Self-arranged marriage, i.e., category 'a'
2. Semi-arranged marriages comprise category 'b' and those whose response is 'yes' for 'c' and 'd'
3. Family-arranged marriage comprises those who said 'no' to the category 'c' and 'd'.

For the length/duration of acquaintances before the marriage, the question was asked about how long they knew their husband before the marriage. The response consisted of five categories- on wedding/gauna day=1, one month before marriage=2, more than a month but less than a year=3, more than one year and since childhood coded together as 4. For convenience, the last two categories have been combined into one category, i.e., 'more than one year'.

The predictor variables for spouse selection are:

1. Current age: Women are divided into three categories depending upon their age: "15 to 24" =1, "25 to 34" =2 and "35 and above" =3.
2. Age at Marriage: The age at marriage is usually taken from the variable that reports her age when she married. It is then divided into three categories: "up to 18" =1, "18 to 24" =2 and "25 and above" =3.
3. Female education: The education level of the female is calculated from her years of schooling. It is divided into four categories: "Illiterate" = 0 years of schooling, "Primary" =1 to 8 years of schooling, "Secondary" = 9 to 10 years of schooling and "Higher secondary and above" =11 to 16 years of schooling. The codifications are as follows:Illiterate=1, Primary=2, Secondary=3 and Higher Secondary and above=4
4. Parents' education: The mother and father's education has been dealt with separately, but the categorisation is the same as mentioned in the female education section.
5. Religion: Three groups have been carved from the religion response: "Hindu", "Muslim", and "Others". "Others" comprises women from other religions like Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Buddhists, etc.
6. Caste: The category of caste has been divided into three categories: "ST" (Scheduled Tribe), coded as 1, "SC" (Scheduled caste), coded as 2 and "Others", coded as 3. The 'Others' category comprises the Un-reserved category, Other Backward Castes and others who do not fall into any caste. This category can also be called the 'non-scheduled-non OBC population'. For women in inter-caste marriage, their caste before marriage is not given. Hence, it is assumed to be the same as the caste of the household.
7. Residence: Assuming that rural-to-urban migration has not occurred in marriage, their characteristics are preserved even if rural-urban migration has occurred. Hence assuming the current residence of the woman as her premarital residence also, it is divided into three categories: "Rural" =1, "Urban" =2 and "Metro Urban" =3.
8. Region: The states of India have been divided into four categories depending on their kinship and other cultural practices relating to marriage: North=1, Central=2,

South=3 and East=4. This regional classification follows Irawati Karve's (1953) classification of kinship regions. Although many scholars consider Karve's work old and outdated, she was the first scholar to give a 'feminist' perspective on the Indian family. However, as certain states have witnessed developmental changes since the 1950s, the classification has been modified to suit the changes.

To find the relationship between the independent variables and spouse selection, multinomial regression is used instead of ordinal regression to preserve the results for both self and semi-arranged marriages. Also, the order of marriage has not been converted into an ordinal scale, as acquaintances have not been considered while categorising marriages. Finally, maps showing different spouse selection patterns have been prepared using GIS software for spatial variations.

Spouse selection patterns of women in India

Marriage patterns can be categorised as self-arranged, semi-arranged, and Family-arranged, depending on the relative say of women and their parents in choosing mates. In self-arranged marriage, a woman and her groom are the sole decision-makers in choosing the partner. "Self-arranged is a better description for love marriages". All self-arranged marriages are not based on love, as some women search for a mate through online advertisements or online marriage platforms or via some friends chipping in with the search process. Often, self-arranged marriages may transcend boundaries of caste, village, community or class (Palriwala and Kaur, 2014). However, many times self-arranged marriages occur within one's community (Donner, 2002). There is increasing evidence of self-arranged marriages in recent times in which parents allow their children to marry someone of their own choice (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016). In Semi-arranged marriages, the woman and her parents are the decision-makers in spouse selection. This is a form of arranged marriage where the parents are responsible for finding mates for their daughters and then organising the wedding ceremony. Females are asked for consent and have the right to say no if they do not like the candidate chosen by their parents. Finally, family-arranged marriages are marriages where parents only are the decision maker in spouse selection. It is organised and arranged by the parents of the woman. However, it differs from the last category because, in family-arranged marriages, girls getting married are not asked for consent. It is, therefore, sometimes interpreted as 'forced marriage'. Forced marriage can be in the form of child marriage, as underage affects the ability of both spouses to understand the consequences of getting married. Marriages are categorised into three types, and it would be interesting to study the overall pattern of marriage based on spouse selection and acquaintances before marriage.

