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Kavya CN

Research Scholar, Department
of Sociology, Kuvempu
University, Shankaraghatta,
Shivamoga, Karnataka.

Pavan Kumar HM

Research Scholar, Department
of Sociology, Barthiar
University, Coimbatore,
Tamilnadu state.

A sociological study on religious aspects in Hindu marriage system

Kavya CN, Pavan Kumar HM

Abstract

Hindu marriage is one of the important and universal institutions in Indian social system, which teaches the actual values of life. According to Hindu Shastra there are four stages of life, of which Grahastha Ashram or married life signifies the second stage. It joins two individuals for life, so that they can pursue dharma, artha, kama, moksha together. Hindu marriage involves many rituals and practices, such as vagdana, kalash stapana, homa, hardi, kangan, mangalyadharana, saphthapadi, guruhapravesh etc., in modern era Hindu marriage, wedding ceremonies, rituals and practices are changes caused due to number of factors, such as westernization, education, industrialization, urbanization and globalization. A study was carried out with the sample of 50 elder females of Hindu religion in Hassan city of Hassan district of Karnataka state. For this study, qualitative method was used. The analysis has been done on the basis of in-depth interviews with those who are elder females of Hindu religion in Hassan city. For this study, data was collected from 50 elder female by using both purposive and random sampling. The present paper aims to find out the changes in Rituals and Practices of Hindu Marriage. The main finding of the study shown that the reasons for changes of Hindu marriage rituals and practices, Such as modern education, job opportunity of male and female, influences of western life style, constitutional legislations, concept of love marriage, register marriage, inter caste and inter religious marriage, etc.,

Keywords: Religion and Marriage, Sociological Study, Hindu Marriage, wedding ceremonies

Introduction

Hindu marriage is one of the important and universal institutions in Indian social system, which teaches the actual values of life. According to Hindu Shastra there are four stages of life, namely, Brahmacharya, Grihasth, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa, of which Grahastha Ashram or married life signifies the second stage. It joins two individuals for life. It extends across seven or more lives, during which the couple help each other progress spiritually. The adage that marriages are made in heaven is very much true in case of Hinduism. Two souls come together and marry because their karmas are intertwined and they have to resolve many things together upon earth in order to ensure their mutual salvation, so that they can pursue dharma, artha, kama, moksha together. It also joins two families together. According to Hinduism there are eight different types of Hindu marriage. These are Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapathya, Gandarva, Asura, Rakshasa and Paishacha marriage. Among the eight types not all had religious sanction. The last four were not religiously defined and were condemned.

Hindu marriage is consummated through elaborate ceremonies presided over by a Vedic priest well versed in Vedic mantras. The marriage date is fixed after consulting the astrological charts and then invitations are sent. Before the marriage date, both parties spend a lot of time in preparation and exchange of gifts. On the marriage day, the bride and the bridegroom and relations on both sides assemble in a public auditorium or a temple premises, or in the house of the bride's parents and participate in an elaborate ceremony conducted by a priest.

The marriage is generally a lengthy affair. A lot of Vedic mantras are chanted during the ceremony, while a band plays on in the back ground. All the guests are entertained with food and beverages. In the main part of the ceremony the bridegroom ties a sacred thread (mangalsutram) or a gold chain around the bride's with three knots, accepts her hand in marriage (panigrahanam) and takes seven steps (saphthapadi) together with her, uttering vows

Correspondence

Kavya C.N

Research Scholar, Department
of Sociology, Kuvempu
University, Shankaraghatta,
Shivamoga, Karnataka.

of friendship, loyalty and righteousness. After this both of them play some traditional games between themselves to lighten the atmosphere and provide entertainment to the guests. This is followed by a gift ceremony during which the couples acknowledge the gifts brought by the guests for their wedding. The Hindu marriage rituals and practices are usually varied from region to region and caste to caste. However following are some of the most common and popular rituals and practices of Hindu marriage. Hindu marriage involves many rituals and practices in pre wedding and wedding day ceremony, such as selecting of the bride and groom by the parents, matching jathakam, engagement, kalash stapanam, homa, hardi, kangan, lawabhoonjana, feasting, swagatham, kanya agaman, kanyadan, hasta melap, rajahoma, manglyadharane, gath bandhan, panigrahana, mangalphera, saphthapadi, Jalastnchana, star gazing, sindhoor, ashirwad, breaking the fast, playing fun games, vidaay, etc. In modern era Hindu marriage, wedding ceremonies, rituals and practices are changes caused due to number of factors, such as education, legislation, westernization, industrialization, urbanization and globalization. Hindu marriage rituals are practicing by short duration. This study is about Religious aspects in Hindu marriage system. The concept of Hindu wedding has seen drastic changes, over the last few years. With changing time, people in India have accepted the concept of love marriage, inter caste and inter religious marriage. For this background we are trying to find out the changes in rituals and practices of Hindu marriage.

