

**AGENCY IN MARITAL CHOICES AMONG YOUNG
PROFESSIONALS IN URBAN INDIA:
A STUDY OF LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS IN DELHI-NCR AND
BENGALURU**

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE

OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

ANTHROPOLOGY

BY

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AUGUST 2022



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DECLARATION

I, Pantangi Sita Santhoshi Sravanthi hereby declare that this dissertation titled *“Agency in marital choices among young professionals in urban India: A study of live-in relationships in Delhi-Ncr and Bengaluru”* submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. George Tharakan C. is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/ INFLIBNET.

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Parts of the thesis have been presented in the following conferences/seminars:

1. ‘Dynamics of urban marriage and family in India: An analysis of live-in relationships in New Delhi’ at the Indian Anthropology Congress 2019: *Anthropology for Developing India – Pathways to Policy Planning and Implementation* held during 21st-23rd February 2019 organised by Department of Anthropology, Savithribai Phule Pune University, Pune.
2. ‘Swipe for love: An analysis of the role of social networking platforms in the formation of romantic relationships’ in the ICSSR sponsored seminar on Urban Transformation: Changes and Challenges in 21st Century on 3rd and 4th March 2020 in the Department of Sociology, University of Madras, Chennai.

Publication:

‘Language as identity: A Study of the Social Organization of Koya of Kamaram’ in *Tribal Identity: Contradictions of Ascribed and Self Asserted perspectives*” edited by Jesurathnam Devarapalli, Kalpaz Publications, Gyan Books, ISBN : 978-93-5324-935-9 (HB), 2022.

Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of coursework requirements for PhD/ was exempted from doing coursework (recommended by Doctoral Committee) on the basis of the following courses passed during his M.Phil. program and the M.Phil. degree was awarded.

Course No.	Title of the Course	Credits	Pass/Fail
AN 701	Advanced Anthropological Theories	4	Pass
AN 702	Advanced Research Methods	4	Pass
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Acknowledgements

Pursuing Doctoral research is often not an easy decision to make, given the task of managing research and life simultaneously. I would like to begin this section by thanking the one person who encouraged me to pursue academic research by identifying my passion and ability to do fieldwork. I sincerely thank Dr. George Tharakan C., my supervisor and guide who has been the strongest pillar of support throughout this journey and has encouraged my ideas by enriching them with his valuable suggestions and his expertise. As I pen this down, I am filled with a deep sense of reverence and gratitude for his guidance not just in pursuing research but also pursuing a career in academia.

I sincerely thank my Doctoral Committee members Prof. Sudhakar Rao and Dr. Appa Rao from the Department of Anthropology and Dr. Pushpesh Kumar from the Department of Sociology for periodically reviewing the progress of my work and providing their valuable suggestions to refine my ideas, methods and analysis.

I sincerely thank Prof. B. V. Sharma, Head-Department of Anthropology, for his constant support throughout the tenure of the research. I humbly thank all the faculty of the Department of Anthropology, University of Hyderabad for imparting the foundational knowledge of the discipline of Anthropology and also for their suggestions at various stages of research.

I sincerely thank University of Hyderabad for giving me this opportunity for pursuing higher education and I thank the University Grants Commission for conferring the Junior Research Fellowship which formed the operative financial support for fieldwork in Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru.

I sincerely thank all my informants from Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru for spending their valuable time with me and consenting to be a part of the study. While some informants built an instant connect and displayed a sense of enthusiasm in discussing their personal relationships, others displayed caution at first to be clear about the objectives and outcomes of the research. Nevertheless, in course of time these informants also developed a rapport and contributed significantly in helping me understand both marriage and live-in relationships. Keeping in view

the privacy requisites of my key informants, their names have not been revealed in any part of this document. This work would not have been possible without the love and support of my dearest informants, some of with whom I have made lasting friendships.

I thank my dear friends and fellow scholars Dr. Anil Gopi and Dr. Simpul Behera who motivated me as we stood by each other throughout our highs and lows. I also thank my fellow research scholars Dr. Abir Majumdar, Dr. Sipoy Sarveshwar and Sudheer Kumar who I reached out to for academic support and career advice.

I sincerely thank my family - my mother, father and brother for always regarding my ambitions as their own and supporting me in all my pursuits. Lastly, I thank my dearest husband on whose unconditional love and support I banked on throughout the course of this endeavour.

Pantangi Sita Santhoshi Sravanthi.

	CONTENTS	PAGE NO.
	Declaration	i
	Certificate	ii
	Certificate (Course work)	iii
	Acknowledgements	v
Chapter 1	INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter 2	ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE	34
Chapter 3	PREVALENCE AND PERCEPTION OF LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS	57
Chapter 4	LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS AND PATTERNS OF CONJUGALITY	98
Chapter 5	LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIP AS AN EXPRESSION OF AGENCY	144
Chapter 6	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	190
	<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	
	<i>LIBRARY SIMILARITY INDEX REPORT</i>	
	<i>APPENDIX I</i>	
	<i>APPENDIX II</i>	
	<i>APPENDIX III</i>	

LIST OF TABLES	PAGE NO.
2.1 Age wise distribution of respondents in live-in relationship	39
2.2 Age wise distribution of respondents (general perception)	40
2.3 Educational qualification of respondents in live-in relationships	41
2.4 Educational qualification of respondents	42

LIST OF FIGURES/CHARTS	PAGE NO.
2.1 Professional profiles of respondents in live-in relationships	44
2.2 Professional profiles of respondents (general perception)	45
2.3 Religious affiliation of respondents in live-in relationships	47
2.4 Religious affiliation of respondents (general perception)	48
2.5 Migration status of respondents in live-in relationships	51
3.1 Familial acknowledgement of live-in relationships	70
3.2 Extensive usage of dating applications in Delhi and Bengaluru	92
4.1 Confirmity/non-confirmity to gender roles in live-in relationships	112
4.2 Confirmity/non-confirmity to gender roles in general respondents	112
4.3 Sharing of wedding expenses	126
4.5 Article regarding adoption by live-in couples (The Hindu)	135
4.6 Article regarding lifting of ban on adoption by live-in couples	136
5.1 Genealogical depiction of arranged marriage in Hussain Dalal and Prateeksha Virk's families	149
5.2 Respondents notion of increasing age at marriage	154
5.3 Post-marital residence pattern	158

5.4 Response regarding courtship before marriage	160
5.5 Opinion on societal recognition of relationship	166
5.6 Typology of live-in relationships	167
5.7 Transition from live-in relationship to marriage	185

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Kinship, marriage and family as social institutions have been the core aspects of the subject matter of anthropology in the formative years of the discipline. These aspects provided an impetus to study the social organisation of what were considered as simple societies. In these societies, which were believed to be stateless, kinship and marriage seemed the guiding principles of social organisation. Malinowski and Meyer Fortes emphasized the importance of studying the family as the unit of domesticity, but the clear distinction between the “domestic” and the “politico-jural” domains of kinship has been credited to Fortes as these aspects of political and religious domains and the office and succession to the positions of these institutions were determined by kinship in simple societies (Carsten 2004, 10). The prime example of such a work is that of the segmentary lineage system of the Nuer (Evans-Pritchard 1940) and the clan system among the Tallensi (Fortes 1945). Therefore, it was the norms and their perpetuation that provided coherence and a sense of order to these societies and this was considered the most important aspect of research. Terminological classifications, cross-cultural comparisons of these classifications made an attempt to fit societies into one or another category without consideration for the several processes that occur across these institutions of kinship, marriage and family. The role played by women and their voice was missing in the scheme of analysis.

Levi Strauss’s alliance theory in *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* shifted the focus from the study of kinship based on descent to a study based on rules of marriage (Carsten 2004). The coherence of social structure was attributed to the alliance relationship between clans or phratries and spoke of the exchange of women between a set of these units as the characteristic feature of

the social structure of the society. A critique of the theory was provided by Rodney Needham, “who felt that Levi-Strauss’s distinction between prescription and preference, which was also that between model and reality for Levi-Strauss, was inadequate, and frequently unclear” (Parkin 1997, 157). In both theories of descent as well as alliance, the roles that women played in culture were highly normative and this is evident from the articulation of the theories itself i.e., the emphasis on sister exchange or the perpetuation of the patri-line, where women became mere objects in the schema of culture or social structure rather than active agents in the entire process (Carsten 2004).

The post-modern approach critiques the “gender blindness” inherent in “Western thought and practice” that translates into anthropological enquiry and ethnography (Rapport and Overing 2000). The perspectives and opinions of women were either underrepresented or not represented altogether in ethnographies. The earlier ways of doing ethnography became troublesome as “disciplinary presuppositions and procedures needed to be radically reconsidered” to include women’s voices (Rapport and Overing 2000, 144). The objectification of women as passive and powerless entities in a coherent social structure that is typically symmetric has been highly criticised by theorists of Feminism as the androcentric bias of anthropological research and fieldwork methods. The dichotomization of space or realms of doing culture to be specific, into ‘domestic’ and ‘public’ (Yanagisako and Collier 1987) or the appropriation of men as culture and women as nature and its implication that culture is essential to shape nature (Ortner 1974) have been offered as explanations for the deep-rooted gender inequalities that exist cross-culturally. Gender was used as a methodological tool to study social asymmetry. However, Stone (2010) categorically differs from Collier and Yanagisako (1987) as in she does not agree with their view that different cultures have different ideas of sexual difference and that they must be

approached in that context and not on biological determinism. Instead, she considers the difference between the sexes as a universal fact and calls for cross-cultural comparisons (Stone 2010). While critiquing the political agenda that gets concealed behind the construction of the nature-culture debate where biological determinism is celebrated and the cultural construction of 'nature' is almost universalised, Butler states that:

“Anthropologists Marilyn Strathern and Carol MacCormack have argued that nature/culture discourse regularly figures nature as female, in need of subordination by a culture that is invariably figured as male, active and abstract. As in the existential dialectic of misogyny, this is yet another instance in which reason and mind are associated with masculinity and agency, while the body and nature are considered to be the mute facticity of the feminine, awaiting signification from an opposing masculine subject” (Butler 1990, 37).

This critique further leads us to several questions such as the native cultural contexts of such dichotomies of nature-culture, the question of the dominant and the sub-ordinate and how these constructions are normalized in the culture specific contexts. Another approach to studying gender is provided by Meillassoux's Marxian notion of culture as ideology offers a counter explanation that “marriage, conjugality and paternal filiation” were all institutions that were created by men to gain control over women and through them the “reproductive and female labour” (Rapport and Overing 2000,147). The problem with this approach is that when used out of context, there is the folly of assuming that everything that women do is a sign of oppression. The notion that the domain of the 'domestic' which is considered dominant sphere of activity of the women is always undervalued than the domain of the 'public' or the 'political' which is the domain of the men (Rapport and Overing 2000). The notion of domination, its very definition must be studied with respect to the context rather than in a decontextualized notion that prevails

devaluing the domestic from the public and in relation to these domains considering that women and men are not equal. Therefore, cross-cultural perspectives became operative in freeing the discipline of anthropology from its Western gaze.

Gender and Marriage

Gender is both an observable phenomenon as well as a methodological tool to observe phenomena. Feminism in Anthropology began as a response to the androcentric bias involved in field research. In the 1970's, looking at women's role in culture became a predominant practice. With Schneider's critique of the cross-cultural validity of kinship, there was a setback in kinship studies that were only revived later in the 1990's through feminist anthropology which focused on specific cultures and their perspectives of kinship and gender (Stone 2010, 20). The subject of analysis came to be the 'cultural' construction of gender and the reproduction of such a construction from one generation to another. Interaction of gender with other realms of social organisation became the cardinal aspect of feminist anthropology. Ortner (1974) attempted to understand the cultural constructions behind gender inequalities which they believed were beyond mere sexual difference. Ortner observed that the cross-cultural feature of gender inequalities can be attributed to the presumption that women are associated with nature as they are considered as an embodiment of nature; while the culture that assumes its responsibility to educate and subordinate nature is considered an embodiment of men (Ortner 1974). A similar proposition with the domestic-public dichotomisation was proposed by Rosaldo (1980). While women, who have natural (biological) instinct towards child socialisation and care, are associated with the domestic sphere and allied activities while men are associated with the sophisticated aspects that are beyond and above the domestic sphere i.e., the public. Therefore, the domestic is represented as subordinate to the public, even though the latter is just an

extensive representation of the former. The existent inequalities between the masculine and feminine genders and the absence of the recognition of the third gender is indicative of the hegemony of the normativity of heterosexuality. These dichotomies are not inclusive to be specific. As a point of departure, an operative task of understanding gender as a cultural construct that is differentiated from sex and biological determinism became inevitable. Then we may ask how is this cultural construct manufactured? Butler's (1990) theory of gender as performativity seeks to explain how gender is constructed culturally.

Marriage as an institution has particular implications for men and women. At the onset, marriage ensures and, in some cases, enforces the perpetuation of gendered performativity (Butler 1990). There is a wide range of literature that is suggestive of how gender can be an important tool in understanding marriage, matchmaking and relationships. The Hindu social order in particular emphasizes the status of *cumankali* (married woman) as the most auspicious state of being for a woman (Reynolds 1991). Codes of conduct specify how women, (both married and unmarried) must behave for their behaviour to be considered appropriate and not sexually explicit. Women are not allowed to articulate their desires and how effectively they resist their expression of sexuality determines whether they are "virtuous" or "loose" (Giddens 1992,7).

Caste and sub-caste endogamy in Hindu marriage ensure the purity of the blood line and must be maintained to protect the honor of the kin unit. The honor of the family lies in the sexual purity of the women and therefore their purity must be guarded before they are given away as a gift, *kanyadaan* (Chakravarti 2006). However, the notion that Hindu women are victims, passive and powerless must be contested and the power of women in choosing and exercising agency in everyday situations must be studied from their point of view (Leslie 1991).

Relooking at marriage

In a globalised cultural economy, the institutions of kinship, family and marriage are also affected by globalisation, modernization and technological advancements. Such a situation demands a shift in the emphasis from norms to individual responses to these changes. The book *Marrying in South Asia: Shifting Concepts, Changing Practices in a Globalising World* edited by Ravinder Kaur and Rajni Palriwala is a guiding work for scholars interested in relooking at marriage, from the perspective of what marriage means for those within and outside the institution. The chapters in the book investigate the “simultaneity of apparent flux and change with the hegemonic and gendered normativity of marriage” (Kaur and Palriwala 2014, 2). Some of the aspects that have already been discussed in contemporary studies of marriage as in the areas of marriage and sexuality, new reproductive technology and effective contraception, transnational marriages and resultant families, urban migration and financial independence in the realm of marriage. Some aspects that figured regularly in discourses on marriage include marriage and wider social network of families, status in marriage negotiations etc. These studies brought out the question of statics and changes in the institution of marriage rather than focusing on structure and function of marriage (Kaur and Palriwala 2014). Marriage in almost all cultures provides certain functions such as legitimizing the sexual relationship between two individuals, legitimizing offspring and providing exclusivity over productive and reproductive capabilities of the couple. Focusing on these aspects of the functions of marriage, it can be suggested that marriage “imbricates the ‘public’ in the personal and makes public order vulnerable to the vagaries of what may be viewed as purely individual intimacies” (Kaur and Palriwala 2014, 4). The importance of marriage and more importantly successful marriages for the stability of families has been extensively written about. Analytical dichotomies such as those between love

versus arranged marriages, importance of self-choice versus collective ethos, the nuclear family replacing the joint family system have been explored hitherto in anthropological and sociological literature. Nevertheless, Kaur and Palriwala (2014) raise certain pertinent research questions that could guide future research in understanding dynamics and continuity in contemporary marriage. Some of these considerations include: the articulation of desire or non-desire for marriage or intimate relationships; the implications of marriage for those individuals who willfully do not enter the institution; the endurance of marriage as an institution in spite of conflict, divorce and incompatibility and how culture and individuals deal with these inconsistencies; whether contemporary marriage is modern or democratic in nature and; the way culture or agency of individuals facilitates a possible intimacy outside marriage for individuals (Kaur and Palriwala 2014).

