



# Economic and Biological Functions of Marriage

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primary being the data which was collected for the PhD thesis of my study, "Delayed marriages causes and consequences."

## I. INTRODUCTION

The institution of marriage is back bone of every society. It is a sweet relationship between the husband and the wife. The development of this relation is co-related with the development of every civilized society in any part of the world. It is as old as down of the civilization. However, the nature and the concept of marriage under various personal laws keep on changing with the changes in the society and social order. The general concept of marriage requires the subsistence of the social unit of 'Family' which is the foundation of every society."<sup>1</sup>

According to Ajay K. Vashvesha "Marriage is an institution which is in vogue since time immemorial and it is almost uniformly regarded as a sine-qua-non for upgrading and cherishing moral and ethical values in the society and to discipline the man who is distinguished from animal because of his rational sense which is wanting in animal."<sup>2</sup>

Marriage is the usual fate of most of the adult persons. According to the Bentham:- "under whatever point of view the institution of marriage is considered, nothing can be more striking than the utility of this noble contract, the tie and society and the basis of civilization, and that to perceive its benefits, it is only necessary to imagine for a moment what man would be without that institution." "The essential thing about marriage is that it is a stable relationship in which a man and a women are socially permitted without loss of standing in a community, to have children. In some tribal societies an unmarried girl may give birth to a child without loss of standing provided that she gets married soon afterwards; sometimes, in fact this proof of fertility is necessary before a girl can get a husband."<sup>3</sup>

A marriage as an institution of society has multiple functions which may include social, biological, political, economic, religious, psychological etc. and so on.

In this paper tow functional aspects of marriage have been taken for study 1. Economic.

Methodology: In order to undertake the study, primary as well as secondary data has been utilized. The secondary data being the historical one and the

## II. ECONOMIC FUNCTIONS OF MARRIAGE.

It is maintained that in the early periods, an individual married because of the practical problems related to getting a living. These practical problems were that people wanted children for economic reasons. They wanted them as security against wants when they (parents) could no longer work for themselves. They also wanted more women to work on fields. According to the Bowman(1960), the basic objectives of marriage are sex gratification, desire for home and children, companionship, social position and prestige, and economic security and protection. Popenoe (1951) has talked of five elements of marriage: mating urge, division of labour, desire for home and children, comradeship( sexually as well as non- sexually covered), and economic security.

According to Majumdar (1944:78), although regularized and socially sanctioned sex gratification is a basic reason for marriage ( and the formation of family), yet it is not the only nor the final cause. He gives the example of Sema Nagas among whom a child marries his father's widows ( other than his mother) to get possessions of the property because according to their tribal custom, not the children but man's widows inherit his property. Thus, Mujumadar believes that the objects of marriage are : sex gratification, need for a dependable social mechanism for the care and rearing of children, transmission of culture, economic needs, inheritance of property.

During the Vedic and post Vedic periods ,in the economic field women enjoyed freedom. Home was the place of production, spinning and weaving of clothes was done at home. Women helped their husbands in agriculture pursuits as well. Some women were engaged in the teaching work too.<sup>4</sup>

The most economic advances in early society, were made by women rather than men. While for centuries, he clang to his ancient ways of hunting and herding, she developed agriculture near the camp, and those busy arts of the home which



were to become the most important industries of the later days. It was apparently she who developed sewing, weaving, basketry, pottery, wood working and building and in many cases it was she who carried primitive trade. But when agriculture become more and more complex and brought larger rewards, the stronger sex took more and more of it into his hands. The growth of cattle-breeding gave the man new source of wealth, stability and power: even agriculture was at last accepted by the wandering male and economic leadership which till age had for the time given to women was arrested from them by men”<sup>5</sup>

Economically women was entirely dependent upon men, the earning member of the family. However much she might contribute to the resources of the family by way of the domestic work she did, there was no recognition of it.