Review of Literature

The changes in Rituals and Practices of Hindu Marriage throughout the world are largely discussed amongst the academicians. But when we examine the available literature on changes in Hindu Marriage, we find that only a limited number of books and articles. However, here a few relevant studies have been reviewed.

Srinivas. A.V focused the study on The Vedic Wedding: Origins, Tradition and Practice. The study explains the intricate, step by step rituals giving clear and precise hands on instructions. The study is a solution for contemporary Hindu couples in the West who wish to fully comprehend their marriage ceremony. The study covers Hindu philosophy of marriage, the origins of the ceremony in the Vedas, Shastras, Grihya Sutras and popular traditions and customs, provide good preparation for understanding the ritualistic ceremony. The study helps to know the Hindu wedding rituals step by step.

Reena Roy (2014) [7] conducted a study on Traditional Marriage Customs in Rajasthan. The study carried out five families of Hindu religion for studying the tradition of marriage customs of Kayad village. The study revealed that religion, education, status of women and employment are playing significant role in increasing the age at marriage. The study discusses various types of marriages, attitudes, perception, about marriage in Rajasthan. The study also observed that change in the stereotype thoughts of people that they prefer education, instead of proposing early marriage for girls. The study use to identify the changes in traditional marriage.

Hemant Gopal in their study the Changing Concept of Hindu Marriage in Modern India focused changing attitude and concept the Hindu marriage. The study found that 46% of persons like a family bond, while 43% of persons want to assert their individual choice within the family set-up, and

11% of persons like a contract of choice. The study revealed that males prefer an educational homely bride, earning wife and professionally qualified wife. This study helps to notice the changes in the attitudes of people in modern society.

Objective of the Study

- To collect the information about demographic profile of the respondents.
- To study the changes in Rituals and Practices of Hindu Marriage.

Hypothesis

- Now a day Hindu Marriage Rituals and Practices are changing.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on the primary data which is collected from 50 elder females of Hindu religion in Hassan city of Karnataka state. Through the purposive and random sampling methods 50 elder female were selected to generate primary data. Detailed information of the attitudes and opinions of the respondents were collected through pre-tested structured interview schedule which is comprised of pre-coded and open – ended questions regarding objectives of the research. The primary data was collected employing interview schedule directly from the respondents and the secondary data were collected from books, journals and website related to Hindu marriage system. The data collections are processed in a systematic way. The data are edited for checking their completeness and accuracy. The data is tabulated and processed in the table by using computer.

Results and Discussion

Table1: Demographic Profile of the Elder Female

| Sl. No. | Options | Frequency | Percent |
|---------|----------------------------------|-----------|---------|
| 01. | Age | | |
| | 51-60 | 24 | 48 |
| | 61-70 | 13 | 26 |
| | 71-80 | 08 | 16 |
| 02. | Caste | | |
| | Above 81 | 05 | 10 |
| | Brahmins | 10 | 20 |
| | Vokkaliga | 15 | 30 |
| | Lingaitha | 15 | 30 |
| 03. | Educational Qualification | | |
| | SC-ST | 05 | 10 |
| | Others | 05 | 10 |
| | Illiterates | 18 | 36 |
| | 1-10 | 15 | 30 |
| | PUC | 08 | 16 |
| 04. | Marital status | | |
| | UG | 07 | 14 |
| | PG | 02 | 04 |
| | Unmarried | 00 | 00 |
| 05. | Family Structure | | |
| | Married | 27 | 54 |
| | Divorcees | 00 | 00 |
| | Widows | 23 | 46 |
| 05. | Family Structure | | |
| | Joint family | 13 | 26 |
| | Nuclear family | 37 | 74 |