Additionally, the class-based implications of changes or statics of marriage customs are to be explored as this aspect has been hitherto unexplored. The authors call for adopting a “political and cultural economy” framework of marriage rather than one based on a Parsonian unidirectional modernisation framework (Kaur and Palriwala 2014, 12). Earlier studies of marriage have avoided lived experience and individual emotion as subjective aspects that do not need anthropological attention (Kaur and Palriwala 2014), but it is these experiences that give contextual examples of the real dynamics of the institution of marriage. Therefore, these principles have been adopted in the study to understand live-in relationship which challenge the heteronormativity of arranged marriage.

Caste as a principle in arranged marriage

Another operative characteristic feature of the arranged marriage system in India is that of the endogamy of caste. Therefore, a section of the discussion has been devoted to understanding caste as an integral feature of arranged marriage. The ‘emic’ models attempted to study the institution of caste at the village level by studying peasant communities. Anthropologists such as Srinivas (1994) attempted to understand the political and economic relations embroiled within the caste system in rural India. Therefore, it came to be realised that caste and class are interlinked with two levels of oppression at work: one based on religious principles with the Brahmins on top and lower castes at the bottom and the other based on “political and economic status with the landlords at the top and the landless labourers at the bottom” (Chakravarti 2006, 12). It is here that gender as a methodological tool comes into play as mentioned by Chakravarti (2006, 21) while she notes how “Meillasoux has argued that the notion of impure was crucial to the ideology of the caste system because it was required to keep the low in a state of subordination; this too applies to gender, and to the impurities that inhere in women...”. The critique on structural analysis of caste is that such an analysis presupposes a static social organisation whereas in lived experience society is at a state of flux. The dynamics of social relations can only be accounted for when the relations of production and reproduction that define social groups are studied (Chakravarti 2006, 39).

The earliest understanding of caste was through the orientalist view which focused on textual information (which were religious) and the missionary view which attributed the presence of caste as a salient feature of Hinduism and sought to free oppressed lower-caste Hindus from Brahminical domination by converting them to Christianity (Cohn 1968). Gough (1971) defines castes as “ranked, birth groups” which are endogamous, non-localised and with corresponding

occupations. The colonial administrators sought to enumerate the characteristic features of caste in an attempt to define it (Leach 1971). Some of these enumerations include the fact that caste is an identity ascribed by birth and is perpetuated through endogamous marriage with restrictions on inter-commensality. It is a hierarchical system with the Brahmins occupying the highest position and relative grading of the middle and lower castes. The occupational theory suggested that the caste-baste division is in-fact the division of people according to their occupations. People associated with skilled jobs such as teaching, learning, ruling, trading, defense were classified as upper castes and people associated with menial jobs such as cleaning, scavenging etc. were considered lower in status in comparison to the upper castes. Dumont's analysis of caste focuses on the fundamental notion of the Hindu religion and suggests that the system is based on the principle of purity and pollution (Chakravarti 2006). This structural analysis of caste views the system as a means of social organisation. The inter-relationship between castes is what concerns structuralists, as an individual caste derives its identity in relationship to other castes (Leach 1971). Therefore, the focus should be on these inter-relationships along with the preponderance on sustenance of endogamy and hierarchy. The most important aspect of enquiry concerning caste and marriage is the sustenance and perpetuation of endogamous arranged marriage.

Arranged marriage as a norm of Indian society

The arranged marriage system is a characteristic feature of Hindu matchmaking and it is true across all castes, regions and language communities in India (Sharda 1990). Sharda (1990) discusses rules of proscription (such as the *gothra* and *pravara* exogamy or rules that specify the unit within which one must not marry), rules of prescription (such as endogamy of caste or rules specifying the unit within which one must marry) and rules of preference (rules that pertain to

the complex gauging of socio-economic statutes of the kin groupings) that are inadvertently followed in arranging a marriage. However, ethnographic evidence su

ggests that the arranged marriage as an operative feature is true of all religions and ethnic communities as well (as discussed in Chapter 4 in detail). Wilson (2013) in her analysis of the “*pen-parka*” ritual of matchmaking among a Tamil Brahmin community explains how two most important aspects predominate the arrangement of marriage which are caste and sub-caste endogamy and astrological compatibility. A similar opinion is expressed by Fuller and Narasimhan (2008) through their study of a Tamil Brahmin community as they see that the entire match-making process “reproduces caste and class”. Though there is internal diversity, India as a country along with “most Eastern cultures, has been placed on the higher end of the collectivism continuum” (Medora 2003). This does not mean that there is no scope for individualistic pursuits, on the contrary it signifies that there is a tendency to place collective interests over individual choices. Individual choices are influenced by collective ethos. This explains the importance of family in Indian society as, “even in the most modern and nuclear families in contemporary India, the deep-rooted jointness in various structural and functional aspects still exists” (Medora 2003). Similarly, the arranged marriage system is believed to resonate the idea that marriage is not just a relationship between individual actors but an enduring bond between two families. This anticipated permanency is presumed to be the reason why elderly kin “arrange marriages” by screening religious, astrological and socio-economic conditions of either parties. The actual marital compatibility between couples is supposed to fall in place as a result of the perfect matching of families. It is as though arranged marriages exist only for functional or material needs and do not involve love or longing for companionship. On the other hand, romantic love is associated with modernity and Western cultural imitation. The

discourse on arranged marriage versus love marriage puts these ideas on two opposite ends of a continuum as though both are distinguishable.

Another operative aspect of research about arranged marriage has been the process of arranged matchmaking and the intervention of technology. Technology has inadvertently transformed the process and means of arranged matchmaking as described by Majumdar (2004) who notes how the traditional genealogists and match-makers called *ghataks* in Calcutta lost their livelihood due to the matrimonial advertisements and websites which took their place. Matrimonial websites have become a sense of solace for people who do not wish to depend on extended family or their wider social network to arrange marriage for their kin. The notions of public and private become obsolete in this context as the method of arranging marriage becomes a private and individualistic realm while hitherto being an aspect of public involving wider social network. On the other hand, the usage of websites and smart-phone based applications which is considered a public platform has been employed in arranging marriages which is the realm of the private.

Liminality as a methodological approach

The concept of liminality as an “interstatiality” has been popularized by the works of Victor Turner although the concept was initially developed by Arnold van Gennep to study “marginality, alterity, rebellion, ostracism, subalternity, pollution, eccentricity and deviance” (Rapport and Overing 2000:229). The rites of passage can be envisaged as the transitions an individual goes through in life from one stage to another; and the rites of passage always had a tripartite structure of separation, liminal and reincorporation to complete the process of transformation of the existing status of the individual (Turner 1969). The inherent symbolism in the rites of passage signified the transition from one social status to another “represented by

physical movement out of and then back into socio-cultural space, the mediatory or liminal stage was far more complex and confused” (Rapport and Overing 2000:230). The individuals in the liminal phase are often considered powerful, dangerous and polluting and sometimes, the individuals in the liminal, were visited by ancestral spirits, mythical creatures etc., before being reincorporated into existing structures. Therefore, there is a need to monitor these individuals by ritual specialists (Turner 1969). Victor Turner formulated his proposition of the liminal by observing the rituals of the Ndembu and later applying it to a wider range of phenomena that can be comprehended by using the concept. The liminal may be used as a period of relief for individuals by abandoning traditional ways of acting so that existing structures can be assessed critically and re-imagined. Existing asymmetrical social structure and inequality is critically viewed and its perpetuation is avoided and is substituted with agentic freedom. Turner’s proposition can be understood as the liminal as a phase that facilitates maximum level of expression of creativity and agency among individuals.

How do liminality and *communitas* as concepts implicate social structure and how does structure resist these implications? The liminal is always viewed as a threat by social structure as it challenges, critiques and restructures the existing norms and prescriptions. The concept of liminoid can be applied to understand dynamics of marriage such as the preference for live-in relationships. Live-in relationships are formed when individuals question existing structural distinctions or compartmentalisations such as caste, class and region which are essential for entering the institution of marriage, seem invalid for entering into a live-in relationship. It is an avenue for exercising agency and creativity in the context of true personal relationships. Naturally, these relationships (which may be viewed as a liminal phase in the trajectory of marriage and marital decision making) are viewed as a threat to the existing structures and norms

associated with the fundamental institutions of marriage and family. As structure resists these implications of the liminal, it is usually through positive reinforcement of existing structures or through aggressive imposition of these existing normative prescriptions. In the case of live-in relationships as well, the Indian society imposes the ideals of arranged endogamous marriage more prominently and aggressively.

Narratives as reflections of self

Narratives as a methodological tool serve to understand phenomena through the construction of the informants of their lived experiences that may in turn help the researcher construct the social world and reality of the informant. Everything that individuals do involves narratives and their telling and re-telling situated in a certain context (both present and the past when the story took place) and for a specific purpose. All these aspects affect how the story unfolds and also effects the narrator's frame of mind while narrating. Narrative may be defined as an account that "involves a sequence of two or more units of information (concerning happenings, mental states, people, or whatever) such that if the order of the sequence were changed, the meaning of the account would alter" (Rapport and Overing 2000:283). This definition provides us two main aspects inherent in narratives; the aspect of a human experience situated in an aspect of temporality. It is through these two aspects that narrative includes time as part of the analysis of a social phenomenon.

What is described in narratives is experiences and constructions of self of the narrator situated in a specific socio-cultural setting. Both the narrative and its meaning (for both the narrator and the listener) is operative for research and analysis when employing the technique in research. Therefore, analysis is inherent in the process of the narrative itself as it is a very reflexive

process rather than as a separate activity as in other methods and techniques. The narrator often provides a first-person account of the experience and by this create individuality (Rapport and Overing 2000). Therefore, the narrative is an expression of the worldview of the individual.

Typically, a narrative consists of a beginning, middle and an ending as inherent in its structure. During the process of narration, the narrator and the researcher who is the audience of the narrator together construct meaning of the experience of the narrator. Narratives are re-represented in actual words spoken by the narrator to maintain the sense of personal and the actual. The researcher therefore, is part of the conversation rather than a mute spectator. The researcher can also reflect upon his/her own purpose and position that information provided by the narrator to build the relationship between them. There is description of the events in the life of a person by the person itself; and all become characters in the story as opposed to ethnographic description where the narrator is the researcher and his/her point of view. Narratives help us in understanding how the informants make sense of their own social-cultural milieu such as customs, traditions, myths, religion, ethos and worldview. By using narratives as tools of doing research, the researcher consciously gives up power over the construction of the identity of the community one plans to study and handing this power to the informant itself. Therefore, the process of research itself becomes reflexive and transparent rather than authoritative. The authoritative control assumed consciously or unconsciously by the researcher is challenged by the narrative technique. Using narratives as a method entails criticality, ethical considerations, simultaneous data collection and analysis, reciprocal relationship between the narrator and the researcher, rich description that involves cultural tropes, symbols, euphemisms etc. The components of a narrative sequence often are time, agency of the narrator, narrator's perspective and the structure of the narrative (Rapport and Overing 2000).

Narrative as a technique is operative in building rapport with informants which is a pre-requisite for anthropological enquiry. Narratives are a great way to building a relationship with the informant as it gives a sense of connection and comfort as the informant start narrating lived experiences. It makes a special connection between the researcher and informant while providing data that is relevant. Sometimes, informants may provide more important details while narrating about certain experiences. Narrative technique has been particularly useful in the present study to understand the social and cultural milieu of informants, as the present sample is not a homogenous one in terms of caste, religion, educational or professional background. Though a semi-structured interview schedule was used during most interactions, narratives proved to be more useful as informants provided vivid descriptions that answered most questions even before the researcher asked them.

Locating agency contextually

Context, particularly, social context is integral to understanding interactions, social structure, human agency and social institutions. A comprehensive definition is provided by Rapport and Overing (2000, 332) which is useful in understanding the aim and scope of applying it in research:

“Context refers to the environment(s) which an individual inhabits before, during and after situations of interaction with others. These may come to be shared in long-term relationships but it is just as likely (if not more so) that they will remain individual and private.”

Individuals participate in various interactions and what each of these individuals takes away from these interactions is what constitutes contextual analysis. Context matters not only in anthropology but any social science that concerns itself with human interactions and culture. The

importance of situation and context lies in the fact that their thorough analysis enables the understanding of the composition and temporality of social phenomena. What becomes central to the analysis of context is how it applies, how to identify it, what happens across it and when phenomena are taken out of it?

Another crucial methodological tool that is located contextually is the aspect of human agency. Agency has been understood as anti-structure or as a re-enactment or manifestation of structure itself. However, the relationship between structure and agency has been illustrated by feminist scholarship. Ortner (1984) exemplifies the relationship between practice and system (read as agency and structure) as in how practice reproduces system and also on the other hand the system influences practice. However, this view of agency as located within structure proves redundant human creativity and imagination. The analysis of agency will be operative when it is freed from the pressures of structure and system and viewed as a complementary process located within a matrix of creativity and imagination of the human mind. Rather than viewing agency as a manifestation of structure, structure and anti-structure may be viewed as a manifestation of human agency.

In the present study, this view of agency as located within a matrix of creativity and imagination is applied to studying marital choices. When such a view is applied, agency in marital choices includes firstly individuals who believe in the institution of marriage and enter it. Secondly, individuals who delay, postpone or place marriage in a second place in relation to other aspects in life. Thirdly and most importantly, resistance may also be understood as agency in terms of marital choices. This study is therefore inclusive of all three subsets of informants i.e., married, unmarried and in live-in relationships. Therefore, the avenues for exercising agency exist in all

three subsets with varying degrees of creativity and imagination. These contexts and situations were mapped throughout the course of the study.

Emergence of cohabitation as an alternative to marriage in the West

Before trying to locate the prevalence and perceptivity of live-in relationships in the Indian context, a brief idea of how these relationships emerged as a major social change in European and American context will be discussed based on the enormous literature on the subject matter. Marriage as an institution has undergone transformation in the West in many dimensions. The idea of marriage has changed from a traditional institution to a much complex phenomenon envisaged differently by different communities and sometimes differently even within the same community. During the nineteenth century, the civil marriage although not mandatory became a norm and was accepted by majority of the population in most Western countries. A little later, in the twentieth century, cohabitation was ridiculed, and it was considered a norm of the lower classes and the people who questioned conventional forms of marriage. Children born out of such unions were not accepted into the fold of one's community. The man was considered the head of the family and it was his duty to look after the financial and material needs of the family. Marriage was the only way in which a man and woman could live together under the same roof. Marriage provided legal and religious legitimacy to a heterosexual couple. Homosexuality was forbidden and considered a sin (Cherlin 2004).

However, the latter half of nineteenth century witnessed many changes in the perception of marriage along with many other social changes post second World War. As Godelier mentions, paternal authority was replaced by parental authority; divorce by mutual consent was legalized in France (Godelier 2011). This resulted in fragmented families and single parenthood became a

common phenomenon. Thus, marriage was “no longer the act that founds the couple. The couple forms before the marriage, which, if they eventually decide to marry, often takes place only after the couple becomes convinced of the necessity to stabilize their union” (Godelier 2011). Giddens (1992) went further to state that marriage “has become just one lifestyle among others”. Some factors that have contributed to these changes; the first being exercising choice with respect to choosing one’s partner irrespective of conventional norms. Secondly, changes in gender relations and equality between the sexes have resulted in increasing live-in relationships. This gradual de-institutionalization of marriage can be understood as “the weakening of the social norms that define people’s behavior in a social institution such as marriage” (Cherlin 2004). In such an event, social norms fail to serve as checks for marital and family life giving rise to agency and choice (Giddens 1992).

Themes of discussion

Discussing love and arranged marriages in a Turkish village, Hart (2007) is of the opinion that the distinction between love and arranged marriages is not simple but complex. This is particularly true because there could exist arranged marriages in which there is a sense of companionship between the couple and also; a love relationship or a live-in relationship purely for economic security or sexual gratification or a combination of both. Exercising choice or agency in courtship or marriage need not necessarily be viewed as deviance from familial ties. However, “[I]n both scholarly literature and everyday discourse, the performance of modernity in courtship and marriage seems to require severing ties to kin while seeking out personal fulfillment in expressions of romantic love and desire” (Hart 2007).

But, arranged marriage in India has undergone a series of transformations from a stage of arranged marriage in the strict sense of the term with little or no consideration for choice and consent of the actual people getting married. The institution of marriage has attained a stage of companionate marriage where limited choice is exercised by actual people getting married while other social and economic factors are judged by the elderly kin (Fuller and Narasimhan 2008). In some cases, even a romantic relationship is recognized by parents and what follows is a traditional wedding that gives the “appearance of an arranged marriage” to extended kin groups but in reality, the couple have “instigated their relationship in private” (Hart 2007).