Nevertheless, women in all classes, except the wealthiest, who could afford the luxury of employing servants, did all the household work. Cooking was mostly done by women. In families of average means, women drew all the water for household purposes, ground flour required for the day's consumption, women performed all the household chorus. Among the poorer classes, the wife was real help mate, doing all the housework as also giving a helping hand in the trade of the man. For instance, in case of potters, women prepared the earth, and later sold in the market the wares prepared by their husbands; in the case of textiles, women did the spinning, men took care of weaving; among fishermen, men caught the fish, women sold them in the market. Thus, women joined men in their occupation. There were, however, certain vocations which women adopted independently, especially those, who either had nothing but their own labour to depend upon, or those who need to supplement the income of the male member of the family chief among them were spinning and grinding corn. In case of the Brahman women cooking was a popular occupation. For others some of the common occupations were those of bangle sellers, milk-seller, grain-parcher, dung-fuel-seller, etc. hair dresser (nain) and mid-wife (Dai) were regular professions. In families where females were kept in strict seclusion, poor women, found occupation as water carriers, scavengers, washer-women, etc. Some domestic trades such as *chikan* and embroidery net-work, basket and fan making, vermicelli making, etc. were also carried on by women. Among the agriculture classes, who formed the bulk of the population, women bore a good share of labor, in the Punjab the women of Jats and Rors of kamboks and Arains and similar minor

agricultural tribes worked regularly in the fields with the men. In the hills women of all but Brahmans and Rajputs worked in the fields; in the higher hills almost the whole of the field work; not always excepting ploughing was done by women; the men working as carriers and coolies. On the frontier, the pathan women worked generally in the fields. In Assam hills, women performed hard toil working in the fields and carrying heavy loads uphill. They had plenty of spirit and could generally hold tier own.<sup>6</sup>

The family fulfills the economic needs of its members. This has been the traditional function of family. Previously, the family was an economic unit. Goods were produced in the family. Men used to work in family or in farms for the production of goods. Family members used to work together for this purpose. It was to a great extent self-sufficient. Family provides the home for its members. The desire for home is strongly felt in men and women. Children are born and brought up in homes only. Even the parents who work outside are depend on home for comfort, protection, and peace<sup>7</sup>

On a very practical level, marriage provides economic benefits for married couples and their families in many direct and indirect ways. On a direct level, third parties, such as the state and employers, often provide benefits for the beneficial treatment of married couples. On an indirect level, marriages provides a legal framework for family life that promotes interdependence and enhances economic efficiency for couples and families.<sup>8</sup>. Taken as a whole, the legal and economic benefits of marriage support the economic goals of efficiency and security for families.

B.P. Beri while explaining the object of marriage says that it is the source of every domestic comfort from infancy to old age.<sup>9</sup>

Traditionally speaking. in Kashmir, “the Muslims ( Musalmans,) if possible, marry their daughters to some near relation, and if this is not possible, they ask some man of their own tribe, who has more sons than money, for a boy whom they take into their house (khanadamad a sort of Beena marrigae). when a man's daughter is three years old, and he cannot arrange for her marriage with a near relative he will take a boy into his house (khanadamad), , and this boy, until he marries the daughter of the house, has to work like a drudge. The custom of *kahndamd* is very popular. It has two advantages. In the first place, the father of the girl receives a drudge who works like a slave for seven years, and in second place, the expenses on betrothal and marriage are very small. There is a moral obligation, on the part of the boy to work, and on the



part of the father to give his daughter in marriage to the boy. It frequently happens that when a boy is taken into the house a deed of gift is executed, and in this case, if the boy leaves the house, the property covered by the deed of gift remains with the boy.”<sup>10</sup>

Man’s life is interconnected with various living and non –living things. His life depends on social, political, economic, ethical, philosophical and other aspects of social system, which when combined together form a complete society so, all the spheres whether political, social, ethical or economic, form an important part of a particular society. Likewise, economy too has an important place in man’s life. Without this aspect, the history of a particular society would be incomplete.

Women in Kashmir might have played a dual role- producers of goods and services as well as their domestic chores and wives and mothers. The economic activities of the people of Kashmir during ancient times revolved round agriculture , trade and various artistic activities. But agriculture was the mainstay of people and a large proportion of population was dependent on agriculture for their income from the very ancient times i.e, from Neolithic period onwards. The agriculture process involved a number of activities from preparing the soil, to sowing of seeds, to cultivation of plants, to protection of fields, to harvesting of crops and its subsequent appropriation.