The result pertaining to demographic profile of the elder female are depicted in table 01. The data table 01 revealed that 48% of respondents are in the age group of 51-60. 26%

of respondents are in the age group of 61-70. 16% of respondents are in the age group of 71-80, only 10% of respondents are in the age group of above 81. The data indicated that in the Hindu Religion 20% of them are Brahmins, 30% of respondents belongs to the Vokkaliga, 30% of them are belongs to lingaitha, 10% of respondents belongs to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, and remaining 10% of respondents are belongs to other castes of Hindu Religion. It was noticed that 36% of respondents are illiterates they were not get education more that because of their non interest and due to lack of co-operation by their family. 30% of respondents had education status of 1-10. And 16% of respondents got PUC education. 14% of them belong to Under Graduation, and only 04% of respondents Post Graduation. The data indicated that 54% of respondents married and remaining 46% of respondents are widows. It is observed that there is a decrease in the numbers of joint family we find 26% of respondents live in joint family and 74% of respondents are having nuclear families.

Table 2: Changes in Rituals and Practices of Hindu Marriage

| Aspects | Frequency | | Percent | |
|---|-----------|----|---------|----|
| | Yes | No | Yes | No |
| Selection of the bride and bride groom by the parents | 43 | 07 | 86 | 14 |
| Matching Jathakam | 38 | 12 | 76 | 24 |
| Engagement | 27 | 23 | 54 | 46 |
| Pre wedding Rituals and Practices | | | | |
| Kalash Sthapana | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |
| Homa | 44 | 06 | 88 | 12 |
| Hardi (Haridra Lepana) | 31 | 19 | 62 | 38 |
| Kangan | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |
| Lawa Bhoonjana | 38 | 12 | 76 | 24 |
| Rituals and Practices of wedding day | | | | |
| Feasting | 40 | 10 | 80 | 20 |
| Swagatham (Welcoming of Groom) | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |
| Kanya Agaman (Arrival of the Bride) | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |
| Jaimala (Exchange of Garlands) | 20 | 30 | 40 | 60 |
| Kanyadan (Giving Away of the Bride) | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |
| Hasta Melap (Joining of Hands) | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |
| Rajahoma (Sacrifice to the Sacred Fire) | 44 | 06 | 88 | 12 |
| Mangalya Dharane (Tying a Mangalsutra from Groom) | 20 | 30 | 40 | 60 |
| Gath Bandhan (Tying of the Nuptial Knot) | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |
| Pani Grahnam (Accepting the bride) | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |
| Mangalphera (Walk Around the Fire) | 44 | 06 | 88 | 12 |
| Saptapadi (Seven Steps Together) | 44 | 06 | 88 | 12 |
| Jalastnchana (Blessing of the Couple) | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |
| Star gazing | 40 | 10 | 80 | 20 |
| Sindhoor (Red Powder) | 20 | 30 | 40 | 60 |
| Aashirvad (Parental Blessing) | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |
| Breaking the Fast (Anna Prasan) | 40 | 10 | 80 | 20 |
| Playing fun Games | 43 | 07 | 86 | 14 |
| Vidaay | 26 | 24 | 52 | 48 |

Table 02 revealed that the opinion of elder females about changes in rituals and practices of Hindu Marriage.

Selection of the bride and bride groom by the parents: The first and the foremost step is the selection of the bride and the bridegroom. In the Hindu custom, the parents select the prospective bride/groom for their son/daughter. The result reveals that 86% of them felt that selection of the bride and bridegroom by the parents is changing because education and

equality concept of younger generation. The practice of young men and women selecting their life-partners by themselves is becoming popular today. And 14% of respondents felt that there are no changes regarding selection of bride and bridegroom by the parents. Even today some people give more importance to selection of mates by their family members.

Matching Jathakam: The use of jathkam of the son/daughter to match with the help of a priest is common. Jatakam or kundali is drawn based on the placement of the stars and planets at the time of birth. The maximum points for any match can be 36 and the minimum point for matching is 18. Any match with points under 18 is not considered as an auspicious match for harmonies relationship. If the astrological charts of the two individuals achieve the required threshold in points then further talks are considered for prospective marriage. The result shows that 76% of respondents are felt that regarding matching of jathakam people beliefs are changing through scientific notion. But 24% of them felt that still Hindu people are practicing matching jathakam of bride and groom.