Many socio-economic processes such as migration, urbanization and globalization “have affected spousal selection, marriage prestations, and the articulations of desire; they cannot help but affect the inner workings of conjugality” (Kaur and Palriwala 2014). In such a complexity and in the presence of impacts of development in a skewed manner, quantitative data alone may not be the right measure of socio-cultural processes. Case studies and other qualitative analytical tools may be used to understand the complexities involved in various socio-cultural processes. Kapadia (2002 a) advocates the use of qualitative methods to understand the interlocking effects of capitalist development and modernisation and how these create gender-based disparities in availability of opportunities and in creating new disparities with respect to rights and position of women. However, this aspect of question of rights (especially pertaining to marital and sexual choices) and position of women could be further explored to see if there are new expressions of these rights influenced both by financial independence and an urban lifestyle. This could be explored with respect to choice in marital decisions.

Marriage gives a ritual status as well in many religions. Unmarried men and women are usually not accorded any ritual status and are considered an ill omen (Medora 2003). The single

unmarried woman is regarded as a lonely, unfortunate, vulnerable, frigid, incomplete, frustrated, man-hater, woman-lover, self-indulgent, promiscuous, unpredictable, non-conforming, subversive, free, interdependent being (Pappu 2011). The single woman is considered single because of the absence of a sanctioned male partner in her life, i.e., the husband. The focus is more on the absence of the male companion and less on the decision of the woman to abstain from matrimony. This is echoed as Rekha Pappu states, “the unmarried single woman is either unthinkable or an enigma, especially in the Indian context where marriages are to a large extent arranged, unlike in the West, for instance, where it is assumed to be a matter of individual choice” (Pappu 2011). However, the feminist critique of hegemony of marriage celebrates the idea of a single unmarried woman. Pappu further elaborates that granting the possibility of women remaining unmarried and granting her desires has coincided with locating her too within the structure of romantic love, which within modernity is the most predominant mode of organizing emotions among the sexes (Pappu 2011). Similarly, “the inequalities of marriage, domesticity and society remain interwoven, and as with all institutions, particularly those that pervade society and have a hegemonic sway, marriage excludes; it marginalizes those who fall outside its parameters or never enter it” (Kaur and Palriwala 2014). Also, there is the trend of escapism among young women who evade marriage prospects by migrating to cities to exercise choice passively. Women often “exercise agency in choosing and finding the means to mitigate; in delaying, rejecting, ensuring or escaping marriage through migration; and in dealing with or moulding new forms of familial relationships” (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008).

Live-in relationships have been in practice for quite some time in Indian metropolitan cities but the incidence and social acceptance of such relationships may differ from one city to another. These relationships may provide interesting takes on the hegemony of marriage as an institution

where in attempt is made to study “individuals as agents within the context of courtship and marriage” (Hart 2007). It may be a case of non- conformity to the institution of marriage as the individuals may not find it necessary to tie the knot to stay together. There may be cases of occurrence of these relationships purely out of love between the individual actors or there might be certain pragmatic reasons such as sharing of rent or other expenses, giving each other moral support etc. The qualitative exploration of such cases would give valuable insights into newer expressions of kinship, marriage and family in urban India.

The gradual de-institutionalization of marriage and cohabitation as its alternative is perceived to be a predominant feature of Western culture (Ramsheena and Gundemeda 2015). The course of events that led to the de-institutionalization of marriage has been discussed briefly to understand the dynamics of the institution of marriage in the West. However, the analysis of these relationships may be understood under the following parameters: A measurement of attitudes concerning marriage and live-in relationships of married, unmarried and cohabiting respondents below 35 years of age with questions attempting to understand the quality and satisfaction of the relationship of the couples (Bumpass et al 1991). Some of these parameters have been employed in this study such as, understanding the opinions of both the married and cohabiting informants with questions that try to conceptualise the quality and satisfaction of the relationship. However, the age limit for the married couples had to be extended to 56 to accommodate varied common perception of both types of relationships.

A combination of all such factors has resulted in the increase of cohabitation and a gradual decrease in the conformity to marriage. However, these studies provide a unidirectional image of the rise of cohabitation as an alternative to marriage from one stage to another and the underlying presumption that there is gender equality in all live-in relationships is debatable.

In avoiding this unidirectional analysis and doing away with notions of romantic love being associated with modernity and arranged marriage as traditional, the framework that the researcher employed is to essentially comprehend dynamics in marriage and family as outcomes of the globalisation processes. Gender as an analytical framework has been employed in this study to perceive conjugality itself as there are very few studies on this aspect of marriage (Kaur and Palriwala 2014).

Taking all the above studies into consideration, this study attempts to look at dynamics and continuities of marriage as an institution by looking at live-in relationships as an expression of agency in marital choices. A live-in relationship is characterized by two consenting adults living together without a formal marriage. Though it is not a socially recognized relationship in India, it has been recognized as an equivalent to marriage by the apex court of India owing to many cases in the recent past in which disputes have been relating to rights accorded in these relationships. Formal marriage is believed to provide a support system to the couple in the form of a socially recognized relationship whereas a live-in relationship is perceived not to have this support system. A study conducted in a reputed Indian university suggests that many Indian students prefer a ritually and socially recognized marriage rather than a live-in relationship and also the preference is stronger in the case of women (Ramsheena and Gundemeda 2015).

The process of globalization has influenced social change in terms of socio-cultural, economic and political parameters which are often interconnected and continuous (Giddens and Sutton 2017). Capitalist economic development has led to increasing materialism around the world with increasing purchasing power and an endless appetite for consumption whether it is goods, services, technology, ideologies or culture. The advancement in the realm of communication technology and various forms of mass media have paved way for a global communication

network shrinking conceptions of time and distance. The political institutions in turn affect and are affected by economic and social organization of a nation state. In such a situation, globalization can be envisaged as multi-level ‘interdependence’ between people, governments and corporations (Giddens and Sutton 2017). The emphasis on economic parameters alone as the essential feature of globalisation is highly debatable. Wallerstein’s (2004) world systems theory of the organization of world economies into the core, the semi-periphery and the periphery acknowledges the unequal distribution of technology, capital and the resultant emergence of class in the global economy (the capitalist core exploits the periphery which forms the working class) and the resultant transformation of social and cultural milieu.

City as a globalized entity

According to Appadurai, the existing “global cultural economy” is a complex entity for ‘with certain fundamental dis-junctures between economy, culture and politics that we have only begun to theorise’ (2008, 51). He further proposes a framework for the analysis of the global cultural economy by analyzing five interconnected dimensions: ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples and ideoscaples. While ethnoscape refers to the agents or individuals actively involved in the process of change or movement; technoscape is the access and exposure to various forms of technology. The financescape refers to the flow and distribution of global financial resources and the effects it could have on the ethnoscape and technoscape. The mediascape on one hand refers to the various forms of media-print, electronic, advertising and new media, and on the other it refers to the accounts of the global cultural economy as created by these forms of media. These accounts help individuals construct an idea of the unknown or the “other” while also providing a space to reflect on the self. Finally,

ideoscapes can be envisaged as flow of discourse that is largely ideological, political and also democratic in nature (Appadurai 2008).

The analysis of all five dimensions would help in obtaining a comprehensive picture of the relationships each of these dimensions have with one another and with the process of globalisation in general. However, globalisation does not necessarily mean abandoning traditional ways of living and social organization. This kind of view only takes into account a one-dimensional perspective of globalisation where there is flow of culture, technology, ideology, information and capital from the global cultural economy to local communities. However, often the flow of the five dimensions as mentioned earlier, is a two-way process where there is a convergence of the local and global, termed as “glocalization” (Robertson 1992). As a result of this convergence, new cultural practices emerge that are localised versions of what is perceived as the global. Similarly, the global flow of dimensions adapts itself to suit the particularities of the local (Giddens and Sutton 2017). To determine whether the flow of culture and ideologies is global or ‘glocal’ and to interpret the process of social or cultural change, it is necessary to understand live-in relationships in their ethnographic context or the ethnoscape of the sample.

Statement of Research Problem

The emergence of live-in relationships as an alternative to marriage and cause and effect theories surrounding the trend such as that of Kuperberg’s (2014) have been well documented in both sociological and anthropological literature in Western countries. Although marriage and its normative facets across various regions in India have been written about extensively, literature specifically addressing live-in relationships and the emotion and desire aspects attached to it have not been explored.

The present study is an ethnographic research employing both the principles of holism and ethno-relativism to understand agency in terms of marital choices of urban middle-class individuals belonging to two cities in India- New Delhi and Bangalore. A holistic perspective avails the study of all aspects of culture of a people - language, kinship organisation, religion, economic organisation, political organisation and the inter-relationship of all these aspects. Since the present study is also an ethnographic study, that focuses on the aspect of personal relationships, marriage and marital choices, other aspects of culture of the people (read informants) also have been given attention to understand the inter-relationships of all these aspects. The other principle that has been applied meticulously in the study is ethno-relativism, which is understanding cultural phenomena of a people from their perspective; providing an emic perspective of a social institution through the eyes of the people an ethnographer attempts to study. Both holism and ethno-relativism require participation of the researcher in the field and employ the technique of participant observation in observing behaviour patterns and social settings of informants. Therefore, participant observation as a technique was employed in all possible contexts, although living with the informants was not possible during fieldwork. The principles of holism and ethno-relativism through employing participant observation form the basis of data collection for this study. The data collected has been analysed and discussed as aspects that inform the general ethos or worldview of the informants.

The present study is a non-experimental multi-city qualitative research to understand the phenomena of live-in relationships in urban India while trying to perceive the factors and processes that have led to the same. The present study could contribute to anthropological literature on patterns of dynamics and continuity of a social institution such as marriage where individual actors exercise agency in terms of marital choices and in turn, reflections of these

choices on structure. Also, social and economic factors that have led to such occurrences can be analysed to arrive at a holistic understanding of live-in relationships. The aspects of caste, class, gender, urban migration and other contributory factors for the prevalence of live-in relationships in New Delhi and Bangalore have been addressed. Since the study specifically caters to mapping lived experiences of heterosexual couples, similar framework and methodology may be employed to map the lived experiences of homosexual couples and other sexual minorities in the Indian context.

Objectives

The first objective of the present study is to understand the prevalence, perception and factors that motivate live-in relationships. Perceptions of the live-in relationships from the point of view of the informants in these relationships and those who are not have been studied. All the factors that influence and motivate individuals to engage in live-in relationships have been studied. The reason for studying these aspects is to determine whether live-in relationships are an extension of marriage as an institution or may be given a status of their own.

Secondly, the study aims to situate live-in relationships in the urban Indian context as an outcome of the post-globalised cultural economy. This is achieved by situating live-in relationships as a result of various dimensions of globalized cultural economy such as the forms of media, ideological underpinnings, financial outcomes, technological dynamics and the relationship of all these dimensions on the people concerned.

Thirdly, the study tries to understand live-in relationships alongside arranged or love-marriages to identify a pattern of conjugality in terms of emotion, desire, care, support and companionship in order to realize what implications marriage as an institution has for those within it and those

outside it. For this purpose, interviews of couples in formal marriage and those in live-in relationship over the same duration and same age were attempted. Also, this exercise has been instrumental in understanding where there is propagation of gender appropriate behavior leading to inequality in relationships.

Finally, the aspect of creative agency of individuals in negotiating with the institution of marriage and marital choices has been studied. This depicts how live-in relationships provide an avenue for urban professional middle-class and upper middle-class Indians to exercise agency with respect to marital choices. This has brought to light the various effects such a trend could possibly have on institution of marriage, and the whole debate on ‘self’ versus ‘collective’.

Tools and techniques of data collection

To understand the concept of live-in relationship in relation to other aspects of social institutions, rather than in isolation, a holistic approach has been employed in the study. Various socio-economic indicators such as class, caste, religion, age, financial independence, educational and professional background have played an important role in mapping the interactions of the individuals with the social institutions around them. Since the informants are mainly people belonging to different communities and religions, the only aspect of homogeneity is the region that they are staying in and the form of relationship that they have chosen. Therefore, the snow-ball sampling technique proved to be the most convenient and practical way of identifying informants who are actually live-in couples. Simple random sampling was used to identify individuals to understand general perceptions and level of social acceptance of live-in relationships in India. Structured and semi-structured interviews have been effectively employed along with a comprehensive schedule that has been drafted separately for informants in a live-in

relationship and informants who are not. Case studies and narratives have been used to record and analyse lived experiences of married couples and also couples in a live-in relationship. The narrative technique especially, was useful in developing a perspective of the socio-cultural milieu of informants in live-in relationships and married couples in terms of collecting familial and marriage histories, age at marriage, the acceptance of courtship or love before marriage and aspects in a similar vein. Finally, observation as a technique was used in congruence with the situation and context as it proved to be far-reaching in getting to know the intricate web of relationships between the informants and the social structure. Particularly of importance was the experience of attending two weddings of informants who transitioned from a live-in relationship to marriage, and this experience provided a perspective on not only the transition of the relationship for the couple but also the society.

Live-in relationships have been largely noticed in urban spaces where men and women living in cities (working or studying) prefer these relationships for various reasons to formal marriage. Therefore, cities with a good combination of native population and migrant settlers have been chosen. This has been done to note the general perception of live-in relationships and the dynamics they bring about in marriage from the perspective of locally settled informants. A detailed discussion pertaining to the general perception informants has been included in the next chapter. The location of fieldwork has been Delhi-NCR region which has an equal representation of native and migrant population. The region has been developing rapidly with manufacturing units and MNC's that have provided employment opportunities to many skilled youngsters. An equivalent city Bangalore, in Southern India has been chosen which is similar to Delhi in terms of the representation of native and migrated population. However, Bangalore has a greater migrant population providing a vibrant space for exercising agency in terms of personal choices.

These cities provide scope for live-in couples with varying factors for preference of live-in relationships rather than marriage. The period of fieldwork in Delhi-NCR was from May 2017 to January 2018 and a revisit in December 2019. Similarly, the period of fieldwork in Bengaluru was from March 2018 to July 2018 and a revisit in January 2020.

Pilot Study

A pilot visit was conducted in the cities of Delhi-NCR and Bangalore to assess the field and develop initial contacts with informants. Through initial contacts, more couples have been introduced to the researcher and also through various social media forums especially for live-in couples. The pilot study was conducted in December 2016 for a period of three weeks in Delhi-NCR when fourteen couples in live-in relationships were interviewed at first. Certain inconsistencies with respect to the interview schedule were corrected. Also, another important aspect of conducting the semi-structured interview was the location or place. The researcher preferred to interview couples or general informants at their place of residence to consciously map the physical environment. However, some informants chose not to allow the researcher to visit their residence, especially live-in couples as they considered it a breach of privacy or sometimes for the simple reason that the landlord or neighbours would have a problem with visitors. In such situations, the couple initially met the researcher at a public place and for subsequent visits let the researcher visit their residence after gaining confidence. The pilot visit helped in refining not only the interview schedule but also in reorganising the objectives of the study and to plan a strategy to analyze the information received through the conversations. The pilot visit also helped the researcher articulate the aim and scope of the study in a profound way to the informants so that the informants would feel safe and interested in contributing their time.

Fieldwork experience in Delhi and Bangalore

Fieldwork in both cities of Delhi and Bangalore provided rich experience in exploring urban anthropology and fieldwork. Earlier fieldwork experiences were located in a rural setting, among a homogenous group of people. The present study provided a challenge in terms of doing fieldwork in an urban setting and most importantly in a heterogeneous group of people with only the location and class as the aspects of homogeneity. Therefore, grappling with the difficulties that the fieldwork location provided was an enormous task. Traditional anthropological tools of participant observation could not be employed on a daily basis except when the researcher attended weddings of informants (one in Delhi and the other in Bangalore during the fieldwork period). It was at these two occasions, that the researcher participated in the wedding events, getting to the family and friends of the couple and observing the rituals. At several other occasions, the researcher was called to meet friends and loved ones of the couples for various celebrations or in general to get to know the social circle of the people the researcher was trying to develop rapport with. Identifying key informants was not easy as each informant maintained a sense of attached detachment in terms of remembering the researcher for the time spent together as opposed to staying with informants in a traditional fieldwork setup where researchers spend maximum time with the key informants; and it is through these individuals that they are introduced to the community they wish to study. On the brighter side, not having to depend on key informants to develop rapport or introduce the objectives of the research directly to the informants has proven to be useful in terms of letting the researcher be in control of the situation.