Table 1: Classification of women respondents by spouse selection type and duration of acquaintance

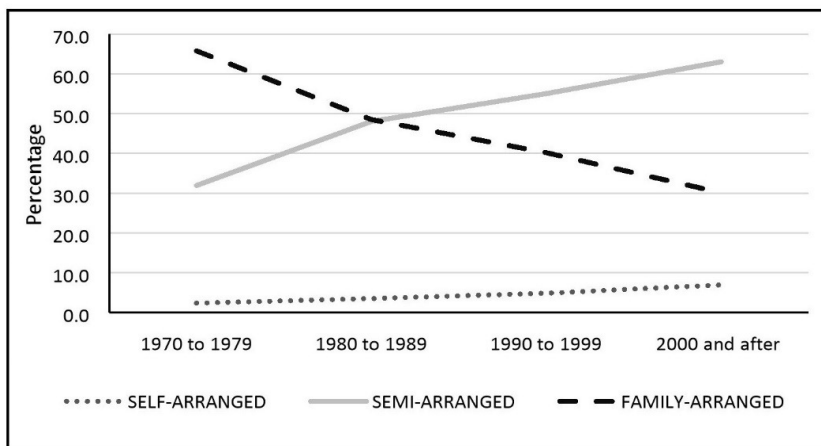
Spouse selection type	Per cent in total women	Duration of acquaintances	Per cent in total women
Self-arranged	5.1	On wedding day	67.5
Semi arranged	54.9	<1 month	14.1
Family arranged	40	> 1 month and < 1 year	7.5
		> 1 year	10.9

Table 1 gives an overall picture of women's marital arrangements in India. Though semi-arranged marriage is dominant, many women (40%) are in entirely family-arranged marriages. Self-arranged marriages are still low, at about 5 per cent. Though "unpacking agency is a complex process", absolute choice or agency in the form of love marriage or self-arranged marriage is little in occurrence, yet considering the opinions of their daughters in arranged marriage regarding the choice of partner is important (Kalpagam, 2008). Many communities in India, like the rural Kurmis of

Allahabad district in Uttar Pradesh and the Bijnor's of Rajasthan, still consider that marriage decisions should not be left to the children, and settling them for marriage is a parental duty.

Table 1 also shows the duration of acquaintances developed by the females before their marriage. About 68 per cent of the women met their husbands on the wedding day, and around 62 per cent had not developed any acquaintances (neither met nor seen photos nor talked over the phone) with their husbands before their marriage. Thus, they were married to strangers. Most persons in the North prohibit marriage between persons of the same clan and village but prefer someone of the same caste. Therefore, under these circumstances, females do not get to meet their husbands before marriage, as their husband might be someone from a distant village or state but of the same caste (Gupta, 1976). Chances of acquaintance are also low as media exposure was less at earlier times in India; hence the data may show biases based on talking over the phone.

Fig 1: Trends in spouse selection by marriage cohorts:1970s -2000s



Marital arrangements based on spouse selection patterns have changed over the years. Fig 1 shows that for women who got married in the 1970s, family-arranged marriage was the dominant form (66 per cent) of marriage, with a high percentage of semi-arranged marriage (32%) and self-arranged marriage (2%). However, for women who married in the 1980s, family-arranged marriages decreased with a consequent increase in semi-arranged marriages. This shows that women have not been given complete control over their marriage-related decisions over the years, as self-arranged marriages have been very low. Marriage practises in Tamil Nadu reveal the exact change as they have evolved from being wholly arranged in which youth have passive or no say in marriage decisions to playing an active role (Jejeebhoy et al., 2013). Semi-arranged marriage is now dominant; therefore, "arranged marriage is shifting rather than declining" (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016). Hence, it is the amount of relative control of the parents that are declining, but they continue to enjoy a significant amount of control, signifying that the change in marital decision-making in India is slow (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016; Hettige et al., 2014). Besides, romantic love is still considered to be dangerous and impractical and arranged marriage is still the norm (Desai, McCormick, & Gaeddert, 1989). Hence, young adults in India, though, are given lesser autonomy in spouse selection, but by giving boys and girls an opportunity to meet their future spouse, marriage patterns are evolving (Rao and Rao, 1982).

Factors affecting spouse selection

Although group boundaries have appeared in marriage since history, political and socio-economic factors open up space for redefinitions (Donner, 2002). While progressing this far, we have seen that various factors affect the type of marriage because the agency of women in the choice of mate

selection is determined by many factors that have been continuing in society for ages. Some have changed with rising female education, workforce participation, and other developmental factors. In addition, globalisation and the interconnectivity of the various regions, diffusion of ideas, and rise in female migration for education and employment have influenced the norms of marriage that prevailed for a long time. These changes have also changed the taste and preferences of spouses, encouraging them to choose them from a broader platform. Some of the socio-demographic factors and their effects on spouse selection have been shown in Table 2.

Table 2 below presents the results of multinomial regression for spouse selection against its independent variables or determinants. Most factors significantly affect spouse selection except for some predictor variables. The current age of the female, age at marriage, female's education, education of the woman's mother, current residence and region are the variables that are significant at p-value 0.000. Some predictor variables, like the education of the female's father, religion and caste, are partially significant. The non-significant variables are religion in the case of Muslims in self-arranged marriage, father's education for females in semi-arranged marriage and other categories in the case of semi-arranged marriage.

The log odds for the self-arranged marriage(X) as well as the semi-arranged marriage of the female(Y) shows that the older females (i.e., those born in recent years) have lesser chances (0.5 and 0.3 for self-arranged marriage and 0.7 and 0.58 times lower for an arranged marriage.