Engagement: After the selection procedure is over, the family members of both the girl and boy ask the priest to suggest an auspicious date for the engagement. In the betrothal ceremony, the bride and bride groom exchange wedding rings among each other. Sweets and garlands are also exchanged among the couple. The result reveals that 54% of respondents felt that present generation directly getting marriage without engagement. But 46% of them felt that Hindu people are still giving importance to engagement ceremony.

Pre wedding Rituals and Practices

Kalash Sthapana: The Kalash or pitcher is symbolical of the universe and space. It represents 'the body' of God. According to the Karma Kanda and the ancient Rishis, the Sthapana or 'installation' of the kalash in all religious functions means that the Devas prevail here. "Hiranya garbha sama varta tagre" is sung in the Vedas – "Here, the devas prevail." 52% of respondents felt that regarding kalash sthapana people notion are changing and they don't give more importance for this ritual. But 48% of them felt that still Hindu people are practicing kalash sthapana as a main ritual of marriage.



Homa: After the various devis and devas have been ceremoniously invited to take their respective seats to grace the site of the nuptial ceremony with all due respect, prayers and offerings, the homa is performed. The fire is lighted in the havan kund or sacrificial basin placed in the Vedi made from the clay, brought symbolically during the matkor ceremony. The homa is the symbolical sacrifice performed

during the pre-wedding and also during the main wedding ceremonials. It is observed that majority 88% of respondents felt that in Hindu marriage ritual of Homa is changing. People are thinking that Homa is very time consuming, due to this reason people won't ready to do this practices. But 12% of them felt that there are no changes in Homa.



Hardi (Haridra Lepana): There is an undeniable sanctity attached to the Hardi ceremony. The Hardi ceremony is the application of turmeric paste on the bride and the groom at their respective homes. The term is given also to the ceremony of applying the turmeric paste. The custom is mentioned in ancient marriage manuals and is known as 'Haridra Lepana' (applying or smearing with turmeric). 62% of respondents felt that people change the style of haridra lepana. But 38% of them opined that there are no changes in haridra lepana.

Kangan: This is tied on the wrist during the performance of the "Haldi". Kanganas have also been tied on items used in the wedding ceremony. The kanganas tied with the chanting of mantras is for protection and benediction for the smooth and successful progress of the prayers. 52% of respondents felt that people are changing the pattern of traditional kangan they use multiple fashion bangles for marriage. But 48% of them felt that there are no changes in wearing traditional kangans.



Lawa Bhoonjana: In the early morning of the main marriage rites this rice is parched. This ceremony is known as the lawa bhoonjana. The daughters of the bride's or bridegroom's family - sister of the bride, bridegroom or father's sister are eligible for the ceremony. After the parching of dhan, they get neg or token money or a gift of sari. The parched unhusked rice is known as lawa or laja and is used in the main wedding rites known as Laja Homa. While the dhan is being parched, women sing songs. But these days it's performed right after the Hardi puja. The result shows that 76% of respondents felt that most of the people don't give more importance to lawa bhoonjana they practice as a namesake ritual. But 24% of them felt that there is no change in lawa bhoonjana.

Rituals and Practices of wedding day

Feasting: All the invitees to the marriage are served meals and sweetmeats, usually by the bride's parents. The bride and bridegroom are usually kept on fast till the marriage is officially completed. Majority 80% of respondents opined that Hindu younger people practices are changing regarding feasting because of less patience. But 20% of them opined that still people are practicing feasting as a compulsory ritual of Hindu marriage.

Swagatham (Welcoming of the Groom): The wedding day begins with the Swagatham or welcoming the Groom and his followers who are greeted by the bride's family, relatives and friends. 52% of respondents opined that welcoming of the groom practice is changing and 48% of respondents opined that there is no change in welcoming of the groom and their relatives.



Kanya Agamana (Arrival of the bride): The bride is usually carried into the Mandap by her maternal uncle and offers his blessings for the life here in after. The Antarpata or the white curtain separating the bride and groom - raised prior to the bride's entrance is lowered and the couple exchange garlands. 52% of respondents opined that concerned to arrival of bride practice is changing and 48% of them opined that there is no change in arrival of bride.