“ However, given the comparative strong physical stature, the contribution of the men in Kashmir” <sup>11</sup> in the overall input labour must have been relatively larger. He must have entailed hard labour. On the other hand Neolithic women must have been, as they are now, largely engaged in such smooth family affairs as cooking collection of edibles, fruits, roots weaving and stitching garments. Thus, the reason to believe that the women folk of cultivators work in the fields with their men folk and contributed to the economy by actively participating in the agriculture functions.<sup>12</sup>

In the past, the women in the traditional Kashmir society were in a paradoxical situation while their social role was projected as minimal, they participated actively in social, economic and other activities. The occupations of women furnish a subject of much interest and importance.<sup>13</sup>

Women belonging to various occupational groups worked with their men both within and outside their homes for livelihood. Generally, the Kashmiri women from time immemorial were professionally restricted to agriculture, spinning, weaving and latter confined to work in handicraft sectors , besides preparing food women’s most

laborious work was that of husking and grinding grain.<sup>14</sup>

The role played by the women in the families of artisan class supplemented their husband’s work. In rural areas, all women worked side by side with their family members in the agricultural fields. Thus the Kashmiri women in urban as well as in rural areas worked in and out of their homes and were socially and economically productive.<sup>15</sup>

“Given manifold responsibilities, man must have been getting support from his family members, particularly from his spouse in every social make up the spouses have been essentially contributing together in sex regulations, biological reproduction and socialization of their young ones. Both of them performed various economic functions. Like arranging food and shelter for the family as a whole- a phenomenon authenticated by Burzahom’s stones slab engraving depicting a man and woman undertaking a joint venture of hunting. This piece of archeological information is significant not because it furnishes us material for supporting the idea that they must have worked shoulder to shoulder in other fields as well”<sup>16</sup>

Marriage seems to be a wealth – creating institution. Married couples build more wealth on average than otherwise similar singles , even those with similar incomes.<sup>17</sup>

The economic advantages of marriage stem from more than just access to two incomes. Marriage partners appear to build more wealth for some of the same reasons that partnership in general are economically efficient, including economies of scale, specialization and exchange. Marital social norms that encourage healthy, productive behavior and wealth accumulation (such as buying a home) also appear to play a role. Married parents also more often receive money or gifts from both sets of grandparents.<sup>18</sup>

A large body of research throughout the developed world finds that married men earn between 10 and 40 percent more than do single men with similar education and a job.<sup>19</sup>

While selection effects may account for part of the ‘ marriage premium’ (i.e women tend to prefer marrying men who are good earners rather than lower- earning men),<sup>20</sup>.

The most sophisticated, recent research appears to confirm that marriage itself increases the earning power of men, in the order of 15 percent.<sup>21</sup>

Married men appear to have greater work commitment, less likelihood of resigning, and healthier and more stable personal routines (including sleep, diet and alcohol consumption).



Husband also benefits from the work efforts and emotional support that they receive from wives.<sup>22</sup>

Marriage promotes wellbeing in many areas including health, happiness, and economic stability. By promoting healthy behaviors, marriage provides substantial benefits \_\_benefits not enjoyed by those who are unmarried (waite, 1995,1999,2000a, 2000b; waite& Gallagher, 2000). While earlier works had suggested that marriage confers great benefits on men, Waite argues that both married men and women are happier, healthier, and wealthier than those who are un married. The married have more economic resources because they share income, pensions, social security benefits, financial assets, and their primary residence. married couples benefits from economies of scale ( that is, two live as cheaply as one). In addition, married people produce more than the same individuals would as single. By developing certain skills, married individuals develop greater efficiency. This advantage increases husbands' work productivity, leading to higher wages.<sup>23</sup>

The economic benefits of marriage for society include less poverty and welfare dependence, because married-parent families are less likely to live in poverty .with fewer people on welfare , government would have a broader tax base. Along with reducing poverty and welfare dependence, marriage generate more revenue in the economy since married people have higher incomes and greater wealth.<sup>24</sup>

### III. BIOLOGICAL FUNCTIONS OF MARRIAGE:

**Biological importance:** The fundamental basis of marriage is defined as "a personal association between a man and a woman and a biological relationship for mating and reproduction. Biologically, the object of marriage is not to legalize it as sexual union, but rather to ensure the survival of the species and of the race. From this point of view, marriage is not merely a sexual relationship, but a parental association. It is the union of male and a female for production and care of offspring and reproduction, therefore, another fundamental object or purpose of marriage."(stone, 1939: 18).