Table 2: Multinomial Regression for Factors affecting decision making regarding spouse selection

Socio-economic background characteristics	X				Y			
		B	Exp(B)	Sig		B	Exp(B)	Sig
Current age	15 to 24#				15 to 24#			
	25 to 34	-0.675	0.509	0	25 to 34	-0.225	0.799	0
	35 and above	-1.042	0.353	0	35 and above	-0.532	0.587	0
Age at marriage	Upto 18#				Upto 18#			
	18 to 24	0.49	1.632	0	18 to 24	0.523	1.687	0
	25 and above	0.996	2.707	0	25 and above	0.929	2.533	0
Female's education	Illiterate#				Illiterate#			
	Primary	0.521	1.683	0	Primary	0.456	1.578	0
	Secondary	0.888	2.431	0	Secondary	0.782	2.185	0
	Higher secondary and above	1.463	4.318	0	Higher secondary and above	1.292	3.641	0

Education of the mother	Illiterate#				Illiterate#			
	Primary	0.406	1.501	0	Primary	0.303	1.354	0
	Secondary	0.807	2.242	0	Secondary	0.372	1.451	0
	Higher secondary & above	1.141	3.129	0	Higher secondary and above	0.701	2.015	0
Education of the father	Illiterate#				Illiterate#			
	Primary	-0.318	0.727	0	Primary	-0.09	0.914	0.009
	Secondary	-0.231	0.794	0.029	Secondary	-0.053	0.949	0.276
	Higher secondary and above	-0.31	0.734	0.018	Higher secondary and above	-0.122	0.885	0.052
Religion	Hindu#				Hindu#			
	Muslim	0.085	1.088	0.362	Muslim	0.197	1.217	0
	Others	0.291	1.337	0.007	Others	0.242	1.274	0
CASTE	ST #				ST #			
	SC	-0.213	0.808	0.036	SC	0.164	1.179	0.002
	Others	-0.581	0.559	0	Others	0.044	1.045	0.384
Residence	Rural#				Rural#			
	Urban	0.349	1.417	0	Urban	0.268	1.307	0
	Metro urban	0.718	2.05	0	Metro urban	0.348	1.416	0
REGION	North#				North#			
	Central	0.998	2.714	0	Central	0.764	2.146	0
	East	3.869	47.894	0	East	1.728	5.627	0
	South	2.077	7.98	0	South	2.255	9.531	0
# The reference category								
X self-arranged marriage regarding family-arranged marriage								
Y semi-arranged marriage regarding family-arranged marriage								

with consent) of having self-arranged marriages and semi-arranged marriages than younger females. However, amongst the two, i.e., model X and Y, the log odds of Y are slightly higher than that of X,

which shows that the likelihood of semi-arranged to family-arranged marriage is more than self-arranged marriages in the recent birth cohorts. Though marriages are still arranged now, the involvement of youth in their marriage has increased (Bhakt,2015). Even among the Singaporean community, marriage in the older generation was the responsibility of the parents as the interaction between male-female was limited (Sandhu and Mani, 1993).

Age at marriage and education of the female also shows a deterministic role in the spouse selection of the female. The log odds of having a self-arranged and semi-arranged marriage increase with age at marriage by about 1.6 times as the age at marriage increases from above 18. However, the log odds of self-arranged marriage in the successive age groups of 18 and above is comparatively higher for self-arranged marriage than the other type of marriage, thereby showing that though the age at marriage increases the agency in spouse selection, this agency increases more for self-arranged marriages from the age of 18 onwards. The log odds for a greater agency in spouse selection in the form of self and semi-arranged marriage of the female is 1.68 and 1.57 times, respectively, for females with primary education and increase consecutively. However, the increase in log odds is more for self than semi-arranged marriage. College education gives higher chances to meet their potential mates and decision-making capacity than a school education. Thus, those with secondary education and above are more likely to make spouse selection decisions. Better education allows her to make her own decisions, allowing her a broader choice in partner selection (Bhopal, 2011). Schooling experiences create ideational changes among females, instilling a sense of independence from the prevailing cultural values (Ghimire et al., 2006). Women with high education and employment find a midway where they do not lament the lack of free choice but exercise some agency by at least saying 'no' to a marriage proposal brought by their parents where she feels unconvinced (Pande, 2015).

Similarly, regarding parents' education, an increase in the mother's education has a significantly positive association with the agency in spouse choice; the father's education has a negative role (as shown in Table 2). This shows that the likelihood of self- and semi-arranged marriage increases with a subsequent increase in mother's education. Women whose mothers have secondary education and above are about 2 to 3 times more likely to go for self and semi-arranged marriage than those whose mothers are illiterate. Women whose parents are educated have greater participation in their marital decisions, and such parents mainly delay their daughter's marriage so that she can complete her education first and earn her living before she gets married (Bhopal, 2011).

The effect of religion, as shown in Table 3, states that compared to the Hindus, Muslims and other religions have higher odds of having a self and semi-arranged marriage. However, the odds are more significant for other religious categories, including Christian, Jain and Sikhs, than the Hindu. Caste also significantly affects the mate selection for self-arranged and semi-arranged marriages. The table shows that the higher caste people and Scheduled castes have a lower likelihood of having self-arranged marriages but a higher likelihood of having semi-arranged marriages when compared to the scheduled tribes. Similarly, the residence significantly affects spouse selection because there is a greater likelihood of self and semi-arranged marriage in urban and metro-urban areas than in rural areas. Urban areas are 1.4 and 1.3 times more likely to have self and semi-arranged marriages, respectively and 2 and 1.4 times more likely in metro urban areas.

