



A SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF IMPACT OF WESTERNIZATION AND MODERNIZATION ON HINDU RITUALS

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ABSTRACT

Over a period of time there is a change in the rituals because of a number of processes like urbanization, westernization, modernization, globalization, and information revolution. A change has been noticed in style of life, values and above all priorities of life, that has led to change in rituals as well as the change in the method of their observance, but this change has not been documented. We need to do in-depth studies of change in rituals and its impact on family life and on social relations. The institution of marriage has undergone a change over the years, the time taken and the methods of match-making have also undergone a change.

Rites, Rituals and customs play a major role in the life of every person irrespective of their religious affiliations. This is more prominent in the case of Hindus. Right from the time of conception and birth up to a person's passing away and even after it, rites and rituals follow a Hindu at all times, much like a shadow. (Bhalla, 2007) Indeed there is some rite, ritual or custom that comes into play for Hindus all 365 days of the year. However, unlike other religions where many customs are mandatory. Hindu way of life is comparatively flexible with people in different regions following variable customs and traditions while a monotonous way of life could figuratively kill many people from sheer boredom, the Hindu rituals and customs enliven Hindus' daily existence. Besides, they also ensure that in the hustle and bustle of daily life, in the materialistic era, people do not lose sight of spiritual goals.

Ritual is a ceremonial or formal solemn act, observance or procedure done in accordance with a prescribed rule or custom. Rituals are meant to induce change or reflect a change that is already taking place. The rituals can be classified into multiple categories based on various schemes such as temple vs home, Agamic vs Vedic, regional vs all India and textual vs popular. Popular indigenous categories of ritual include yojna (fire worship). Samskara (rites of passage), Utsava (festival), Vrata (vows) archana (offering at a temple) and puja. Most of these categories are fluid and often component ritual steps overlap one another (Venkatesh : 2004). Here the focus of our study is on a class of rituals collectively called Sanskara (rites of passage). Rites of passage can be grouped under five important heads. They are :

1. Prenatal Rituals
2. Rituals of childhood
3. Educational Rituals
4. Marriage Rituals
5. Funeral Rituals

The prenatal rituals include conception (garbhadana), quickening of male child (pumsavana) hair parting (Simantonayyana). The rituals of childhood include birth ceremonies (Jatkarma), Name giving (namkarna), first outing (niskramana), first solid food feeding, (annaprasana), tonsure (Chudakarana) and boring the ears (Karnvedha). The educational rituals include learning of alphabets (vidyarambha),



initiation (Upanayana), beginning of vedic study (Vedarambha), shaving of beard (Kesanta) and the end of studentship (Samavartama). The rituals of marriage include all those ceremonies related to marriage (Vivaha). The last rites or funeral rites include all those connected with the death.

Over a period of time there is a change in the rituals because of a number of processes like urbanization, westernization, modernization, globalization, and information revolution. A change has been noticed in style of life, values and above all priorities of life, that has led to change in rituals as well as change in the method of their observance, but this change has not been documented. We need to do in-depth studies of change in rituals and its impact on family life and on social relations. The institution of marriage has undergone a change over the years, the time taken and the methods of match making has also undergone a change.

Moreover except naming ceremony, tonsure ceremony, marriage and funeral rites, other Sanskaras are not observed by majority of Hindus now. Rather some new rituals are replacing them and the mode of their observance is affected by Western style. Birthday celebration, superannuation celebrations and many more are additions to and some where replacing the old rituals. All these changes need an empirical study to see precisely the magnitude of change in rituals and its impact on family and society at large. This study is a humble attempt in this direction.

METHODOLOGY

The universe of the study is district Bijnor of Western U.P. There are five Tehsils in this district out of which Tehsil Nagina is selected for the present study. Nagina is a small town and a Municipal area. It is a 'Wood craft city'. In addition, it has many powerloom units and sugar industry also. We selected two densely populated residential areas of Naginatown by random sampling: Mohalla Mughlan and Manak Chowk and the three Villages named Jeetpura, Begampur and Budawala for intensive study. We took voter's list of all these areas and selected married Hindu ladies of all ages. We took respondents of all the three generations to ensure a comparison of observance of rituals over a period of time. We took 10% sample, comprising 350 respondents from Nagina town and 150 from the villages. Thus we selected a total of 560 respondents for this study. Observation and Interview Schedules were prepared to collect primary data. Respondents were interviewed at their homes and data thus collected was tabulated, analyzed and interpreted to get the results. The important results of this study are as under:

1. Out of the sixteen rituals (Sanskaras) there are only four that are followed by 100% of respondents. These are naming ceremony (Namkaran), tonsure ceremony (Chudakaran), Marriage ceremony (Vivaha) and Funeral (Antyesthi). There are five rituals that are not followed at all by 100% respondents. These are conception (Garbhadhan), Pumsavana (For a male child), Vedarambha (starting the study of Vedas), adolescence (Kesantha for boys and Ritukala for girls), Samvartra (completion of education).
2. Conception, though important is not at the priority of the four aims of Hindu marriage (Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha), Lust (Kama) is at the first priority, so marriage is consummated on the very first night and conception is delayed by the use of contraceptives. Conception occurs accidentally and is no more a sacred ritual as is prescribed to be done on the fourth night before the first intercourse by invoking deities.
3. As regards pumsavana Sanskar (for the birth of a male child), it is no more observed. It is not so that son-preference has decreased in the society. Son preference is very much there in Hindu society, but in spite of depending on this Brahminical ritual whose chances of success are fifty-fifty, people are following fool proof and scientific method of ensuring a male child and that is through the use of ultrasound scanning. So, there is no need to invoke gods and observe this Sanskara.
4. As regards vedarambha i.e. starting the study of Vedas, it is no more observed by the respondent of this study. In the wake of modern education, only those subjects are studied, which give us,



- guaranteed employment. Study of Vedas can enlighten you with knowledge, but can not provide you a handsome job. So, the observance of this Sanskara has been dropped by the Hindus.
5. Adolescence ceremony (Kesantha for boys and Ritu Kala for girls) is no more observed. It used to be observed to make the children aware of their physical changes how to cope with them and help them overcome their hesitation in joining the young adult community. Nowadays the media make the children mentally mature much before puberty. They already had so much information, about the approaching manhood/ womanhood, that there is no need of observing this Sanskara.
 6. Samvartra (Completion of education) Sanskar was observed when children returned home after the completion of education. Now a days the centres of higher learning are either within the city or if far away children come home frequently in summer and winter holidays. Moreover completion of education is not a joyous occasion to be celebrated. It is so because higher education is no guarantee of a well paid job in this era of competition. So, the observance of this Sanskara has been dropped by the respondents.
 7. As regards SimantonayyanaSanskra, 67% of the respondents observed it, while 33% have already dropped it. From among the first generation 82.61% observed it, whereas 75% of the IIrd and 17.65% of the IIIrd generation were found to observe 1%. So the observance of this Sanskara is on the decline (4.1)
 8. In our sample 65.20% of the respondents were found to observe JatkaramaSankara (Birth Ceremony) 100% of the 1st generation 62% of the IIrd generation and 29.41% of the IIIrd generation respondents observed it. Though still the new born is made to lick honey, but not as a ritual. As a ritual father used to make the child lick honey mixed with ghee by writing OM with it on his tongue with a gold spike and before the severing of the umbilical cord (4.2).
 9. As regards first outing (NishkramanSanskara) 66.40% of the respondents were found to observe it. 78.26% of the first generation 73.33% of the second and 25.88% of the IIIrd generation were found to observe it. Most of the deliveries now-a-days are done either in Hospitals or Nursing homes. On the discharge from the hospital, child is automatically exposed to the outer world. So there is not much relevance of the observance of this Sankara (4.4).
 10. As regards AnnarprasanaSanskara (first solid food feeding), 70.40% of the respondents were found to observe it 86.96% of the first generation, 80.67% of the IIrd and 11.76% of the IIIrd generation respondents were found to observe it. Now a day's solid food is given to the child on the advice of a child specialist and it is no more observed as a ritual (4.5).
 11. Ear piercing (Karan Vedha) ceremony has been found to be observed in 17.40% if the respondents only. 43.48% of the 1st generation, 10.67% of the second and 5.88% of the IIIrd generation respondents observe it as a ritual. The observance of this ritual is found to be decreasing (4.6).
 12. With regard to learning of alphabets (Vidyarambha) Sanskar, only 3.60% respondents observed it as a ritual in the traditional way, though importance of education is known to all, yet it is not observed as a sacred ritual child starts learning alphabets, when he get admitted to the school. In our sample 13.04% of the 1st, 1.00% of the IIrd and 0% of the IIIrd generation respondents were found to observe it (4.7)
 13. As regards initiation Sanskara (Upanayana) 50.20% of the respondents observed it. On further analysis 65.22% of the Ist, 52.67% of the IIrd and 21.18% of the IIIrd generation respondents were found to be observing this rituals for their sons. It is surprising that initiation, the most pious of all the rituals that confer the status of twice-born (dwija) on the upper three castes is now observed only by 50.20% of the respondents. It shows the decline in the observance of rituals among the Hindus (4.8).
 14. VivahaSanskara (Marriage) has undergone a sea change over the years. Marriage proposal was earlier mediated through Brahmins or relatives and now through newspaper and internet. In our