Jaimala (Exchange of Garlands): The couple exchanges garlands as a gesture of acceptance of one another and a pledge to respect one another as partners. 40% of

respondents opined that exchange of garlands importance is changing but majority 60% of them opined that still Hindu people give importance to exchange of garlands.



Kanyadan (Giving Away of the Bride): The bride's parents offer their daughter in marriage in a pious and solemn ritual called kanyadan. The concept behind Kanyadan is that the bride is a form of the goddess Laxmi and the groom is Lord Narayana. The parents are facilitating their union. 52% of respondents opined that kanyadan is the main ritual of Hindu marriage but it lost its traditional prominence. And 48% of them opined that in Hindu marriage still kanyadhan is practicing with its traditional prominence.



Hasta Melap (Joining of Hands): The parents of the bride place the bride's right hand into the groom's right hand symbolizing their renunciation, the groom's acceptance of the bride together with the acceptance of the responsibility to love, respect and protect her forever. 52% of respondents opined that hasta melap is last its importance and people practice as a name sake of ritual.



Rajahoma (Sacrifice to the Sacred Fire): The bride places both her hands into the groom's and her brother then places rice into her hands. Together the bride and groom offer the rice as a sacrifice into the fire. Majority 88% of respondents opined that in Hindu marriage ritual of Rajahoma is changing. People are thinking that Rajahoma is also very time consuming, due to this reason people won't ready to do this practices. But 12% of them opined that there are no changes in Homa.



Mangalya Dharane (Tying a Mangalsutra from Groom): Mangalsutra is the token of dignity and love given to a bride by her groom. On the wedding day, the groom ties the Mangalsutra around the neck of the bride with three knots, while the priest recites Vedic hymns and prays. It signifies the union of the bride and the groom, amidst the presence of deities, who are believed to be attending the marriage. 40% of respondents opined that mangalya dharane is the main ritual of Hindu marriage but it is losing its traditional value people are think that it is only thread of three knot. But 60% of them opined that still Hindu people have more traditional value regarding mangalya dharane.



Gath Bandana (Tying of the Nuptial Knot): The scarves placed around the bride and groom is tied together symbolizing their eternal bond. This signifies their pledge before God to love each other and remain faithful. 52% of respondents opined that Gath bandana is losing its value but 48% of them opined that Hindu people have value concerned to Gath bandana.



Accepting the bride (Pani Grahana): The groom holds the left hand of the bride with his right hand, as a symbolic gesture of accepting her as his bride, amidst Vedic chants and some accompanying rituals. 52% of respondents opined that panigrahana is famous ritual of Hindu marriage but today it is also losing its importance. But 48% of them opined that there is no change in panigrahana.



Mangalghera (Walk around the Fire): The couple makes four Mangalgheras around the fire in a clockwise direction representing four goals in life: Dharma, religious and moral duties; Artha, prosperity; Kama, earthly pleasures; Moksha, spiritual salvation and liberation. The bride leads the Pheras first, signifying her determination to stand first beside her husband in all happiness and sorrow. 88% of respondents opined that mangalghera practice is changing but only 12% of them opined that there is no change in mangalghera.



Saptapadi (Seven Steps Together): The bride and groom walk seven steps together to signify the beginning of their journey through life together. A pink cloth is draped over the bride shoulders and tied to the groom shoulder cloth. Then the couple walks seven steps together. Each step represents a marital vow:



- **First step:** Let us take this first step vowing to keep a pure household; avoiding things injurious to our health.
- **Second step:** Let us take this second step vowing to develop mental, physical, and spiritual powers.
- **Third step:** Let us take this third step with the aim of increasing our wealth by righteous means.
- **Fourth step:** Let us take this fourth step to acquire knowledge, happiness, and harmony by mutual love and trust.
- **Fifth step:** Let us take this fifth step to pray for virtuous, intelligent, and courageous children.
- **Sixth step:** Let us take this sixth step for longevity.

- **Seventh step:** Let us take this seventh step to vow that we will always remain true companions and life-long partners.

The study revealed that Majority 88% of respondents felt that Saptapadi is also an important ritual of Hindu marriage but today it is also losing its traditional value. But only 12% of them felt that still Hindu people have traditional value regarding saptapadi.