This study adds to the previous research that the northern region, compared to the southern region, provides lesser agency to females in spouse selection. As shown by the table, there is a higher likelihood of self-arranged and semi-arranged marriage in the Central, East and South region than in the Northern region. For example, the Eastern region is 47.8 and 5.6 times more likely to have self-arranged marriage and semi-arranged marriage (than family-arranged marriage) than the Northern region. Similarly, the Southern Region is 7.98 and 9.53 times more likely to have self-arranged and

semi-arranged marriages, respectively. The same is true for the central region, but the likelihood is not as high as in the eastern and southern regions.

Spatial and Regional variations in spouse selection patterns

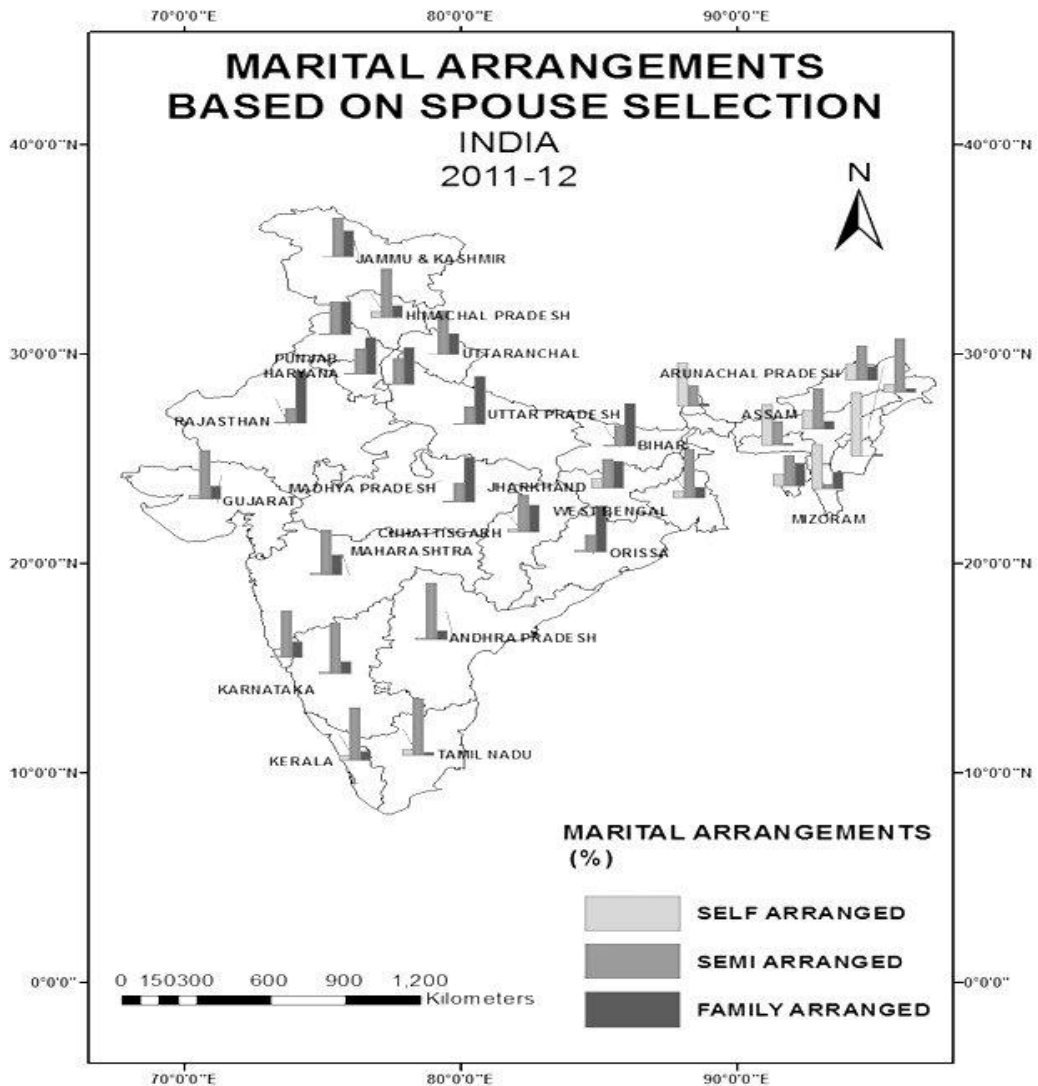
As marital arrangements and customs vary among regions in India, marital customs can be briefly discussed according to Irawati Karve's (1953) work "Kinship Organization in India". Karve (1953) has divided India into four Kinship regions based on the interrelationship of the kinship organisation and the linguistic divisions. These marital practices can be briefly shown in Table 3 below. The three kinship regions are north, south, central, and the fourth region, i.e., the eastern region, she states, is not concrete (Uberoi, 1993). The Northern Zone comprises Punjab (West Punjab is now part of West Pakistan), Kashmir, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, and parts of Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal and Assam. Some of the family and marital features of this zone are early marriage, gauna ceremony, marrying out of the village (village exogamy), caste endogamy, marriage with a stranger (or not able to meet before marriage), polygamy (which is allowed for males but not for females) and the purdah system (where women keep large veils to cover face before the elders of the house). Families are large and joint, and the bride's father does not eat in the house where the daughter is given after marriage. All these practices make it difficult for the girl to have her choice in marriage. The Central Zone comprises the states of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Odisha. Essential features of the Central Zone are marriage with paternal or maternal cousins, and many castes are divided into exogamous clans; among some castes, hypergamy also exists. The Southern Zone comprises Karnataka, Goa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Dominantly patrilineal and patrilocal, there are instances of cross-cousin marriages, or a man marrying his elder sister's daughter (a man marrying his younger sister's daughter is taboo); widow-remarriage is practised. Hence a girl always marries someone older than herself and younger than her parents. Karve (1953) states that the Eastern Zone is less compact than the above three zones. It includes people of the northeast and east who speak Mundari and Monkhmer languages, and the marriage practices of this zone are yet to be deciphered.