The narrative technique proved to be extremely useful in the context of urban setting, as the time frame of fieldwork was not sufficient to obtain life histories of informants but at the same time, superficial conversations also would not be sufficient as it was important to note marriage

histories of particular families, opinions on companionship, to derive at common patterns of conjugality etc. With respect to live-in couples also the same conditions applied as it was important to know the social-cultural milieu of both individuals and how they negotiate with this heterogeneity in day-to-day interactions. Therefore, in such a frame of reference, narrative technique was employed extensively to preserve the interactions and conversations with informants with the researcher submitting all sense of control to the informants and becoming an ardent listener while reflecting simultaneously upon what is being narrated. This leads to a grounded approach and writing that is truly emic in its presentation rather than grand theorization.

Another difficulty was to convince the informants that the job of the researcher is not to pass value judgements about live-in relationships or marriage but to understand the human agency that motivates individuals to get into either type of relationships in their lives. Most informants were interested in the researcher's opinion on live-in relationships. This was a tricky situation as the researcher would have to play a neutral role and avoid being opinionated.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher takes total responsibility for safeguarding the rights and privacy of informants participating in the research in accordance with guidelines set by the American Anthropological Association (1998). A consent form has been administered as a first step to each informant assuring their rights and clearly stating the purpose of research. Pseudonyms have been used when informants are not comfortable to share his/her actual name. While interviewing, utmost care has been taken to avoid hurting sentiments or opinions of the informants. The opinions and statements have almost been mentioned in the active voice to avoid the slightest possible distortion that could generate alternative meanings.

Chapterisation

The present study is an attempt to understand live-in relationships in the Indian cities of Delhi - NCR and Bengaluru. While it is analysis of urbanity and its relationship with marriage and family, the study also delves on the important relationship between structure and practice in terms of marital choice. It has been divided into six chapters with the first chapter providing an introductory brief on the aims, scope and objectives along with the review of existing literature. The second chapter titled 'Ethnographic Profile' is a note on the "ethnoscape" of the informants which includes both the location of the study as well as the people or individuals. Age-sex distribution, educational and professional qualification, religious affiliation and migration status were the operative characteristics of the sample discussed in the chapter to introduce the ethnoscape of the informants.

Chapter Three titled 'Prevalence and perception of Live-in Relationships' is a general understanding of live-in relationships as the title suggests mapping the prevalence and perception of these relationships in both cities of New Delhi-NCR and Bangalore. The differences of perception between the informants in live-in relationships and informants of a general perception were identified and discussed. Another major aspect discussed in the chapter is the influence of mediascapes, technoscapes and ideoscapes as influencing factors for the emergence of live-in relationships.

Chapter Four titled 'Live-in relationships and Patterns of Conjuality" focuses on the comparison between live-in relationships and marriage to comprehend what marriage as an institution implies for those within it and for those who imagine conjuality outside it. Certain patterns of marriage such as gendered performativity, endogamy of caste, transactional nature of

marriage and marriage as a foundation for family have been observed and contrasted with live-in relationships.

Chapter Five titled 'Live-in relationship as an expression of agency' is a chapter that envisages live-in relationships as a channel to exercise agency with respect to marital choices for urban, educated, middle and upper-middle class informants. Further, in the concluding chapter, the implications live-in relationships could have on the institutions of marriage and family have been discussed.

Chapter Two

ETHNOGRAPHIC PROFILE

This chapter discusses the ethnographic profile of the informants in the study to give a background picture of the social, cultural, economic and religious underpinnings that define and identify informants. At first, the nature of both cities where fieldwork has been carried on, i.e., New Delhi and Bengaluru will be discussed to determine what effect they can have on the decision-making process of individuals with respect to marriage and relationships. Secondly, parameters that inform the social and economic status of informants have been discussed which are broadly divided into age-sex distribution, educational qualification, professional profiles, religious affiliation, and migration status. Further, the cultural background of informants has been discussed to give an account of how various cultural backgrounds can produce corresponding worldviews and thereby various opinions about marriage, match-making and live-in relationships.

“Orthogenetic” and “heterogenetic” nature of cities

The economic role played by cities is equally important as is the cultural role where processes of transformations of culture occur which are greatly informed by economic processes. These processes are also influenced by political and ideological parameters as well. The role of cities in the ancient civilizations has been largely politico-religious whereas in the post-globalised era they are largely economic (Redfield and Singer 1954). On the one hand, cities that are “orthogenetic” function to fulfill economic transactions of individuals of varied cultural groups and they become a “religious or intellectual center...” where “little traditions” merge to form comprehensive “great traditions” (Redfield and Singer 1954: 186). On the other hand,

“heterogenetic” cities are characteristic of change or serve to signify the conflict between the old and the new when there is cultural change (Redfield and Singer 1954). The role of both cities in this study i.e. New Delhi-NCR and Bangalore can be assessed as to whether they may be orthogenetic or heterogenetic in nature and these may be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

This study focuses on informants from two cities - Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru. Both have a lot of common features as well as exclusive features. New- Delhi is a city with great historical and administrative significance on account of being the capital city of the country. The National Capital Region is a planning region that encompasses Delhi at the center and cities of adjoining states such as Haryana and Uttar Pradesh at the periphery. Delhi, Faridabad, Gurgaon, Noida and Ghaziabad are the prominent cities of NCR which are truly cosmopolitan on one side due to extensive industrial and technological development and on the other there is a strong influence of the local traditions of the neighboring states that is always critical of the emerging trends in society. Gurgaon which is known as the IT city of Delhi-National Capital Region and Bangalore are major Indian IT cities (Radhakrishnan 2011). There is a very high in-migrant population that almost outnumbers the local settlers.

Similarly, in the case of Bangalore, there is a heavy migrant influx from neighboring states owing to the image of ‘Silicon Valley of India’ as it is the biggest IT capital of India providing employment to thousands of people from all over the country. The presence of many key multi-national corporations and their Indian operations headquartered at Bangalore, the city has witnessed an infrastructural and investment boost in the form of technology parks, technological colleges and universities, high-rise housing projects and malls. Therefore, Bangalore becomes an ideal metropolitan city to get a job and settle down not just for IT professionals within India but also for NRI’s who plan to relocate back to their home country (Radhakrishnan, 2011). It is

this amalgamation of a truly cosmopolitan culture and the local ethos that translates into a very interesting setting for newer avenues of kinship, marriage and family be it live-in relationships, single parenthood etc. Due to sharing of geographical boundaries with all the major states of South India, Bangalore is truly a linguistically and culturally heterogeneous city.

Both New Delhi and Bangalore possess characteristics of heterogenetic transformation, where there is a nexus between the existing and the emerging aspects of culture. The ideas of 'progress' are conventionally believed to be originating from the city (Redfield and Singer 1954). However, it is the agency of the individuals that is the true mark of 'progress' as opposed to the Western understanding of 'progress' as a unidirectional entity from the state of traditional to the modern. The ability to choose between shared understandings such as norms to ideating and creating novel ways to act according to situations is the ultimate progress. The city is not the center of progress but it is the individual as an epitome of agency who is the actual symbol of progress. The city as a space provides or facilitates for the exercise of individual agency. Ultimately, it is the individual who can decide through an "enlarged cultural consciousness, inventing formulas of universal toleration and the benefits of mutual understanding and extolling the freedom to experiment in different ways of life" (Redfield and Singer 1954, 201). Therefore, both the cities of New Delhi and Bangalore provide for an exercise of agency of individuals in various aspects of negotiation with culture through their truly heterogenetic nature. Multi-linguistic, multi-ethnic and multi-cultural communities are characteristic to both cities, with a dynamic cultural situation, where there is a conflict between the old and the new. In New Delhi, the principal languages spoken in Delhi are Hindi, Haryanvi, Punjabi and Kashmiri. The predominant ethnic communities apart from the majoritarian Indian ethnic groups are Afghani and Tibetians. Similarly, Bangalore has considerable population of Telugu, Malayalam and Tamil speakers apart

from the Kannada speakers (who are the predominant linguistic group). Tulu and Konkani speakers are minor linguistic groups in the city. Culturally, Bangalore is heterogenous with people of various regions settled in the city. The individual is therefore situated in this situation of dynamism and has to choose how to act in the new situation. Live-in relationships also become one such phenomena in the cities of both New Delhi and Bangalore.

The analysis of live-in relationships in both the metropolitan cities of Delhi-NCR and Bangalore calls for determining the ethnographic details of the informants of the study who are in live-in relationships and those who have provided a perception about live-in relationships in general. 100 informants participated in the general perception interviews and 106 informants in live-in relationships. The interviews and revisits were conducted in both cities at the residential premises of the informants. This way it is convenient to understand the social and cultural parameters of the informants' lives in the most natural manner. Observation as a technique was employed in most cases, but the challenging part was the fact that the researcher could not live with the informants throughout the course of fieldwork. The course of fieldwork was also determined by the schedule of the informants who are urban professional leading hectic lives. However, in course of time, the researcher developed rapport with few couples with whom participant observation in the truest sense was possible, in terms of naturally being able to observe the informants doing their daily activities while living with them. The researcher also attended the wedding rituals of two couples who transitioned from a live-in relationship to marriage to observe rituals, behaviour patterns and the social universe of the couples getting married. This provided the researcher the best avenue to exercise the technique of participant observation.

Interviews have mostly been semi-structured with an exclusive interview schedule designed for informants in live-in relationships and those who are not. Certain aspects of the sample that will enable to understand the cultural, social and economic environment of informants in a comprehensive way have been identified and discussed. The specific parameters that have been particularly focused upon and the significance of studying each parameter with supplemented statistics are discussed under the broad categories - age-sex distribution of respondents, educational qualification, professional profiles, religious affiliations and migration status. These aspects have been discussed briefly.

Age-sex distribution of respondents

The age-sex distribution of the informants has been collected and analysed to understand how age and sex of the informant play a role in marital decision making. While 20 years of age has been determined as the lower limit, 40 years has been noticed as the upper limit of the informants. Of 106 informants, there are 50 heterosexual couples (50 men and 50 women) and 6 single individuals. Though the snowball sampling method does not allow for equal representation of all age groups, a sincere effort has been made to include both men and women of different age-sets in the marriageable age that is between 20-40 years of age.

Table 2.1 is a representation of the age-sex distribution of respondents in live-in relationship in the cities of NCR and Bangalore. We may note that the optimum age-set of the informant sample population is between 25 to 35 years of age for both men and women. Most informants are in their late twenties to mid-thirties, with a particular outlook towards marriage as an institution. After the age of 35, individuals usually get married. The incidence of remaining single after the age 35 is very low as can be observed from the data furnished above. It may also be observed

that there are no women above the age of 35 who are in a live-in relationship. This proves that age at marriage is very operative for marital decision making among urban Indian men and women.

Table 2.1: Age wise distribution of respondents in live-in relationship

Age	Male	Female
20-25	6	20
26-30	30	25
31-35	14	7
36-40	4	-
41-45	-	-
Total – 106	54	52

Although in most live-in relationships in this sample the male partner is older than the female, it is not uncommon that the female partner is older than the male partner. Such relationships account for 10% of the live-in couples. Women generally do get married by the age of 30 and in some cases by 35. Marriage is an important life cycle ritual in most Indian communities irrespective of region, caste and religion. There is 100% conformity to this rule with respect to informants in this study as they take the decision to get married, in this case, after being in a live-in relationship. Therefore, marriage is irreplaceable in Indian society as it is both a most important rite of passage and an identity in itself (read as the status of being married). The

deinstitutionalization of marriage and its replacement by cohabitation as in the West (Cherlin 2004) is not a reality in the case of urban Indian individuals of marriageable age.

Table 2.2 : Age wise and marital status wise distribution of respondents (general perception)

Age-set	Married Men	Married Women	Single Men	Single Women
20-25	-	2	5	4
26-30	4	5	6	4
31-35	10	8	5	3
36-40	6	6	4	4
40-45	4	3	4	-
46-50	1	1	2	-
51-55	2	1	-	-
56-60	4	2	-	-
Total - 100	31	28	26	15

Similarly, the general respondents are of different ages with as much variation as possible as it was a purposive sampling technique that was utilized to collect the data. There is also the aspect of marital status to include perception of both married and unmarried individuals on the institution of marriage and the phenomenon of live-in relationships. Therefore, the sample is well

representative of aspects such as age-set, gender, marital status and also inclusive only of native residents to generate a local general perception of live-in relationships in New Delhi and Bangalore. Here also, the optimum age-set is between 25-35 years of age for both men and women. The incidence of women remaining single after the age of 35 is low in this case also as can be seen from the Table 2.2. This shows the adherence to getting married by the age of 35 and in most cases by the age of 30. This is true for men also but there are considerable number of unmarried men above 35 years of age as well.

Educational qualification of respondents

Educational qualification serves as a marker of development of overall personality and is instrumental in formation of opinions on various aspects of life.

Table 2.3: Educational qualification of respondents in live-in relationship

Graduation		Post-Gradation		PhD	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
27	29	24	21	3	2

From the statistics mentioned in Table 2.3 it may be deduced that all the respondents, both men and women, are well qualified possessing Bachelors' degrees or even higher education going up to Masters or PhD. Most informants have a Masters' degree in Information Technological and Computer Science streams. The other common post-graduation degree possessed by most informants is the Master's in Business Administration. Both degrees are pre-requisites for the IT-industry specific jobs and therefore the preference for the degrees in that specific domain. Other

streams in which the informants are qualified are medicine, law, teaching, web-designing, interior designing, market research, advertising and public relations.

Similarly, Table 2.4 is representative of the level of qualification of informants who were studied for general perception of live-in relationships. The purposive sampling method has been devised to include people of diverse professional backgrounds such as doctors, lawyers, engineers, academicians, and various other fields. Graduation degree has been set as the lower limit of the purposive sample to include only educated informants to maintain homogeneity of the social and economic background of the informants for recording general perception. Education and professional profiles have been instrumental in perceiving the economic class of the informants along with the social and cultural background.

Table 2.4 : Educational qualification of respondents (general perception)

Graduation		Post-Gradation		PhD	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
30	17	23	20	4	6

The corresponding professional profiles of informants in live-in relationships as well as informants interviewed for general perception have been discussed to make a note of the economic class of the informants. This is also an operative aspect of the informants that helps in assessing the socio-economic background of the informants in Delhi-NCR and Bangalore.