- sample 86.96% of the 1st generation respondents has Brahmin as the mediator and 13.04% have a relative as a go between to finalise the marriage proposal. In the second generation 6.67% respondents reported that Brahmin was the mediator in their marriage, whereas 86% had relative and 7.33% had their marriage negotiated through advertisement in the Newspaper. From among the IIIrd generation none had a Brahmin as a mediator, 58.82% had a relative 29.41% had negotiated their marriage proposal through advertisement in the news paper and 11.17% through internet (Table 5.1)
15. In the marriage of children 43% respondent (Parents) wanted to exercise their own decision whereas 57% parents wanted to marry children according to their choice. In the 1st generation 100% parents wanted to exercise their choice whereas the corresponding percentage in the IIInd generation is 33.33% and 0% in IIIrd generation. It shows a paradigm shift in the attitude of parents (Table 5.2)
 16. The analysis of data show, that 23% of the respondents had their choice in their marriage whereas 77% had no choice. From among the 1st generation none of the respondents, from the IIInd generation 13.33% and from the finalization of their marriage proposal (Table 5.3). It shows a change in the attitude of parents over a period of 60 years.
 17. In our sample 13% respondents had done intracaste marriages. There was no instance of interreligious marriages in our sample. On further analysis it was found that none from the 1st, 13.33% from the IIInd and 29.41% from the IIIrd generation had done intracaste marriage (Table 5.4) coincidentally only 13% respondents were in favour of intracaste marriage of their children and rest 87% preferred intracaste marriages. (Table 5.5)
 18. The data shows that 11.60% of the respondent were in favour of love marriage of their children whereas 88.40% were not in favour of them. none of the 1st, 6.67% of the IIInd and 44.70% of the IIIrd generation were in favour of love marriages (table 5.6)
 19. In our sample 59% respondents married between the age of 15 to 20 years, 24% between 20 to 25 years, 17% above the age of 25 years. Further analysis shows that 100% of Ist generations married between 15 to 20 years whereas the corresponding percentage for IIInd and IIIrd generation is 60% and 0% respectively. 26.67% of the IIInd and 47.06% of the IIIrd generation respondents married between the age of 20 to 25 years 13.33% of IIInd and 52.94% of the IIIrd generation respondents married above the age of 25 years. Thus age at marriage is on the rise (5.7).
 20. It was found that 57% of the respondents of our study had no gap between marriage and cohabitation whereas 43% had observed gauna. Out of the later 22% had a gap of 1 month, 12.40% had a gap of 6 month and 8.60% had a gap of 1 year between marriage and gauna (5.8).
 21. The marriage celebration that look a couple of days earlier are now over in a couple of hours. in our sample 16% respondent told that their marriage took three day's time, whereas 17% had it in two days and 67% had it in one days only (5.9)
 22. The saptpadi took a time of 5 hours for the Ist generation, whereas the corresponding percentage for IIInd and IIIrd generation are 4% and 0%. 96% of the IIInd generation had their saptpadi completed in three hours whereas 100% of IIIrd generation had their saptpadi completed in two hours only.
 23. It was found that in the case of 16% respondent dowry was demanded. Inter generation analysis reveals that 0% of Ist, 16.67% of the IIInd and 35.29% of the IIIrd generation respondent reported that dowry was demanded in their marriage. The above analysis distinctly shows a change in marriage rituals among the hindus.
 24. While some traditionally sacred ritual have been dropped, at the same time some new western rituals have been added to the list of hindus rituals. Birthday of children according to tithi of vikramsamvat is celebrated by 43.47% respondent of the 1st generation in a traditional way. 23.33% of the IIInd and 100% of the IIIrd generation respondent celebrate the birthday of children by first performing puja at the temple and them cutting the cake. So there is continuity of tradition as well as