Map 1 below gives a pictorial representation of the three marriage types in all the states of India. It shows that self-arranged marriage in India is highest in Northeastern India. The northeast's kinship pattern differs from the rest of India because of the higher tribal population and more significant influence from Christian missionaries. The STs of the Northeast (especially the Nagas of Manipur and Nagaland) have a comparatively higher SMAM (Singulate Mean Age at Marriage) than the STs of the rest of India. This can be attributed to the late marriage of the Nagas due to many mass migrations of the youth to metropolitan towns in search of better education and jobs. With better education and job, women marrying late also possibly marry out of their own choice (Jeermison & Sahoo, 2019). On the other hand, Jharkhand shows a comparatively higher percentage of self-arranged marriages because of the higher tribal population and their different marriage practices. Women of tribal communities are supposed to enjoy more decision-making power, and some enjoy property rights (Xaxa, 2004).

In North India, most states have family-arranged marriages as the dominant form of marriage except Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. There is a higher percentage of semi-arranged marriages in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand than in the rest of North India because, in these two states (especially in Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh), a particular form of polyandry called Himalayan Polyandry is being practised. Besides, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand states are the Pahari part of Northern India, where women have much more freedom than women elsewhere in Northern India (Berreman, 1962), and norms of village exogamy is not present in most of the villages here in the Pahari area of North India. However, some tribes of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, like Kinnauras and Bhots, still practice polyandry, although most are now gradually shifting towards monogamy (Gautam and Kshatriya, 2011). J&K behaves so because it is

Muslim-dominated, and Muslims practice kin marriages, therefore higher semi-arranged marriages in Jammu & Kashmir. On the other hand, the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Odisha have the highest percentage of family-arranged marriages as they fall within the belt of North Indian Kinship, where women have a lower autonomy, and poverty forces their parents to marry their daughter early and without their consent. Haryana also has a higher percentage of family-arranged marriages as couples in Haryana who violate the norms of caste endogamy, or rules of gotra or village exogamy, may have to succumb to violence from the family members as well as caste panchayats (Grover, 2009).

Map 1: Spatial Variation in Spouse Selection Pattern of Women in India, 2011-12



Source: Prepared by the author using IHDS II data

Semi-arranged marriages are comparatively higher in the southern states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu due to the greater autonomy of females in the South than in the North. Besides, kin marriages in some Southern states allow women to [get to] know the man getting married before marriage. In addition, other development factors like female literacy positively changes female spouse selection decision-making. The percentage of Semi-Arranged marriages is also high in West Bengal because of the rise of the modern city of Kolkata, the surrounding marketplace culture, the new print culture and the rising middle class that responds to love marriages in stable terms (Donner, 2002; Majumdar, 2009). All these changes are a result of the British capitalism that was mainly rooted in West Bengal, which transformed the traditional social practices related to marriage giving a more significant say to females in spouse selection while still adhering to the arranged marriage culture as only those love marriages that are inter-community and inter-caste are said to cause conflicts in the family.

Certain states have witnessed changes since the 1950s, so the classification has been modified to suit the changes. Since then, West Bengal, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Bihar have experienced administrative and socio-economic changes. As a result, these new states have bifurcated from their older states. Besides, modernisation has changed these states' spouse selection patterns. Hence, these are now grouped as Central states. Also, the tribal-dominated states of the Northeastern region have been clubbed into the fourth category, i.e., the eastern zone, thereby making the group compact. On the other hand, Rajasthan has been regrouped in the Northern zone because of the high prevalence of child marriages in the state (Census of India, 2011).