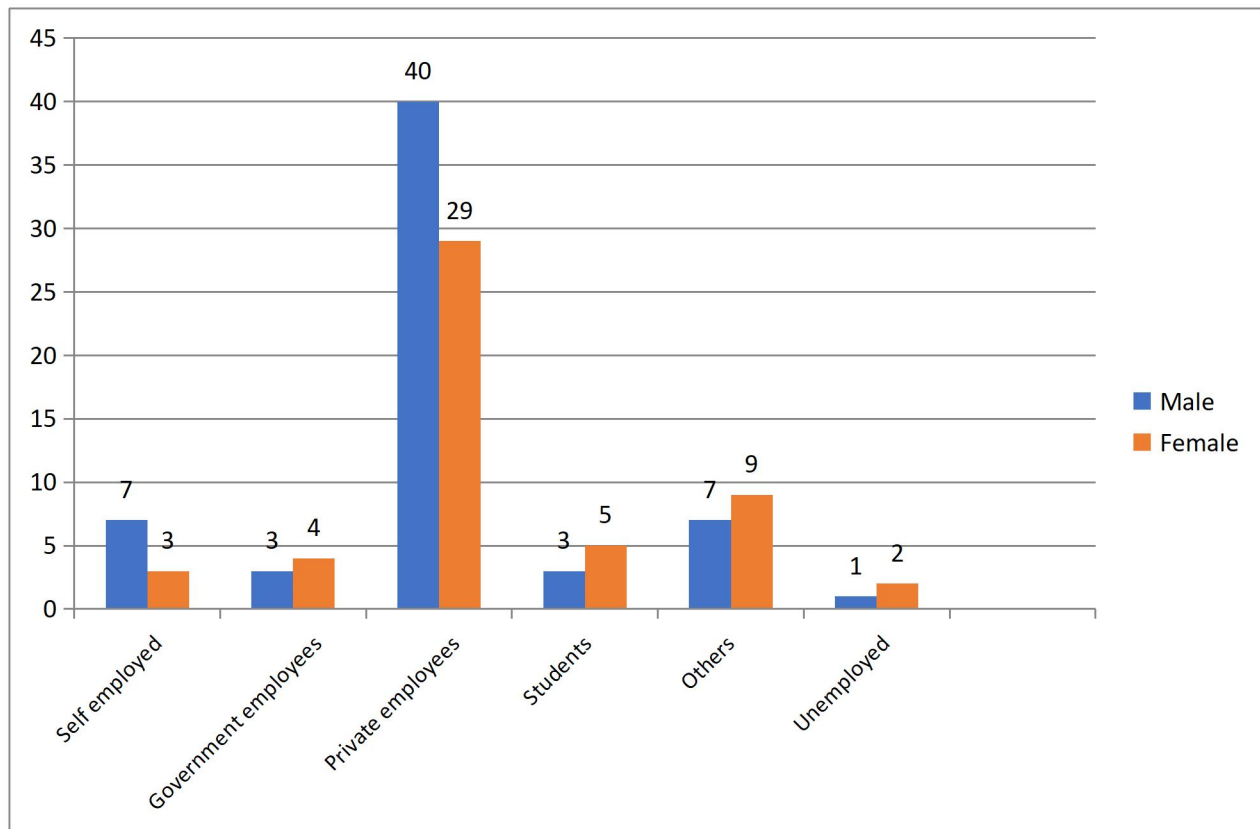
Professional profile and economic class of respondents

There are a wide range of professionals among the informants who are in live-in relationships, be it doctors, lawyers, government officials, students and entrepreneurs, but the highest number belongs to employees of private organizations and MNC's. Here also, we can observe that almost all respondents are working professionals and the numbers suggest an equal representation of men and women in all professional fields. However, there is a higher preference for working in MNCs as these provide a wide range of perks to their employees in terms of annual packages offered, performance bonuses, healthcare etc. But the phenomenon that is interesting to note here is the emergence of a “transnational” MNC culture in all major cities in India that an increasing number of young Indians are approving and adapting to (Radhakrishnan 2011). The transnational culture is an outcome of migration due to the high mobility involved in the IT industry. The Figures 2.1 and 2.2 are representative of the professional profiles of informants in live-in relationships and informants interviewed for general perception respectively. Looking at other aspects of society such as migration, influence of religion etc. will complement in defining what this transnational culture really is. Similarly, in the case of general respondents also, there is a preference for working in MNC's although we can note a higher percentage of individuals in government service as well.

The annual income of informants of both sample sets (those in live-in relationships and those who are not) is in the bracket of 5-15 lakhs per annum in Indian Rupees. Informants working in the private sector, especially Multinational Corporations earn comparatively higher annual income along with work incentives than informants in entrepreneurial or government organisation. As mentioned earlier, there is higher preference for working in these corporations

that offer healthcare and better salary compensation compared to PSUs and other governmental organisations.

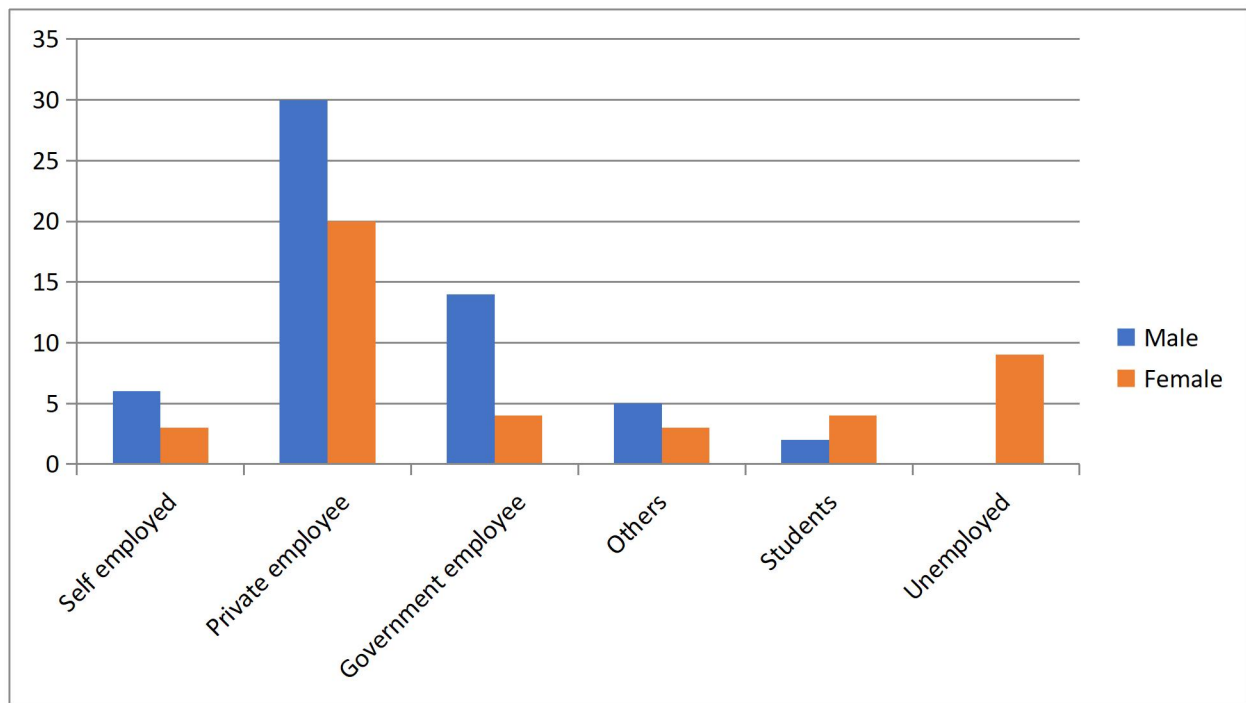
Figure 2.1 : Professional profiles of respondents in live-in relationship



Informants belonging to both sample sets could afford comfortable housing, food, healthcare and savings. An interesting pattern observed during fieldwork with respect to housing was that informants in live-in relationships preferred living in apartments in gated communities as these housing communities offered better security, minimal interference and contact with landlord and neighbours that were ideal for their relationship status.

As migrants from rural and semi-urban backgrounds, informants in live-in relationships were tenants and did not own properties. While the local residents who were interviewed for general perception of live-in relationship showed clear property ownership patterns in both cities.

Figure 2.2 Professional profile of respondents (general perception)



Therefore, both sets of informants belong to the middle and upper-middle economic class with respect to their income, professions and lifestyle patterns.

Religious affiliation of respondents

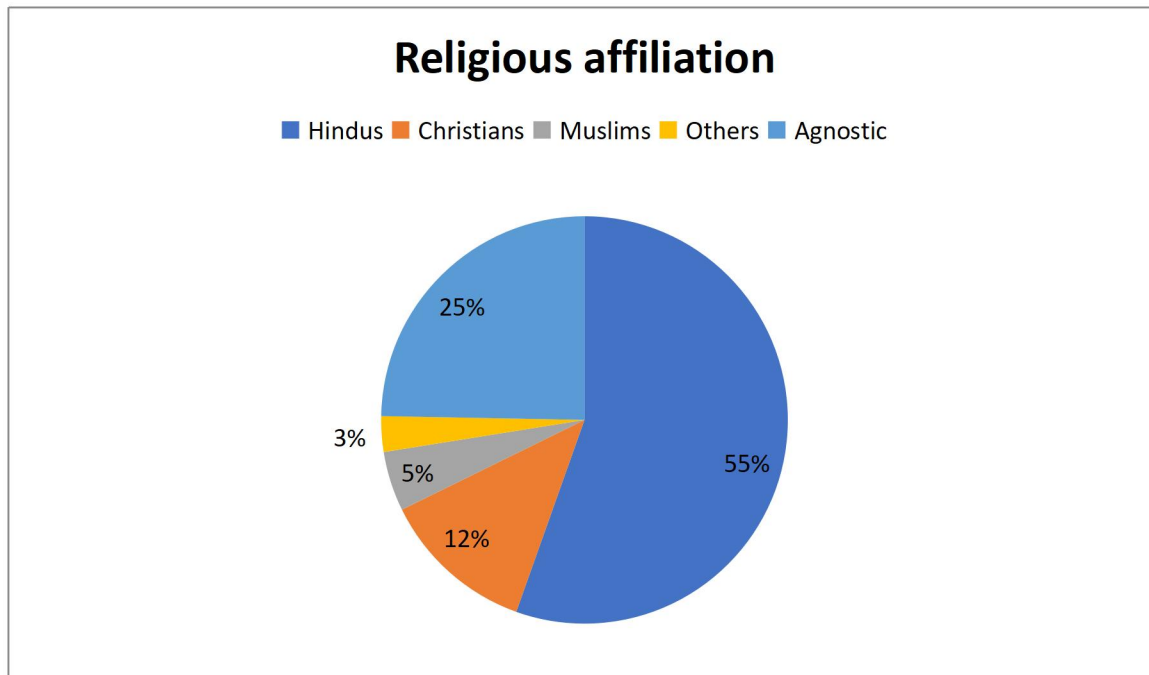
Religious affiliation is a marker of the overall ethos of the individual. Whether he/she adheres to their religion or not helps us understand the hold religion has over their opinions on various aspects of life including matrimony. Questions regarding the practice and fulfillment of religious tenets, customs and rituals were asked of the informants to know how religion operates in their day to day life. As can be noted from the figures 2.3 and 2.4 below, Hinduism is followed by a

majority of individuals among both informants who are in live-in relationships as well as who participated in the general perception interviews. Islam and Christianity have an almost equal presence in the sample followed by other faiths such as Sikhism, Jainism, Bahai and Parsi (whose percentage has been represented as the category Others).

Although a major proportion of the respondents (both in live-in relationships and general respondents) are affiliated to some faith, there is a high and considerable proportion who have questions or doubts regarding the very foundation of faith. Agnostic category is perhaps the most comprehensive when compared to Christians, Muslims and other religions in representation. This category is inclusive of individuals from various religions including Hinduism in both cities. These individuals reported to have certain contestations with the practice of religion or do not find it necessary to identify with a particular religion. The belief in a God or pantheon does not seem necessary to live an orderly life. The very concept of God (as an entity above human beings) is a question of importance for agnostic individuals. However, agnostic individuals revealed that they did not mind taking part in festivities or rituals while at home in the city or in their native village. Also, an operative fact playing here is the fact that the agnostic view of religion is purely individual in nature and does not imply that the family or spouse or live-in partner are also agnostic. This can be attributed to education, economic independence and urbanization which in turn lead to individual opinions, in this case about belief system and the notion of God. Globalisation and exposure to World culture and liberalisation of thought can also be attributed to be reason for the agnostic nature of individuals. On the other hand, individuals who associate themselves with a particular religion practice it privately. The home becomes the place where religion as a part of day-to-day life resurfaces and is practiced. Most homes in the city have a *puja* room or an altar or a framed photograph of deities, sacred objects etc., which is regarded a

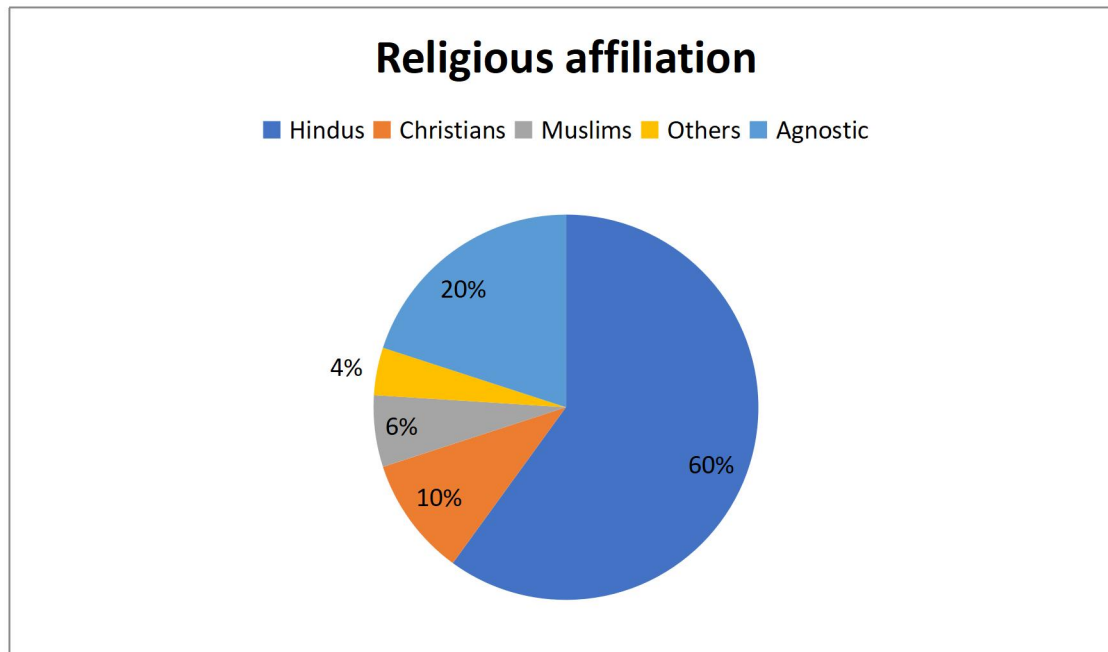
smaller representation of a religious shrine. Individuals or families as a whole pray and perform rituals in the home; religion therefore becomes a private aspect of urban life.

Figure 2.3: Religious affiliations of respondents in live-in relationships



Religious organisations may be characteristic feature of urban life, as an attempt to mobilise solidarity and creation of identity in a heterogenous space such as the city. Some religious organisations are of a secular nature, which try to maintain and perpetuate the knowledge of scriptures, ways of life and worship. Some of the organisations that were introduced through informants in Delhi are *Dera Saccha Saudha*, Art of Living, Baba Ramdev and the Patanjali institution and the Maata Amritanandamayee foundation and Isha Foundation in Bangalore. Belief in self-proclaimed godmen was observed in both New-Delhi NCR and Bangalore.

Figure 2.4: Religious affiliations of general respondents



Although caste is a pan-religious phenomenon in India, caste as an identity is suspended or recedes in day-to-day life and reemerges in marital negotiations to maintain endogamy of caste. The aspects of purity and pollution associated with caste cannot operate in urban life, and therefore there is a “compartmentalization” (Kolenda 1984:146) of the caste identity from other identities such as class, religion and professional liaison. These identities precede while caste recedes in urban life. Especially with respect to live-in relationships, caste is pushed to the margins, as informants do not consider caste compatibility while forming a live-in relationship or any other inter-personal relationship for that matter. This aspect has been highlighted and discussed elaborately in Chapter Four.

The most important aspect of discussion in terms of religious affiliation pertinent to this study is the relationship between religion and marriage. Religion shapes the ethos of an individual and this inadvertently includes a perception and liberty of decision making with respect to marriage,

taboos surrounding pre-marital relationships, inter-personal relationships etc. From the ethnographic fieldwork experience in the cities of New Delhi and Bangalore, a few deductions in this regard of the relationship between religion and ethos surrounding marriage and relationships can be elucidated. Hinduism considers marriage as a sacred relationship not just between two individuals getting married, but a connection between two kin groups (families, lineages, phratries). Endogamy of religion and caste is the major requisite of arranging Hindu marriage. Therefore, arranged marriage is the ideal form of marriage with little or no tolerance for personal or pre-marital relationships let alone cohabitation or pre-marital sexual relationships. Christianity and Islam may not have pre-requisites such as caste endogamy but in India caste identity is highly operative in arranging marriage irrespective of religion. This aspect also has been discussed elaborately in the subsequent chapters. Arranged marriage with the requisite of caste compatibility is the essence of marriage in not just upper caste Hindu communities but also other religions as well. A pattern that has been observed with respect to attitude towards caste endogamy is the liberal democratic views of urban professionals of marriageable age in New Delhi and Bangalore. Due to the emergence of liberal democratic views, caste endogamy is replaced by personal compatibility and indicates further compartmentalization of religious identity and personal relationships. On the other hand, the informants who notified general perception regarding live-in relationship feel that caste endogamy is an essential aspect of marriage and it maintains coherence in society. Therefore, religious affiliation has been an important factor of consideration to portray the conflict between informants in live-in relationships and those who are not.