Jalastnchana (Blessing of the Couple): The parents of the bride and groom bless the wedded couple by dipping a rose in water and sprinkling it over the couple. 52% of respondents opined that jalastnchana practice is changing. But 48% of them opined that there is no change in jalastnchana.



Star gazing: The bride and the groom are shown either the pole star or the star of Arundathi, advising them to remain steadfast in their lives like the stars. 80% of respondents opined that stargazing practice are changing. And 20% of them opined that there is no change in practice of stargazing.



Sindhoor (Red Powder): Then the ritual of 'sindhoor' takes place where the groom applies a small dot of vermilion, a red powder to the bride's forehead and welcomes her as his partner for life. This signifies the completion of the marriage. 40% of respondents opined that sindhoor practice is changing with western concept. 60% of them opined that there is no change in practice of sindhoor.



Aashirvad (Parental Blessing): The religious part of the ceremony is capped off by the blessings of the officiating priest. The relatives and friends join in to throw rice and

flowers on the couple and express good wishes for the couple. The newlyweds seek Ashirvada, the blessing from the priest and parents by bowing down and touching their feet. The Bride and the Groom are now united and seek blessings from Lord Vishnu the Preserver and his consort Lakshmi, The Goddess of Wealth. 52% of respondents opined that changing of younger generation attitude towards parental blessing. And 48% of them opined that there is no change in practice of parental blessing.



Breaking the Fast (Anna Prasan): The couples share a meal together and express their mutual love and affection. 80% of respondents opined that breaking the fast is changing because today's generation can't ready to practice feasting. And 20% of them opined that still Hindu people practicing both feasting and breaking the fast.



Playing fun Games: The marriage rituals are usually followed by some fun games between the bride and the groom, such as picking a ring from a vessel filled with water, playing with flower balls etc. 86% of respondents opined that playing traditional fun games are changing and 20% of them opined that there is no change in playing traditional fun games.



Vidaay (Good bye): the last ritual of the ceremony is where the bride begins an important role in her life as a member of the groom's family. She throws a handful of rice so that the house of her childhood remains prosperous and happy. The day concludes with the bride living her family.

Major Findings and Suggestions

The important observations and findings are as follows.

- ✓ Now a day Hindu marriage rituals and practices are changing, through this study we are found some reasons for changes of Hindu marriage rituals and practices. Such as modern education, job opportunity of male and female, influences of western life style, constitutional legislations, concept of love marriage, register marriage, inter caste and inter religious marriage, etc.,
- ✓ Through our study we found that main rituals and practices are facing drastic changes, these are as follows.
 - Selection of the bride and bride groom by the parents
 - Matching jathakam
 - Homa
 - Hardi
 - Lawa bhoonjana
 - Feasting
 - Rajahoma
 - Mangalaphere
 - Sapthapathi
 - Star gazing
 - Breaking the fast
 - Playing traditional games are changing.
- ✓ But some of the rituals and practices are still following by the Hindus with many modifications, those are as follows.
 - Engagement
 - Kangan
 - Swagatham
 - Kanya Agaman
 - Jaimala
 - Kanyadan
 - Hastha melap
 - Mangalyadhane
 - Gath bandana
 - Pani Grahana
 - Jalastnchana
 - Sindoor
 - Ashirvad
 - Vidaay are still practicing by short duration.

Suggestions

- The basic approach should be inculcated the practices among Hindu people regarding traditional rituals and practices of Hindu marriage.
- Hindu Family should be deciding to practice of traditional rituals and practices.
- The awareness should be increased in the Hindu young generations of Indian society to practice rational rituals and practices of Hind marriage.

Conclusion

In Shastric Hindu marriage is considered as a sacrament, which was an indissoluble union of men and women forever, but the society has changed by the new ideologies. In modern society the concept of Hindu marriage becoming a civil contract. The present study is an attempt to find out changing rituals and practices of Hindu marriage. This study is deals with the pre wedding rituals and rituals of wedding day. Through this study we can find maximum rituals and practices are changing because of education, job opportunity

of male and female, influences of western life style, constitutional legislations, concept of love marriage, register marriage, inter caste and inter religious marriage, etc., and also some rituals and practices of Hindu marriage are still following by the Hindu people but those are practicing by short duration. Thus, it can be concluded that the concept of Hindu rituals and practices has taken a changing form and shade.

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