Table 3: Practices in the different kinship regions- A comparison

Kinship Regions	Inter-caste Marriage	Consanguineous Marriage	Patrilocal Residence	Purdah/Burkha Practise	Same Village	Amount of Dowry (in percentage)		
						Low	Medium	High
North	6.40	4.30	98.10	82.40	3.80	31.20	48.40	20.40
Central	4.90	5.40	98.10	69.70	7.60	43.60	33.50	22.90
East	8.70	0.80	94.10	65.80	28.50	65.40	18.00	16.60
South	3.80	19.90	97.00	14.20	18.50	40.90	29.10	29.90

Source: Calculated by the author using IHDS II (2011-12)

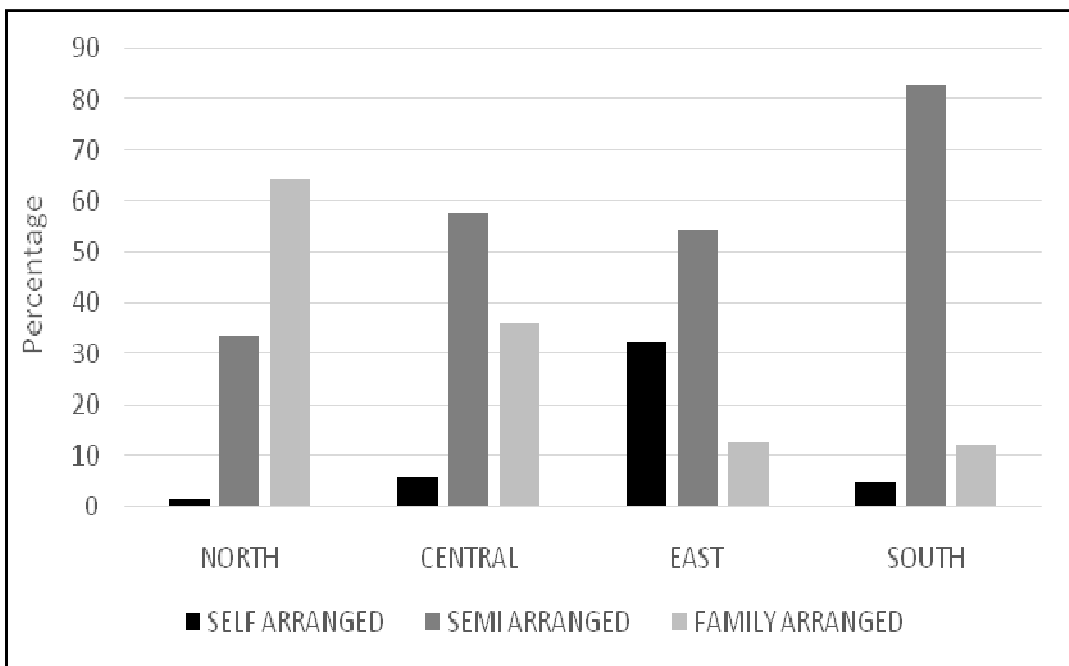
Table 3 above summarises the prevalence of different kinship practices in all four kinship regions delineated by Irawati Karve (1953) and modified as explained above in statistical form. Anthropologists find that the regional dimension of Indian kinship prevails over the other diacritical markers influencing culture and marriage practices. It states that inter-caste marriages are very low in all four regions because of the stronghold over caste (Patel, 2010). Although love marriages or the proposal to choose someone of their own may create conflicts with their parents and community; usually only those marriages that are inter-caste or inter-community create issues and are considered to deviate from the norms (Donner, 2002). Similarly, consanguineous marriage is practised more in the southern and central zones. Although more kin marriages might signify more natal family support and premarital acquaintance with the in-laws and the husband, it might also signify a more significant burden for the girl to split time between the in-laws and the natal family and also give lesser freedom to say no to a marriage proposal that comes from the relatives in case she does not want the marriage

(Rahman and Rao, 2004). Patrilocal residence means that the girl has to stay with the husband's family, with whom she is hardly acquainted, which is comparatively higher in the North and Central zones. This might imply that in areas of neolocalism or matrilocality, women have more autonomy as they are not under the control of their in-laws, which might lead to the greater exercise of rights and reduced practice of *purdah/burkha* after marriage in such regions. Areas of village exogamy are often associated with caste endogamy, where there exists a geographic 'circle of exclusion' as to where a woman should marry thereby (Raju, 2011). Therefore, the post-marital residence of women away from their natal home makes a woman an instrument by which she cannot claim any right over her parent's property nor be allowed to remain in touch with her parents. Also, dowry or gift given by the bride's family during a marriage is practised in northern and southern regions. The eastern region shows lower instances of dowry. Nevertheless, cash given as a gift is higher in the southern region compared with other regions of India (Soy & Sahoo, 2016).

Karve's work has been critiqued by many social scholars who state that there is no representation of the lower castes, particularly the 'untouchables' in the kinship practices of India (Gough, 1956). Also, the Indian kinship organisation is subtly equated with Hindu kinship. Eastern India, including earlier Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, has been chiefly neglected over the North Indian Kinship system. She has also been critiqued for trying to distinguish between the North and the South and making a line between the two regions based on marriage consolidation (in the South) with expansion (in the North), allowing more freedom to women in the South than the North.

Figure 2 shows that the northern zone mostly has family-arranged marriages as the dominant form (64.6 per cent of the total), followed by semi-arranged marriages. This indicates that women have less participation in spouse selection. Therefore, in North India, arranged marriage is still the idealised form of marriage (Grover, 2009).