Migration status of respondents

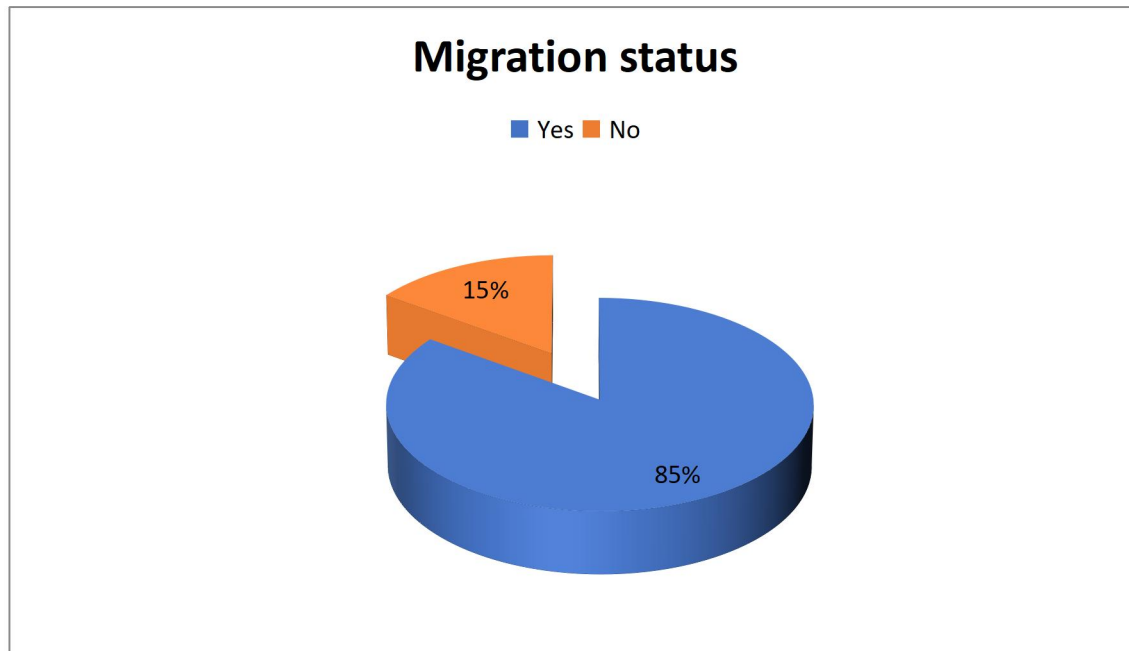
Migration has always been an operative factor of analysis in kinship, marriage and family studies. Migration entails not just movement from the native place but also social, cultural and economic changes that occur complementarily with the physical movement. Studies on migration have always tended to focus on men and their separation from kin network and ‘brotherhood’ to a strange city or country. However, the notion that women migrate as “dependents” has been challenged with women being active participants in the process of migration (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008). Marriage has been associated with migration for women, as often women are asked to migrate leaving their careers and family behind due to cultural prescriptions of patrilocal or virilocal post-marital residence patterns. In fact, migration is used as a proxy by most women to negotiate with decisions regarding career, marriage and other difficult choices.

Migration status has been recorded of only respondents in live-in relationships as the general perception respondents were chosen using a purposive sampling that excluded migrants to get a more local oriented picture about these newer expressions of marriage. The Figure 2.5 portrays the migration status of informants in live-in relationships of New Delhi and Bangalore. The data represented in the Figure 2.5 is suggestive of the fact that most informants in live-in relationships are first generation migrants in both cities, from rural and semi-urban backgrounds.

What is interesting to note here is the extremely high percentage of migrants who are open to live-in relationships as opposed to people living in their hometowns. This is suggestive of the fact that the migrants find it easier to get into live-in relationships as they can keep their relationship a secret in the absence of parents or relatives. Also, the infrastructure needed for the pursuit of live-in relationships is supplemented in an urban metropolitan setting compared to a

rural or a semi-urban space. Location based dating applications, housing applications and websites that cater to couples in live-in relationships are some aspects of this infrastructure that contribute to the adoption of live-in relationships by informants in both the cities.

Figure 2.5 Migration status of respondents in live-in relationship



Another aspect of analysis has been the need to migrate, either in search of employment, or an internal transfer in an existing career opportunity, and in some cases, to pursue higher education as there is no infrastructure for pursuing higher education in towns and rural districts in India. This holds true of both men and women in New Delhi and Bangalore. And further this goes on to challenge the assumption that women migrate as “dependents” or due migration brought upon due to marriage. Economic independence coupled with lesser vigilance with respect to conformity to cultural norms. Therefore, agency may be exercised with respect to decisions involving marital choices with influence from “political-economic processes, by historical and

symbolic determinants and by cultural constructions of gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity” (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008:50).

The analysis of all the above aspects of age-sex distribution of respondents, educational qualification, professional profiles, religious affiliations, migration status and conformity or non-conformity to gendered roles assists in defining this so called “transnational” class of individuals. In the parlance of India, this is loosely understood as “background” in daily conversations (Radhakrishnan 2011). The knowledge of the background of the informants is instrumental in understanding the prevalence, perception and factors responsible for the rising numbers of live-in relationships in India.

Kinship organisation and patterns of post-marital residence

The patrilocal form of descent organisation dominates both sets of the sample as informants both men and women derive their descent through male ancestors. This is reflected in the adopting of surnames which are clan/ lineage name of father or adopting father’s first name as one’s last name as is the custom among communities in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The associated post-marital residence pattern with patrilocal descent is the patrilocal or virilocal form of residence pattern which is the predominant pattern among informants in New Delhi and Bangalore. Similarly, dowry is the most prominent form of marriage payment with varying degrees and modes of transactions from the geographical North to South. In terms of type of family pattern, fraternal and lineal joint family is more common in New Delhi-NCR compared to Bengaluru. Patrilocal descent pattern with patrilocal form of post-marital residence and payment of dowry as the preferred marriage payment is the ideal social organisation of informants in New Delhi and Bangalore. It is therefore interesting to see how informants in live-in relationships in these cities,

negotiate with this ideal social organisation and exercise agency to form live-in relationships in the first place.

Cultural background and agency with respect to marital choices

The final underpinnings that help in comprehending the ethnographic context in which the informants of the study are situated is the cultural background. Cultural background may be loosely defined as the overall ethos or worldview of an individual by virtue of being a part of certain groups or communities; these groups or communities define how the individual perceives life, relationships, religion, politics or even death. Culture has been defined as the sophisticated nexus of shared understandings, beliefs, and all other shared perceptions that are exquisite to its members (Tylor 1871). What may be stressed here is the aspect of membership into the group as well as the fact that culture is passed on from one generation to another which may give the impression that culture is essentially superorganic (Kroeber 1952). Culture when viewed this way, is not inclusive of the person, of individual agency (ability to choose to act from shared understandings) and creative aspect of human mind. It also presents a static view of culture that is over and above the individual.

The most comprehensive definition of culture is perhaps that presented by Parsons (1972), in that culture is the work of the human mind and this definition brings the individual and his/her relationships to culture back to the focus as opposed to earlier works that placed culture under the weight of structuralism and functionalism. An enriched view of culture, as systems of meanings that are used by members of a group to develop their view of life, was provided by Geertz (1973). He employed “thick descriptions” to decipher these systems of meanings and interpretations of these meanings made it possible to understand what a culture means to those

who associate with it. And the aspect of membership may also vary, be it common race, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, sexuality, geographical region etc. Keeping this discussion of the various definition of culture at the core, the subsequent paragraphs will be aimed at addressing some of these common categories that help in summing up the cultural background that informs the agency of individuals in a live-in relationship. Some of these common categories that have had an overarching presence in informants in Delhi and Bangalore are gender, religion, geographical region and political outlook. Each of these categories will be discussed briefly.

The perception of pre-marital sexual relationships differs according to gender as observed from informants in New Delhi and Bangalore. As the study only includes heterosexual couples, the perspectives of men and women could be gathered. While men looked at live-in relationships as liberty in terms of marital choices, women had a different perspective. For women informants, live-in relationships provided an avenue to exercise agency in life choices and at the same time, they provided an alternative to marriage (where there is inherent sexual division of labour). However, both men and women in live-in relationships did express that they found live-in relationships to be free of gender stereotyping and performative gender roles. With respect to political outlook, the informants with a liberal political approach found it much easier to migrate from rural or semi-urban hometowns to urban. Similarly, the same set of informants with a liberal outlook also preferred live-in relationships over marriage. A liberal political outlook also helped informants break gender stereotypes and gender based performative roles as many live-in couples based their relationship out of equality and freedom.

The geographical region may be considered the most important cultural background that shapes the idea of marriage. Although most informants in New Delhi and Bangalore had migrated from nearby towns or smaller cities, there were also many of them who had migrated across regions

such as from the North East, Southern states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The Northern states from where informants had migrated were Gujarat, West Bengal and the bordering states of Delhi such as Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Haryana. If a strict comparison is drawn between both the cities, informants in Bangalore were mostly non-locals but urban migrants from major and minor cities of neighbouring states such as Chennai, Hyderabad , Vijayawada, Kochi and other districts of Kerala. On the other hand, in Delhi-NCR, the migrant informants were from rural districts of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan. There is higher number of informants from the states of Kerala and West Bengal. This is again suggestive of the liberal political outlook and an affinity for Left ideology. As a result, there is an oblivious influence in the shaping of agency to choose unconventional options be it in education, career, sexuality and expressionism and finally marital decisions

It is not uncommon for both partners in a live-in relationship to belong to different regional backgrounds. In fact, such instances are more in number when compared to couples belonging to the same state or union territory. However, it is also true that geographical region or the State from which one belongs has an enormous role to play in the way live-in relationships are perceived. A person with a liberal political outlook from Kerala or West Bengal finds it much easier to adopt live-in relationships, pre-marital dating, pre-marital sexual relationship or single parenthood compared to a person who has a conservative political outlook from a state like Uttar Pradesh or Bihar where right based political outlook and traditional social structure are predominant. Incidentally, the cultural background therefore is a reminder of the heterogeneity in a homogenous pool of informants who are in a live-in relationship. The study of cultural background has improvised the analysis of lived experiences of informants and enhanced the

incorporation of the principles of holism and ethno-relativism, principles which drive ethnography and social anthropology.

This chapter provides an account of the economic, social, cultural and religious underpinnings that define the informants and identify them. Before these aspects are discussed a note on the nature of the cities where informants are dwelling and their relationship with the broader socio-cultural understanding of ethos of informants has been highlighted. The determinants of socio-cultural and economic underpinnings of the informants such as age-sex distribution, education, profession, economic class, migration, religious affiliation and kinship organisation have been discussed. Finally, the cultural background and related aspects such as gender, region and political outlook that affect agency of urban professionals in marital decision making has been discussed.

In conclusion, western education, economic independence, urban lifestyle and a liberal political outlook are the primary characteristics of couples in a live-in relationship in both New Delhi and Bangalore from the data and discussion furnished in this chapter. Religious and caste affiliation recedes while class as a primary feature emerges in this context. The emergence of the individualization in middle and upper-middle class on account of education, economic independence and an exposure to 'glocal' culture on account of urbanization leads to the increased class consciousness. This is reflected in the ability to choose conjugal life outside marriage as an alternative.

Chapter Three

PREVALENCE AND PERCEPTION OF LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS

Anthropological engagement with marriage was predominantly concerned with the universal existence of the institution and the functions it seems to perform. The vivid descriptions of the event i.e. the wedding was deemed operative, as the rituals seemed exotic in comparison to one's own cultural prescriptions of marriage. The focus of the structural functional perspective and structural perspective (with the advent of the alliance theory) was to view marriage not merely as a relationship between two individuals but as a relationship between two kin groups. The alliance framework also tended to understand phenomena (in this case marriage) as a result of binary oppositions. Levi-Strauss's (1969) theory of the system of exchange was severely criticized for the commodification and objectification of women and rightly so, as it does not take into account women's voices or opinions reducing them to objects that could be exchanged by kin groups.

With Collier and Yanagisako's (1987) call for a unified analysis of gender and kinship, there was a consistent shift in anthropological understandings of marriage. An example of such an engagement would be the work of Palriwala as she tried to view "residential practices focusing on female mobility rather than the permanence of the patrilineage" (Kaur and Palriwala 2014, 3). Such an attempt would contribute to the understanding of norms (the extent to which they are practiced and avenues where they are negotiated with) not just from the perspective of the dominant groups (caste, gender, religious etc.,) but also from the perspective of marginal groups. Similarly, not only marriage but the institutions of kinship and family as well can be looked at from such alternative approaches in order to broaden the scope of anthropological analysis.

When discussing dynamics of the institution of marriage, it is almost impossible that one would not stumble upon the discourse on the assumed binary opposition of the arranged marriage versus love marriage where the latter is suggestive of increasing self-choice while the former ensures the reproduction of collective ethos. In other words, contemporary marriage is often understood as an increase in self-choice and pre-marital courtship as the defining criteria. However, the problem with such a dichotomization is that both arranged marriage and romantic partnerships, or love relationships have both undergone a series of transformation as a result of on-going processes of migration, globalization, gender equality and alternative sexualities (Kaur and Palriwala, 2014). While arranged marriages have become more accommodative of individual's choice and interests that might result in a congeal relationship, love relationships not necessarily involve severing ties with one's kin or losing one's identity in the pursuit of desire.

There is little written about actual constructions of intimacy and desire, on the contrary there is an imposition of the model of 'normative conjugality in a functional marriage' which is "hegemonic and heterosexual" (Kaur and Palriwala 2014, 15). On moving beyond the apparent realization occurs of the imposition of this model of sexual legitimacy within marriage as the ideal (Kaur and Palriwala, 2014). Any relationship that challenges this model is not recognised by Indian society and is pushed to the margins as an abnormality. This chapter tries to explore experiences of live-in heterosexual couples to locate what these relationships mean to actors experiencing conjugality willfully or circumstantially outside the purview of marriage. The available literature on the course of emergence of live-in relationships in the West particularly in Europe and America will be analyzed to identify some patterns that may apply in the present scenario and live-in relationships in the urban Indian context has been reviewed in the introductory chapter which will be considered as an impetus for further enquiry. Firstly, a

general understanding of live-in relationships will be arrived at through the various accounts of informants who are couples in live-in relationships as well as common people's perceptions. An attempt will be made finally to note any differences in perception and how these arise. A suitable working definition of live-in relationships will be arrived at while understanding what live-in relationships can mean to marriage and family as institutions in the light of data from New Delhi and Bangalore. Secondly, an understanding of live-in relationships will be arrived at by viewing these relationships as an influence of globalisation in the form of ethnoscapescapes, financescapescapes, mediascapescapes, technoscapescapes and ideoscapescapes¹.

Dynamics of intimacy and love

Cherlin (2004) argues that when social change gives rise to new situations, actors do not depend on shared understandings but negotiate with the situations by finding new ways to act. As a result of the growing individualization and fact that marriage became more of a choice rather than an enforcement, there emerged what Giddens (1992) terms as 'pure relationships' as they provide the companionship and love that marriage offers without compromising on the individuality of both partners allowing either of them to develop a sense of 'self' and most importantly, providing gender equality. Giddens (1992) suggests of the changing nature of intimacy itself that outlines the nature of relationships. He introduces the term 'plastic sexuality' that signifies the emergence of uninhibited pre-marital sexual encounters which in turn changes the discourse on love and intimacy. Norms become obsolete and shared understandings no longer apply when the rapidly changing circumstances demand newer choices that help in "constructing, adjusting, improving or dissolving" the relationships actors form with one another (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995). There is a constant tug between relationships and bonds on one hand and the pursuit of individual aspirations on the other. This is the reason there is a growth in

counselling centers, therapy sessions as people are constantly trying to strike a balance between both realms. Marriage seems too taxing a responsibility to be handled along with professional growth and commitments. Yet, the importance of marriage does not seem to be dwindling but only delayed. While talking about the increasing frailty of human bonds, Bauman suggests the idea of ‘top-pocket relationships’ that are based on convenience as they can be sought when needed and pushed into a pocket when not required (Bauman 2003). The views of Bauman, Giddens are criticized on the basis of the pessimistic view they hold on the process of transformation of relationships. Rather than assuming modernisation as the responsible factor for the emergence of pre-marital relationships and cohabitation, these changes may be attributed to the changing nature of the idea of intimacy itself. Live-in relationships in the Indian context are a noticeable change in the way intimacy is constructed in a relationship. Gathering from the informants’ lived experiences, it may be said that live-in relationships are characteristic of providing an intimate conjugal relationship but at the same time, the relationship caters to the individualism of each of the partners in the relationship.