- change in the method of celebration (6.1).
25. Birthday of the mother (respondent) in the family is not observed by the respondents of the Ist generation, 10% of the IInd and 100% respondent of the IIIrd generation are found to observe it. Exactly similar trend is found in the celebration of birthday of the father in the family. It was not a tradition in the Ist generation, whereas 10% of IInd and 100% of IIIrd generation respondent are found to celebrate it.
 26. Wedding anniversary celebration is found to be observed in 13.03% respondent of the Ist 16.67% of the IInd and 100% of the IIIrd generation respondent. It is also a western ritual added to the list of hindu rituals.
 27. Mother's day celebration started in Greek and then United States President Woodros Wilson signed a resolution for having a dedicated mother's day on May 8,1914. In a period of less then a decade,it has become popular in india. It is not celebrated by the respondent of Ist and IInd generation. But all the (100%)respondents of IIIrd generation are found to observ it as a day to say a big thank you to the mothers.
 28. Valentine day is also a western tradition to express love and to celebrate the spirit of love. It has invited much opposition from the traditionalists in India. None of the respondent from the Ist and IInd generation are found to celebrate it, whereas all the respondent of IIIrd generation celebrate it,the respondents gave gift to their hasbands (valentine) on this day.
 29. Retirement day is also a new addition to the list of rituals. None of the respondents of Ist generation are found to observe it,whereas 10% of the IInd and 100% of IIIrd generation respondents are found to celebrate it with their colleagues, friends and relatives.
 30. Respondents told the reasons for not observing all the sixteen sanskaras. 44% respondent was of the opinion that they could not observe rites of passage for lack of time. 43% told that lack of resources is the cause of not observing sanskaras whereas 53% did not observe the rituals as they are not important in the modern life in 21st century.moreover they are outdated and has no relevance in their lives (7.1)
 31. The respondents about the impact of not observing rituals on the relations in the family. All the respondents of 1st generation the experienced one 13.33% of the 2nd and 10.59% of 3rd generation admitted that it does affect the quality of relationship, Now a days, there is not mych intimately in the family relations because they do not much intimately in the family relations because they do not partake that sacred atmosphere created while observing the rituals. The reasons for leaving traditional rituals as given by respondents are modern education which appeals to the brown and not to the heart. Role of media in glamorizing new rituals and indifference towards the old. Further the women were at the hub of affairs in observing family rituals. Now with here new role as a working women an equal partner in learning for the family, there are other priorities before her and she is hardly left with the energy to follow the traditional rituals. (7.2)
 32. Respondents of rural community observe all the Sanskaras more in comparison to Urban community. 80.67% of Rural respondents observe Simantan Sanskaras, whereas 61.14% of urban observe it. 84.66% of rural observe Jatkarma Sanskaras whereas 56.85% of urban observe it. 70% of rural respondents observe Annaprassan Sankara, whereas 70.57% if Urban observe it 39.33% of rural observe Karanvedahweheras 8% of urban observe it. 60.66% of rural observe Upnayana Sanskara Whereas 45.71% of Urban observe it. Thus it proves the hypothesis that Rituals are more strictly adhered to in rural community than in Urban (4.9)
 33. It is found that Sanskaras are more strongly observed in joint families than tin nuclear families. 79.45% of rural respondents observe Simantan Sanskara whereas the corresponding figures for nuclear is 33.33% 81.36% of joint families observe Jatkarma whereas 21.48% of Urban observe it. 80.82% of jopint families observe Annaprassana Sanskara whereas 42.22% of the nuclear observe it.



34. It has also been found that women play a proactive role in the observance of Sanskaras. Thus it proves the hypothesis that women are more keen to observe the Sanskaras than men.
35. It has also been found that increase in economic status leads to decrease in the observance of Sanskaras. 61.19% of lower income group respondents observe SimantanSanskara, whereas only 31.94% of the middle and 6.87% of higher income group observe it. 64.11% of lower income group observe Jat karmaSanskara whereas 31.60% of the middle and 4.29% of higher income group observe it. 57.10% of lower income group observe AnnaprasanaSanaskarawheras 31.82% of middle and 11.08% of higher income group observe it. Whereas 25.29% of middle and 20.69% of higher income group observe it. 27.78% of lower income group observe VedharambhaSanskara, wheras 33.33% of middle and 38.89% of higher income group observe it. 49.40% of the lower income group observe UpnayanaSanskara, wheras 39.05% of the middle and 11.55% of the higher income group observe it. Thus it proves the hypothesis that indifference towards rituals increases with increase in Socio-economic status. (4.11)
36. We could not find any conclusive evidence about the impact of education on shortening of rituals, so the hypothesis that there is a tendency towards shortening of rituals with increase in the label of education stands rejected (5.13 & 5.14)
37. Our system of education is the legacy of Britishers so we tried to see the impact of westernization on rituals through education. In our sample 27% respondents are below Matric, 49% are intermediate and 24% are Graduates and above, as regards SimanatanSanskara 82.22% of under-matric observed t, whereas 75.51% of inter and 32.50% of Graduate & above observed it . as regards Jat karma Sankara, 85.19% of under Martic 77.14% of Inter and 18.33% of Graduate & above observed it. As regards Annaprasana Sankara, 88.15% of under metric 80.41% of inter and 21.67% of GRadutes and baobe observed it. As regards karanvedha Sanskara 36.29% of the Under-Metric 12.65% of inter and 5.85% of Graduates and above observed it. As regard Vidhyarambha Sanskara 6.67% of under matric 2.86% of inter and 1.67% of Graduate& above observed it. As regards Upanayana Sanskara 73.33% of under metric 46.12% of inter and 32.50% of Graduates & above observe it (5.12). so the hypothesis that the inclination towards observance of rituals decreases with increase in the level of winterization is proved.

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