Fig 2: Marriage arrangements based on spouse selection (2011-12): A regional representation



The Central Zone also shows a mixed pattern as the percentage of family arranged marriage is less than in the northern zone (but more than in the southern zone), and semi-arranged marriage is

more than in the northern zone but lesser than in the southern zone. Women in the Southern Zone have a higher percentage of semi-arranged marriages (around 80 per cent), whereas the eastern zone has a high percentage of both semis (around 53 per cent) and self-arranged marriages (around 33 per cent).

As a whole, semi-arranged marriage is high in all four regions, but the relative degree of the involvement of the woman and her parents and related cultural and customary patterns vary across the regions. As discussed above, the North India Kinship system and the marital practices here lead to more seclusion of women and lower participation in decision-making concerning her life decisions. The central zone, which has typical characteristics of both the north and south, shows a more significant percentage of semi-arranged marriages due to the greater economic participation of women in developed states like Gujarat and Maharashtra, as they have financial resources to search for potential partners via matrimonial websites. Also, some castes of Gujarat and Maharashtra speak Indo-Aryan languages but remain Dravidian in kinship (Trautmann, 1981). Hence, women will likely get married to someone already known. Similarly, Odisha, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh states have a higher percentage of tribal populations contributing significantly to the higher percentage of semi- and self-arranged marriages. As marriage opportunities are determined by factors like region, religion, caste, economic well-being and the relative number of men and women of marriageable ages; therefore women in the South find themselves in a better position to exercise agency in mate selection (Banerjee, 1999). Besides, consanguinity leads to better acquaintances with the marriage partner before the wedding. The Eastern Zone has a higher prevalence of semi-arranged and self-arranged marriages due to the higher tribal population and matrilineal and matrilocal societies. In the eastern zone, family-arranged marriages are as low as in the South, showing the better status of females.

Conclusions

The spouse selection pattern of women in India shows that about 55 per cent of women have semi-arranged marriages, and around 40 per cent have family-arranged marriages, with only a small percentage of women in self-arranged marriages. However, the strange part of the marriage process is that most women, around 68 per cent, have met their husbands on the wedding day. Furthermore, around 62 per cent have neither met their husbands before the wedding nor seen their husband's photos or conversed over the phone. This shows that marriage decisions are taken mainly by parents. As younger birth cohorts have more agency in mate selection, thus spouse selection patterns are changing with increasing autonomy given to females now. Besides, age at effective marriage and her mother's education positively give women a greater say in mate selection. Other developmental factors, like urbanisation, positively affect women's say in spouse selection. Also, women from Scheduled Tribes have more say in spouse selection than women from other caste groups.

In most regions, kinship rules perfectly explain spouse selection patterns. However, there are large variations in spouse selection patterns among states and regions, with the northern states and region falling mainly into the northern kinship belt and family-arranged marriages, in contrast to the southern region with a high percentage of semi-arranged marriages due to a high number of consanguineous marriages. The central region and states in the central zone have a mixed pattern, and among the eastern zone, the state of Manipur tops the list of self-arranged marriages. The differences in spouse selection patterns among states are accountable to the different cultural practices in the regions of India; the Northern states still favour endogamous caste marriages and village exogamous

marriages, and the Southern states prefer consanguineous marriages. Therefore, women's relative says marriage increases as we move from the north of India to the centre, then to the South and east. Many states like West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Rajasthan, carved after Karve's work in 1953, belong to the Central Zone of India (except Rajasthan and Odisha) now show a shift in behaviour towards more semi-arranged marriage. Thus, education, age at marriage, urbanisation and caste play a strong role in determining the type of marriage, yet kinship and marital practices that vary among different regions, continue to have a strong hold on marriage-related decisions.

Since 'consent' varies with the degree of involvement of women in the marriage and cannot be fully measured, efforts to increase women's participation in marriage have been few. Few of the initiatives taken by the government in this field relate to safeguarding the interests of those who opt for inter-caste or inter-religion marriage, such as the Special Marriage Act 1954. As inter-caste and inter-religion marriage is still taboo in India, the Special Marriage Act allows two people from different religions to marry without renouncing their religion. In some cases, the Act claims to be the only legally correct mechanism to record such a marriage, but the literature on this Act speaks of considerable problems in applying this law. The present study can also include the implications of these marital choices on her future decision-making and the impact of this decision-making upon other aspects like women's employment after marriage.

Acknowledgements: The authors thank Jawaharlal Nehru University for providing extensive support and resources that helped write the paper.