More generally, cohabitation became accepted as an alternative to marriage in the geographical West. British demographer Kathleen Kiernan (2001) writes that the acceptance of cohabitation is occurring in stages in European nations, with some nations further along than others. In stage one, cohabitation is a fringe or avant-garde phenomenon; in stage two, it is accepted as a testing ground for marriage; in stage three, it becomes acceptable as an alternative to marriage; and in stage four, it becomes indistinguishable from marriage. Sweden and Denmark, she argues, have made the transition to stage four; in contrast, Mediterranean countries such as Spain, Italy, and Greece remain in stage one. In the early 2000s, the United States appeared to be in transition from stage two to stage three. On a similar note, Cherlin (2004) discusses three possible

trajectories of the future of marriage as an institution. The first alternative would be a re-institutionalization of marriage which will be possible if there is a reversal of individualization to more belonging towards collective ethos and the restoration of the traditional family setting where there is a single bread-winner and the woman is responsible for child-rearing and home-making. The second alternative is the prevailing situation, that is, marriage is deinstitutionalized but it remains operative and distinctive. It does not become just another form of relationship but remains the most prestigious one. Finally, the third alternative he suggests is something of the likes of “fading away of marriage” and its replacement by cohabitation or “pure relationships” (Cherlin 2004). While the first alternative seems an impossible and undesirable outcome (as Cherlin himself suggests) the other two possibilities are quite probable as future trajectories of the institution of marriage. The problem with applying such a generalist framework to understand live-in relationships in the Indian context would be a great fallacy. This is, as the cultural ethos and background of people varies incredibly across regions, linguistic and other ethnic identities in India and this greatly impacts the way marriage and live-in relationships are viewed or perceived. Although this aspect has been introduced in the previous chapter, the subsequent discussions elaborate on these perceptions from the field.

The major reasons for the de-institutionalization of marriage and the emergence of live-in relationships in the West have been analyzed under social and economic parameters. One of the social factors may be recognized in the behavior of people who question conventional marriage and do not consider marriage as a necessary step for staying together. While emphasis on choice and equality of genders have been reported as the other major social factors, the economic factors for preference of cohabitation has been the ease of sharing monetary responsibilities such as rent and household expenditure and the absence of legal liabilities such as alimony in case of

separation. A combination of all such factors has resulted in the increase of cohabitation and a gradual decrease in the conformity to marriage. However, these studies provide a unidirectional image of the rise of cohabitation as an alternative to marriage from one stage to another and the underlying presumption that there is gender equality in all live-in relationships is debatable. Also, it is to be noted that ‘pure relationships’ as Giddens suggests (1991) or live-in relationships as we understand them are rather volatile and their termination is not bound by law although same legal sanctions apply constitutionally. These relationships exist purely for emotional support and for those who want to derive an identity through these relationships. This is where the notion of ‘enforceable trust’ (Cherlin 2004) that marriage offers comes into play as marriage is almost a permanent commitment given in the presence of significant others in one’s life. Whereas a live-in relationship offers only private commitment often that is clandestine. This understanding of the concept of live-in relationships and its emergence in the European and American context, will significantly contribute to the understanding and examination of the nature of live-in relationships in the Indian cities of Bangalore and New Delhi. Whether the above-mentioned trajectories can be applied while understanding the Indian context or if it has taken a course of its own will then be determined.

Perception of live-in relationships from the point of view of couples in live-in relationships

While interviewing informants in live-in relationships, one of the preliminary questions asked was regarding the individual’s or couple’s idea of a live-in relationship, their understanding of their own relationship and how they think a live-in relationship is either similar to or different from marriage. A parallel enquiry was directed at understanding the informant’s cultural interpretation of live-in relationships. The responses were often accompanied by emotions, funny anecdotes or sometimes replete with references from personal experiences or from popular

culture. A systematic synthesis of all the responses from the respondents revealed some common or overarching patterns in the way live-in relationships are perceived by actors experiencing them. Therefore, these patterns have been identified to derive at a definition of live-in relationships in the Indian context through the eyes of the informants to bring in a truly 'emic' perspective. At the core, live-in relationships seem to be out of the bound of society at large, where societal standards are either temporarily disregarded or do not apply. They seem to be breaking the stereotype of the hegemony of marriage providing a sense of relief to the people who detest the idea of societal demonstration of relationships and their intimacy by getting married. They serve as a sense of reassurance for people who are commitment phobic, who probably became that way due to witnessing unhappy marriages.

As Vikram, a 28-year-old architect, living in Bangalore rightly puts it, “a live-in relationship is more than just a relationship and less than marriage”. For Anirudh and Dipti a young couple from Central Delhi who got married recently after a four-year long live-in relationship, live-in relationships have been romanticized more than ever in the last few years as an alternative to marriage, thanks to popular culture. For them, their relationship mostly helped either of them to increase the acceptability of their partner and working towards tolerance of each other's personality. They also exclaim that these tags and labels that we designate to relationships are actually redundant to the actual people in the live-in relationship. That is, the label of “live-in relationship” is what society designates to urban heterosexual couples who live together without getting married. To a couple, this is a label that is imposed on them by society.

For few individuals in live-in relationships like Ankita Sharma, an investment banker working in Bangalore, live-in relationships are similar to marriage except that there is no involvement of the family. While in marriage, there is conjugal pressure between the companions to make the

marriage work, in a live-in relationship there is the extra burden of societal pressure seeking to hasten the transition of the relationship into marriage to legitimize it. However, in everyday parlance live-in relationships seem purely based on convenience. At first, there is convenience of walking in and out of the relationship based on free will and most importantly there is no judgment although there is emotional wearing. Couples get a lot of time together, cooking and eating several meals together, gratification of sexual needs, and sometimes just the simple satisfaction from doing mundane things together helps form an emotional connect and a sense of belonging. This is what essentially distinguishes couples who are in live-in relationships and those who are in love but live apart. According to informants in a live-in relationship, staying together gives companions a chance to learn about each other's habits and develop tolerance to each other's personality along with getting acquainted with each other's likes and dislikes. One of the major reasons for couples to move in together is to check their compatibility before getting into a long-term commitment like marriage. A few couples also admitted to have rediscovered their own 'personalities' while in a live-in relationship. On the other hand, there are material and economic reasons like sharing of rent and other expenses especially since this is an urban phenomenon. Many couples felt that the sharing of financial responsibilities was one of the reasons accompanying other major reasons that led to the decision of moving in together. This is evident from Ravi and Anne's experience in the city of Bangalore.

Ravi is a software engineer residing in Bangalore where he met Anne a lecturer at a technological institution in the same city, through a common friend at Church. Coincidentally they realized that they belonged to the same town in Srikakulam district of Andhra Pradesh and moved to Bangalore on account of their professional commitment. While she lived in a hostel, he lived in a rented apartment with good amenities. The bad food and unhygienic conditions of the

hostel where Anne stayed led to their decision of moving in together in his flat. Also, as Anne says, “It was the most logical thing to do. We were spending a lot of time together anyway and it just seemed foolish to spend so much money living separately. We are now saving a lot of money as well as time as we do not have to travel from one part of the city to another to see each other.”

From these experiences of informants, it can be gathered that live-in relationships are preferred by financially independent individuals belonging to middle and upper middle classes. It is also observed that live-in relationships are urban centric, with a clear presence in metropolitan cities such as Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore. Migration to urban areas is associated with separation from family of orientation and there is a sense of longing for family and companionship (Jayapalan, 2013). Therefore, this longing for companionship and care is also one of the reasons for urban professionals to prefer live-in relationships.

Live-in relationships are the common place term for pre-marital cohabitation. Contrary to popular belief, they are not entered only to test compatibility for marriage or as a means of pre-marital sexual relationships. Live-in relationships appeal to individuals who wish to negotiate with the institutional nature of marriage and family. For couples belonging to inter-faith or inter-caste identities, live-in relationships provide an alternative imagining of conjugality or a conjugal relationship outside the bounds of rules of endogamy and exogamy of marriage. Testing compatibility with one another, pre-marital sex or sharing of expenses may also be some of the reasons for live-in relationship, but not the only reasons for preferring live-in relationships over marriage. Live-in relationships also provide companionship, love, emotional support like a conjugal relationship and hence a pessimistic view of the relationships as “top pocket relationships” or “open relationships” is uncalled for. The adaptation of live-in relationships in

India is not a novel phenomenon as can be seen from the depiction of such relationships in films (especially Bollywood), poetry, songs etc. The increasing adaption of live-in relationships in metropolitan cities could be attributed to the liberalisation of sexuality in India, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

However, couples in a live-in relationship seem to recognise some inconsistencies in live-in relationships that may prompt the general public to assume a negative opinion on these relationships. While agreeing that live-in relationships cannot replace marriage, informants who are cohabiting couples are of the opinion that marriage is a social identity while live-in relationship cannot account for providing such a recognition. Another aspect that most interactions with cohabiting couples revealed is that the live-in relationship does not guarantee a successful or happy marriage. Live-in relationships are highly based on contextual and territorial aspects that form the basis of decision-making of the heterosexual couple. Especially important is the aspect of territoriality as there is a unanimous agreement among live-in couples that live-in relationships can only be imagined in metropolitan cities and not in tier two cities such as Lucknow, Kanpur, Bhopal, Madurai, Vizag, Nagpur etc. The most prominent reason for this that has been repeatedly cited by respondents has been that in smaller cities, there is no provision of infrastructure that might lead or support couples that wish to cohabit. In cities of metropolitan nature, housing societies and other accommodation applications such as Nestaway and Nobroker provide housing options for couples in live-in relationships. It is relatively easier to obtain accommodation for rent/lease if the landlord is a non-local, residing in a different state or country altogether. This option is unavailable in tier two cities. Another reason is that social circles are wider in towns and smaller cities and there is a perception that everyone knows quite everyone in such cities. Therefore, individuals may not have the liberty to make choices such as

that of getting into live-in relationships in such cities for the fear that somebody in their wider social circle or their parent's acquaintances might recognise them and may judge them on their relationship choices. This could be the reason why many live-in couples in India do not involve their family and parents in their relationship until absolutely sure of marriage.

The gap between the social learning process and an individual's agentic ability (here in deciding to stay in a live-in relationship) is what we can conclude as cohabitation gap. Soons and Kalmijn (2009) suggested that cohabitation gap depends on the country's cultural characteristics. Indeed, they found that married people were significantly happier than cohabitators only in countries where cohabitation is not common. On the one hand, the selection into cohabitation might be even stronger in these countries. Cohabitators represent a small selective group of people who significantly differ from the majority of the population in countries where cohabitation is not common and are a marginal social group that deviates from the norm of the married majority (Stavrova et al. 2011). The latter is especially true in the context of urban Indian heterosexual couples. Heterosexual live-in couples represent a marginal social group in the larger social group of live-in couples in India (including homosexual couples and couples identifying with alternative sexualities). A detailed discussion shall be presented with respect to difficulties faced by such couples in obtaining familial and societal recognition of live-in relationships on account of being a marginal social group.

Familial acknowledgement of live-in relationships

Momentarily, a few more cases and narratives of informants have been furnished to provide a consolidated perception of live-in relationship from the perspective of heterosexual live-in couples, especially concerning the acceptance of their families and wider social network. As

Swathi Savaria(34), a software engineer in Noida, who has been in a live-relationship for the past ten years exclaims that she does not believe in the institution of marriage anymore as she has witnessed so many failed marriages due to lack of respect and understanding between the couples. The live-in relationship she has with Rehaan, she feels is organic and that she does not need others to solemnize it. People are entitled to hold opinions but these opinions do not affect her and will definitely not decide whom she can or cannot spend her life with. The only people whose opinion matters to both her and Rehaan are that of their parents'. When asked how live-in relationships are perceived in her culture she replies, she hail from a Marwadi family living in Jaipur. Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are considered deeds against the honour of their family. Living-in with Rehaan who a Muslim is against the wish of her family and community as they perceive it to be *love jihad* (terrorism in the name of love). They want to get married, but they are also waiting for her parent's approval of their relationship. Many couples have found live-in relationships as an option to deal with caste and religion endogamy. The narrative of Neethi and Irshad also reflects a similar theme of negotiating with caste endogamy as a prerequisite for marriage and found solace in their live-in relationship.

Neethi Dubey (35) is a software engineer working in Noida for the past 14 years. She hails from Kanpur and is from an orthodox upper-caste family. Her family is not at all open to the idea of love or courtship before marriage and all marriages in her family have been arranged marriages. The average age of marriage in her immediate and extended family has been 23 for women and 25 for men. She was introduced to Irshad Khan her neighbour in Kanpur, by her brother who was a friend of Irshad's brother. Eventually they fell in love. His family is an orthodox Muslim family. However, a year after they met, they had to move to Noida on account of their MNC jobs. The general cost of living in the city was expensive and also it was the first time both of them

were away from their families. They constantly longed each other's company and it was difficult for them to meet after work in the evenings as her hostel had a policy of not allowing inmates to go out at night. It was at this point that they decided to move in together as it seemed like the most practical thing to do. It was quite a task to get a house on rent as they were not married. Finally, they found a house where the landlord demanded more rent as they were a live-in couple and not married. She mentions that neighbours, the house maid and even some of her colleagues were always intrigued and judgemental about their relationship. Their friends stopped inviting them to social gatherings after few years as they felt awkward to introduce them as a live-in couple to their wider social network. It is at this point that the couple decided to break the news to their respective families and get married although it did not matter to them as much as it did to the society. Their parents opposed their relationship on grounds that it was inter-religious. She was forced to bid her goodbye to her family forever.

They settled down in Noida ever since and have been living together for thirteen years now. Fed up with landlords and their greed in exploiting their situation, they bought an apartment for themselves. They have a pet and, in her words, "we have built a world of our own". He decided to take a break from his monotonous job and is now a homemaker. They defied all stereotypes and laugh about how their neighbours are so curious about their relationship status, especially now with him being a homemaker and she pursuing a job. They are very content with their relationship and are often proud of themselves when they see friends who are married yet so unhappy all the time. They state that if there is trust and confidence in a relationship there is no need for some rituals or legal papers to validate that relationship.

Thus, it can be inferred how religion and caste give rise to newer expressions of family and marriage. When we observe without pre-conceived notion of normative marriage rules, it is

almost indistinguishable from marriage. A couple in a live-in relationship live like any other married couple, they do have a sexual relationship, a romantic one, where there is love, equality and sense of belonging. Yet there are no elaborate rituals, legal documents or even the support of family members to validate their relationship. Though many informants have gone against the normative imposition of caste endogamy, in choosing partners who may not belong to their caste or religion, parental recognition of their relationship has been of prime importance.