Thus the main objective of the institution of marriage has always been to provide for posterity and the continuance of human race. Interpreting marriage, Radcliffe-Brown says that in certain societies a man may be said to have relatives by marriage long before he marries and indeed as soon as he is born into the world. This is provided by the institution of the required or preferential marriage. Marriage as a physical as well as a moral union is

recognized by society as the basis of a family. It may be sacrament and in that way an indissoluble union for this life and hereafter, as in the case of a staunch Hindu or Roman Catholic, or a temporary civil contract for a fixed period as in the case of a Muta marriage among the Shia Muslims. But whether a sacrament or a civil contract, the relationship, above sexual satisfaction, is to join two members of opposite sexes for the procreation of legitimate children. In the words of H.M.Stone and Abraham stone, " while particular marriages may, of course, be entered into for any number of other reason as family pleasure, social conveniences, financial considerations and similar motives, basically the prime object of marriage are companionship, sexual intimacy and procreation." Stone, 1939: 21)

E.E.Evas-Pritchard say that the sex is mainly bounded with marriage and the first sexual play occurs in imitation of one of the domestic routines of married life. It occurs in response to a cultural, and not to an instinctive, urge.(Evans-Pritchard), 1951:50). S.J. Tambiah says citing B.Z. Zeligman and a committee of the Royal Anthropological institute of great Britain and Ireland that marriage is a union between a man and a women such that children born to the woman are recognized legitimate offspring of both parties.<sup>25</sup>

Marriage is one of the most important events of life affecting social status as well as the psyche of an individual. It not only serves to satisfy the fundamental biological need of sexual gratification through a socially acceptable way but also helps the individual to achieve a higher level of personality maturation. Historically marriage existed in one form or another in every culture, ensuring social sanction to a physical union between man and women and laying the foundation for building up of family. Nambi(2005)<sup>26</sup>

The most important function of marriage is to beget children. The society gives recognition to children born out of wedlock and the children thus born are ascribed status as per the norms of the society. A society basically channelizes the sexual rights through the institution of marriage and it helps in mating within rules and regulations as ascribed by a society. This helps in maintaining the norms of incest taboo also.<sup>27</sup>

Health is a multidimensional concept that encompasses a large array of measures, including behavioural, physical, and emotional outcomes. One important way that marriage may affect overall health is by increasing the likelihood that people will engage in healthy behaviors (such as exercise and eating a balanced diet), while also reducing



various risk-taking behaviors ( such as smoking or drinking heavily). Marriage may affect these kinds of behaviors in a variety of ways, and the expected direction of these effects is not always clear. For example, new responsibilities and social norms associated with marriage may encourage people to give up certain behaviors considered incompatible with married life, such as heavy drinking or drug use. In addition, marriage may have a substantial influence on how adults spend their time – reducing the amount of time spent socializing with friends, for example ,these changes may lead to a reduction in alcohol consumption, if marriage causes people to be less likely to go out to social events that involve drinking. If the responsibility of family life reduce the time available for exercise, these changes may lead also lead to a reduction in the amount of physical activity. Having a spouse to monitor one’s behavior may encourage healthier living habits--- such as a better diet, less heavy drinking and more physical attractiveness, making them less worried about their weight and the amount of exercise they get.

The effects of marriage on health care access and use may also contribute to overall effects of marriage on health. For example, just as spouses may influence health related behaviors such as diet and alcohol use, they might also encourage the use of preventive health service such as cancer screenings or regular physical exams. Marriage might improve access to care by increasing the material resources available to purchase care or by providing access to a spouse’s health insurance policy. To the extent that marriage affects patterns of health care access and use, it might also have consequences for an individual’s health care cost.

Marriage may improve access to health care by increasing access to health insurance. For unmarried people without a regular source of insurance, marriage often affords the opportunity to become insured as a dependent on a spouse’s health insurance policy. The option of dependent coverage also provides some protection against becoming uninsured in the event of a job loss, a career change, or the decision to stop working to return to school or raise children. Even when both members of a couple have their own source of insurance, marriage improves access to care by providing some freedom to combine health plans or to choose the best option among several plans.