References

- Allendorf, K., & Ghimire, D. J. (2013). Determinants of marital quality in an arranged marriage society. *Social Science Research*, 42(1), 59-70.
- Allendorf, K., & Pandian, R. K. (2016). The decline of arranged marriage? Marital change and continuity in India. *Population and Development Review*, 42(3), 435-464.
- Banerjee, K. (1999). Gender stratification and the contemporary marriage market in India. *Journal of Family Issues*, 20(5), 648-676.
- Banerji, M. (2013). Are the young and the educated more likely to have "love" than arranged marriage? A study of autonomy in partner choice in India. *IHDS Working Paper* 08.
- Banerjee, P. (2006). The acts and facts of women's autonomy in India. *Diogenes*, 53(4), 85-101.
- Berreman, G. D. (1962). Village exogamy in northernmost India. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 18(1), 55-58.
- Bhakat, P. (2015). Involvement of youth in marriage related decision making in India. *European Scientific Journal*, ESJ, 11(10).
- Bhopal, K. (2011). 'Education makes you have more say in the way your life goes': Indian women and arranged marriages in the United Kingdom. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 32(3), 431-447.
- Census of India (2001). Retrieved from http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2001_common/census_data_2001.html

- Desai, S., & Vanneman, R. (2015). *India Human Development Survey-II (IHDS-II)*. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR36151.v6>
- Desai, S. R., McCormick, N. B., and Gaeddert, W. P. (1989). Malay and American Undergraduates' Beliefs About Love. *Journal of Psychology and Human Sexuality*, 2(2), 93-116.
- Donner, H. (2002). One's own marriage': Love marriages in a Calcutta neighbourhood. *South Asia Research*, 22(1), 79-94.
- Ghimire, D. J., Axinn, W. G., Yabiku, S. T., and Thornton, A. (2006). Social change, premarital nonfamily experience, and spouse choice in an arranged marriage society. *American Journal of Sociology*, 111(4), 1181-1218.
- Gough, E. K. (1956). Brahman Kinship in a Tamil Village I. *American Anthropologist*, 58(5), 826-853.
- Grover, S. (2009). Lived experiences: Marriage, notions of love, and kinship support amongst poor women in Delhi. *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 43(1), 1-33.
- Hettige, S. T., Graner, E., & Amarasuriya, H. (Eds.). (2014). *Youth and Social Transformation: Improving Life Chances of Youth in Sri Lanka*. A joint publication of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and Social Policy Analysis & Research Centre, University of Colombo.
- Jeermison, R. K., & Sahoo, H. (2018). Changing Pattern of Marriage Among Tribals in Northeast India. *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies*, 4(2), 281-300.
- Jeejeebhoy S.J. (2000). Women autonomy in rural India: Its dimension, determinants, and influences of context, In H.B.Presser, and GitaSen (ed.), *Women's Empowerment and Demographic Process*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jejeebhoy, S. J., Santhya, K. G., Acharya, R., and Prakash, R. (2013). Marriage-related decision-making and young women's marital relations and agency: Evidence from India. *Asian Population Studies*, 9(1), 28-49.
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, agency, achievements: Reflections on the measurement of women's empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435-464.
- Kapadia, K. M. (1955). *Marriage and Family in India* (3rd ed.). Bombay: Oxford University Press.
- Karve, I. K. (1965). *Kinship Organization in India* (2nd ed.). Bombay: Asia Publishing House. (1st ed. 1953; 3rd ed. 1968).
- Kishor, S. (1997) 'Empowerment of women in Egypt and links to the survival and health of their infants', Paper Presented at the *Seminar on Female Empowerment and Demographic Processes, Lund* (April, 20-24).
- Majumdar, R. (2009). Looking for Brides and Grooms. In *Marriage and Modernity: Family Values in Colonial Bengal* (pp. 23-53). Duke University Press.
- Palriwala, R., & Kaur, R. (2014). Introduction – Marriage in South Asia: Continuities and transformations. In R. Kaur and R. Palriwala (ed.), *Marrying in South Asia: Shifting Concepts, Changing Practices in a Globalising World* (pp. 1–27). New Delhi: Orient Blackswan.
- Pande, R. (2015). 'I arranged my own marriage': arranged marriages and post-colonial feminism. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 22(2), 172-187.

- Patel, T. (2010). [Review of Contentious marriages, eloping couples: Gender, caste, and patriarchy in northern India, by P. Chowdhry]. *Sociological Bulletin*, 59(1), 146–148.
- Gautam, R. K. & Kshatriya, G. K. (2011). Polyandry: a case study of Kinnauras, *Indian Journal of Physical Anthropology and Human Genetics*, 30 (1-2), 145–161.
- Raju, S. (2011). Introduction: Conceptualising gender, space, and place. *Gendered Geographies: Space and Place in South Asia*, 1-30.
- Rahman, L., & Rao, V. (2004). The determinants of gender equity in India: examining Dyson and Moore's thesis with new data. *Population and Development Review*, 30(2), 239-268.
- Rao, V. V. P., & Rao, V. N. 1982. *Marriage, the Family and Women in India*. South Asia Books: New Delhi, India.
- Rapp, D., Zoch, B., Khan, M. M. H., Pollmann, T., & Krämer, A. (2012). Association between gap in spousal education and domestic violence in India and Bangladesh. *BMC Public Health*, 12(1), 467. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-12-467>
- Sandhu, K., and A. Mani (1993) *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.
- Soy, N. F., & Sahoo, H. (2017). Marriage arrangements and customs in India. *Social Science Spectrum*, 2(4), 248-262.
- Trautmann, T. R. 1981. *Dravidian Kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Uberoi, P. (Ed.) (1993). *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Xaxa, V. (2004). Women and gender in the study of tribes in India. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 11(3), 345-367.