Other research show that, in addition to improving access to health care (as measured by access to health insurance), marriage shapes patterns of health care use. Spouses can influence health care use by monitoring a partner’s behavior, helping

a partner navigate the formal health care system to find appropriate and high-quality care, and providing basic social support services (such as transportation to doctor’s appointments) and informal postoperative care after surgeries or other medical procedure. To the extent that married people view keeping in good health as part of their overall commitment to marriage, they might also have more motivation to seek necessary health care service.

Marriage may have important influences on mental health. A happy marriage provide substantial emotional benefits. For many people, marriage creates an important sense of identity and self-worth( Gove et al.1990). Moreover, a spouse may provide emotional intimacy and support, fulfilling an essential human need for connection (house et al. 1988). Consequently, married people may be happier, more satisfied, and less depressed than those who are unmarried. These emotional benefits may, in turn, improve their physical health, by reducing the toll stress, depression, and other mental health problems can take on physical well-being.

As discussed earlier marriage reduces certain health risk behaviors (in particular, heavy drinking); improves access to health insurance; and improves mental health(in particular, reducing depressive symptoms). Therefore , it follows that marriage may also have benefits for physical health and longevity. Indeed, studies consistently show that married people live longer and enjoy better physical health than unmarried people.<sup>28</sup>

The effects of marriage on health: A synthesis of Recent Research Evidence. Prepared for department of health and human services office of assistant secretary for planning and evaluation office of human service policy task order no 9 by Robert G. Wood, Brain Goesling, Sarah Avellar, Mathematica policy research, Inc june19,2007

Children who live with their own married parents enjoy better physical health, on average, than do children in other family forms. Marriage appears to have a protective effect on children’s physical health and life expectancy, whilst divorce and unmarried childbearing have the opposite effects.<sup>29</sup>

Longitudinal research,(a longitudinal study is an observational research method in which data is gathered for the same subjects repeatedly over a period of time. Longitudinal research projects can extend over years or even decades.) which follows individuals over their life course, suggests that parental divorce increases the incidence of health problems in children, perhaps by up to 50 percent.<sup>30</sup>



Marital status remains a powerful predictor of infant mortality, even in countries with nationalized health care systems and strong supports for lone mothers.<sup>31</sup>

Both married men and women enjoy better health on average than do single or divorced individuals.<sup>32</sup>

Selection effects may account for this part of this differential (i. e. healthier people are more attractive marriage partners to begin with), although research has found no consistent pattern of such selection.<sup>33</sup>

for example, men with health problems are more likely to remarry than are otherwise similar healthy men. However, men with healthy lifestyles are more likely to marry other men.

one review of more than a dozen longitudinal studies concluded that, above and beyond the selection effect, 'marriage makes people live longer' and 'makes people healthier', and 'marriage quality and marital beliefs can increase these effects'.<sup>34</sup>

Marriage seems to offer a protective effect. Married people appear to manage illness and better, monitor each other's health, have higher incomes and wealth, and adopt healthier lifestyle than do otherwise similar singles.<sup>35</sup>

Marriage is associated with lower levels of debilitating illness. For those aged 40 and over, women and men in their first marriage are the least likely to report a limiting, long- term illness, followed by the remarried, the widowed, and the divorced or single.<sup>36</sup>

The most careful research into the health effects of marriage has taken place in the United states,, where a recent study of 9,333 Americans between the ages of 51 and 61 compared the incidence of major diseases as well as functional disability in married, cohabiting, divorced, widowed, and never – married individuals. 'without exception' the authors report, ' married persons have lowest rates of morbidity for each of the diseases, impairments, functioning problems and disabilities'. Marital status differences in disability remained 'dramatic' even after controlling for age, sex, and race.<sup>37</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSION:

The ideal marriage is of benefit. A marriage were the partner's share views, beliefs, and support each other in times of happiness and sadness, in times of wealth and in poverty. Also where the partners trust each other and value their relationship. God created Adam and Eve for good reason, to make each other happy. Marriage fulfills

the economic needs of partners. Marriage provides the framework within which people's needs are met and thus marriage benefits individual economically. It also benefits society. As a wealth generation institution, married couples create more economic assets on average than singles. Marriage and health are synergistic in human life. It is true that married people are more healthy and stable minded than a single. Early marriages have good effect on humans in respect of long life, less disease and useful citizen in society.

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