Figure 3.1 Familial acknowledgement of live-in relationship

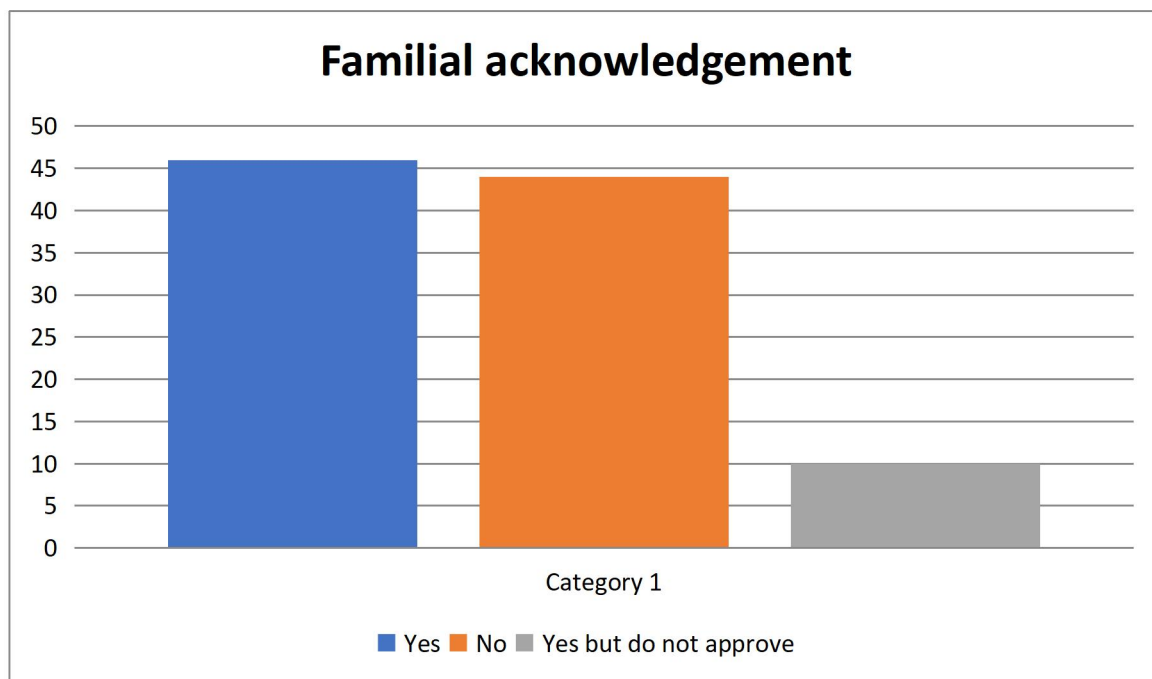


Figure 3.1 discusses familial acknowledgement of live-in relationships of associated individuals and shows an unfavourable approach in the recognition of live-in relationships in Indian society. The families who do approve of live-in relationships willingly or unwillingly are a significant proportion of the sample but the majority of the families are either unaware or do not approve of these relationships. This clearly indicates that live-in couples face judgment in society where the majority do not acknowledge such relationships let alone give their approval. Informants who

were not comfortable informing their parents or families about their live-in relationship stated endogamy of caste and religion as the main reason why they believed their families would not approve of their relationship. Strict adherence of endogamy of caste and religion is a characteristic feature of marriage in India. As many informants mentioned, couples in live-in relationships preferred to keep their relationships a secret, without bringing it to the notice of their families.

However, from the statistics furnished in Figure 3.1, there are considerable number of couples who have informed of their relationship to their family. There are families that are aware that their members are in a live-in relationship and do approve of them. On the other hand, there are families that are aware of the live-in relationship but are not ready to accept or are indifferent to it. The families that do approve of the relationship anticipate the transition of the couple from a live-in relationship into marriage. In fact, most couples who wished to get married after a few years of living-in, had informed their families of their live-in relationship, end up getting married as the family is concerned with societal recognition of the relationship. Some informants also mentioned that their families are never informed of the living-in part of their relationship as they felt their parents might not be able to understand their reasons or their decision to stay together with the person they love before getting married. Therefore, the whole relationship is kept a secret in most cases in both new Delhi and Bangalore.

The subset of informants whose families have acknowledged and approved their live-in relationship, belong to the Southern and North Eastern region of the country. This indicates that these regions may be more accommodative of newer expressions of kinship, marriage and family. Similarly, these families of live-in couples also identified with a liberal outlook towards life (social, political and cultural). Also, the highest number of informants in this subset are women,

which points that they are more eager and comfortable sharing about their relationships with their parents and siblings. Women informants mentioned that informing their families provided them much relief, even though it meant facing resistance and judgement from their families initially.

Majority of the couples reported to have faced problems with landlord the moment they stated they were not married but staying together. Either the rent as such was hiked or they were turned down a place to live altogether. That is the reason most couples opt to pass off as a married couple. But this too created its own share of problems. Neighbors wonder why families never visit or when the couple might have children. The whole idea of a non-marital relationship seems highly promiscuous to the average Indian. Informants who were women mentioned about their apprehension to share about their live-in relationship even with their colleagues and friends for the fear of judgment and sometimes even character shaming. When relationship fails, people look at it as the woman's mistake. On the whole, actors in live-in relationships are of the opinion that their relationships are not respected or even acknowledged in Indian society and a significant number of them are indifferent to this validation. The subsequent section illustrates the perception of the people of both the cities to note the gaps in perceptions of the actors and the non-actors.

Perception of live-in relationships by general public in cities of Delhi and Bangalore

The other side of the story also has an interesting take on the acceptance of live-in relationships in India. Although opinions on the matter seem divided, there is consensus on the fact that live-in relationships cannot replace or provide an alternative to marriage in the Indian context in majority of the cases. To begin with, most informants questioned the very name of the

relationship as an unrecognized, illicit and unwelcome change in the institution of marriage. There is an absence of recognition of live-in relationships or pre-marital cohabitation in most Indian languages. There are no formal or emic terms used to represent such relationships. A few examples cited by some informants include the Telugu term *sahajeevanam* which loosely translates to living together. Another term from Rajasthani folklore *hsali* is mockingly used to refer to the form of marriage by trial where the prospective groom performs various activities to impress the prospective bride in order to get approval for courtship before getting married. In fact, Anchitha a mass media professional staying in Delhi, recollects the old folk tradition which is an institutional form of courtship before marriage. She recollects stories told by her grandmother of probable young suitors visiting the potential bride in her home, trying to form an emotional connection. However, this was in her grandmother's generation and mostly generations above her. This is unimaginable in the present scenario in a highly patriarchal state like Rajasthan.

A peculiar system of living together without a legal or religious marriage is the custom of *maitri karar* in Gujarat as noted by Bina Desai, a lawyer residing in Delhi originally belonging to Ahmedabad. According to this custom, which is not practiced anymore, an agreement is drafted between the couple who wishes to stay together in a local court as an agreement that they would live together and be accountable for one another. The system was mainly misused by hitherto married men or women to bypass the Hindu Marriage Act which prohibits illicit relationships outside marriage when one's spouse is still alive and not divorced. A similar system is in place in the rural communities of states such as Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh called the *nata pratha* which is believed to be an empowering custom in terms of marital decision making for women. Women in abusive and unhappy marriages could abandon their husband and children and enter a

nata marriage with another man of their choice. A bride price is paid to the previous husband by the man who wishes to enter *nata* with the woman. In most cases, as informed by Bina Desai, there was no payment of bride-price and the couple would just start living together.

Another example for such provisions in Indian communities includes the status of *chapania* ascribed to agrarian helpers or labourers who are taken as partners by widowed or separated landlady in Assamese culture. It is predominant in agrarian communities in rural Assam and the word *chapania* is used to refer to the man who becomes the cohabitor of the woman who chooses him. When viewed from the perspective of the actors involved, the *sambandham* relationships of Nair community in Kerala as studied by Gough (1959) also exhibit characteristics of live-in relationships. This is also mentioned by Parvathy Menon, a software engineer in Bangalore. She herself is in a live relationship and recounts the now non-existing custom where the couple cohabited without a formal marriage.

Although all these examples from various communities across the country suggest live-in relationships as a pre-existing custom, they do not adequately account for the present sample which is urban, educated, financially independent and hitherto unmarried individuals who have chosen live-in relationships as a preference. While these ethnographic examples observed by different informants are considered customary practices, live-in relationships are not considered customary. They are seen as an influence of Westernization and Modernization. As there are no emic terms which denote live-in relationships, this is reflective of the fact that they are not recognized as customary practices in Indian society. Therefore, the characteristics of the sample of the study define live-in relationships as essentially different from these ethnographic examples that may mimic live-in relationships but are not entirely similar.

Towards defining live-in relationships

A working definition of live-in relationships may be proposed to give a comprehensive picture of the sample of informants in live-in relationship who have been interviewed. This can also be useful in delineating the particular kind of relationships that this study is concerned with and also as a demarcation from other similar kinds of relationships that do not fall in the purview of this study. Live-in relationships need to be differentiated from another form of relationships called ‘friends with benefits’ which quite literally as the name suggests involve a heterosexual or homosexual couple who are not emotionally attached to the relationship but are in the relationship only on a need basis to explore their sexuality. Such relationships were a common place in both the cities of New Delhi and Bangalore. Since such relationships do not involve common residence, emotional or psychological attachment of the couple, they are not to be confused as live-in relationship where a couple invests their psychological and emotional being into the relationship.

Another type of relationship that was common place in both cities was the phenomenon of open relationships, where there were truly no bounds for the relationship as a couple (both heterosexual and homosexual) would be open to relationship with other individuals while in a relationship with one another. Both partners recognise their limits and rights in the relationship but there is no exclusivity to one another, as they are open to a relationship with other people while in one already. Live-in relationships on the other hand are based on the principle of exclusivity, where the couple has exclusive rights over one another while in the relationship. Therefore, a couple in a live-in relationship enjoy exclusive rights over one another until they are satisfied with the relationship.

‘Sugar dating’ implies a relationship ideally between a younger, financially dependent individual and a much older financially independent individual where the older individual returns monetary or other benefits in exchange for favours from the younger individual. The older individual is addressed as ‘sugar daddy’ or ‘sugar mommy’ who would provide for the younger individual provided they tended to their needs which are usually sexual in nature. Sugar dating has become a popular and common phenomenon not in Indian cities but in most South Asian countries. It is an outcome of growing income disparities between the middle and the upper classes and a rise in consumerism.

Another common phenomenon which is structurally an opposite of live-in relationships is the LAT or Living Apart Together. In these relationships, a couple is in a relationship with one another but stays apart in different houses. This may be a conscious choice of the couple to give each other their own space both physically and otherwise or a response to a situation such as staying close to place of work to avoid daily commute etc. LAT relationships are not age bound, as they are preferred by both young and middle-aged individuals and of course the reasons may vary according to individual circumstances. When married individuals prefer a LAT, it is usually to avoid conflict due to differences of opinion. To differentiate live-in relationships from other relationships that have a similar outlook, a definition may be drawn. For the purpose of the present study, live-in relationships may be defined as - the pre-marital cohabitation entered into by heterosexual individuals who are hitherto unmarried, whose creative agency ushers them to find companionship outside the purview of marriage and their psychological and financial independence provides the needed impetus to support their choice.

The foundation of live-in relationship is the ease of walking in and walking out according to these informants. This temporariness and arbitrariness is what makes the picture vague for an

average Indian. People question the stability of the relationship when people enter it with the notion of exiting someday. On the other hand, marriage provides more stability to the institution of family. Ramesh Kumar Chikkara (58) government employee from Delhi, is of the opinion that such relationships are a superimposition on the Hindu culture (his idea of an ideal national model of life and ethos) and they are unwanted. He would not feel shy to even boycott such people he states, sternly. He also questions the status of caste in these relationships as it is one of the most important factors considered while marriages are arranged. To avoid all confusion, he suggests people getting into live-in relationships should get married ultimately. Barkha Yadav, a 46-year-old housewife from Gurgaon suggests that people pass off lust in the name of love in live-relationships. Citing her own love marriage as a reference, she asks why people cannot get married if they love each other so much. She also thinks that the success rates of such relationships are very low. However, the present study indicates that live-in relationships are successful as most relationships tend to culminate into marriage. Even if there is separation, it is based on mutual consent.

Independent thought process does not go hand in hand with social organization of many Indian communities. Another overarching theme in most responses is the opinion that the physical security of women and the notion of *izzat* is compromised in such relationships. Women seem to be at the receiving end of judgment as they are considered of low morale if they give in to such “promiscuous” unions. When the whole relationship is based on secrecy, how will the women deal with situations of domestic violence or sexual assault? What happens to consent in such cases? Who will they approach for help? With increasing number of cases reported of ‘love jihad’ where women are trapped in the name of love to seek ulterior socio-political motives, the question of safety of women becomes predominant. However, women in live-in relationships

counter these arguments by stressing the importance of equality and agency of women in choosing their romantic partners. Also, they bring out the counter argument that marriages (both arranged and love) are also not free from domestic abuse or sexual abuse. Therefore, attributing the problem of violence (which is a larger social problem in itself) to live-in relationships alone and questioning the morale of women who choose live-in relationships is a weak premise.

A recurring theme in most responses has also been the dichotomy of sacred and profane. While marriage is considered a sacred commitment backed by religious attestation, live-in relationship is associated with ideas of profanity unacknowledged by any religious institution although the state and legality sanction the same status to both types of relationships. The institution of marriage is associated with “selective legitimacy” dividing relationships into “the legitimate and illegitimate, the moral and the immoral and sometimes the holy and unholy” (Sen et al 2011). The idea of this profanity associated with live-in relationships stems from the fact that live-in relationships are considered promiscuous with overt sexual behavior against the norm of abstinence from pre-marital sex. The people who hold opinions strongly against live-in relationships assert that pre-marital sex cannot be justified on the pretext of testing compatibility. Sanctity of space (in this case the neighborhood) is also affected according to these proponents when live-in couples are present amongst them. That is, some informants who opposed the idea of live-in relationships felt that the presence of live-in couples in their neighborhood or community led to the attribution of a bad reputation for the entire place. This resonates with the general perception of live-in relationships (by the sample drawn from New Delhi and Bangalore) as an undesirable change that is happening in Indian society.

The notion of honour or *izzat* of not just the woman but her entire family and lineage is reflected in control of her sexuality and desire (Channa 2007). Therefore, not observing abstinence from

pre-marital sexual relationships is associated with profanity. The very notion of a relationship out of the institution of marriage translates to illegitimacy, both the relationship and the children born out of it. The relationship is not even worthy of being compared to a sacred institution such as marriage according to most informants who are married. Essentially what marriage has, to be raised to the status of the most sacred of all relationships is the religious and ritual sanction added to legal recognition in all communities, religions and regions. Elaborate or simple rituals are performed according to the procedures prevalent in one's community or kin group and these are performed in the presence of ritual specialists and the extended family and friends. This religious recognition is absent in the case of live-in relationships, as it is not sought by actors in such relationships to publicize and legitimize the relationship through the wider society's eyes. As in most cases among the informants in live-in relationships, family and extended kin are not aware of the relationship of the actors as they choose to keep it a secret for the fear of severing ties with the family of origin. This is viewed as an act of profanity, rendering the relationship as uncalled for and something that makes a mockery of a sacred institution such as marriage.

According to informants who are not in live-in relationships, live-in relationships are unrecognized, illicit, promiscuous relationships which are sought by individuals who are migrants in metropolitan cities and have financial independence. Since these relationships do not take into account the basic structural features of Indian arranged marriage such as caste and religion, they are bound to fail (according to non-actors of live-in relationships). The notion of *izzat* or honour of women is at stake in such relationships as there is an ease of walking in and out of such relationship without any institutional or religious sanction.

Finally, the notion of live-in relationships as an essential outcome of globalization, Westernization and migration is very strong among the general public. The general public views

these relationships as Western-lifestyle centric and urban centric. They are a result of exposure to forces of globalization, rising consumerism and mass media with special emphasis on social media. Therefore, it is evident from all these responses that there is a huge gap in the perception of live-in relationships from the point of view of actors who are in and are not in them.

Gaps in perception of live-in relations

One possible explanation for the gap in perception of live-in relationships is the emphasis laid on permanency of marriage and the hegemony of the idea of marriage. There are certain expectations of conjugal behavior which are unfortunately extended even to live-in relationships that are not based on the similar underpinnings of gender, labor and power as of marriage. This is where the conflict arises. The society at large fails to understand that moving into a live-in is a choice undertaken by two consenting individuals who are comfortable with the idea of moving on with other relationships if one fails. This liberty that marriage does not provide does not go hand in hand with the ethos of the majoritarian Indian irrespective of caste and religion. Those individuals who want to locate themselves in the realm of marriage are always welcome but those individuals who willfully locate themselves outside the realm of marriage are not welcomed to do so fearing the deconstruction of existing social structure. This applies not only to live-in relationships but also to homosexuality and other members of the LGBTQA+ communities. Live-in relationships are perceived as an aberration to the idea of the one culture model of India. There are also a considerable proportion of individuals who see the upsides of live-in relationships in helping young adults understand conjugality better. The following account represents the notion of all informants who perceive live-in relationships as a normal and healthy outcome of globalisation and urbanisation.

Rajeev Darsh (52) is a resident of New Delhi, working as an art director at the Nehru Planetarium. He is married for 27 years to Shiela Darsh (46), who works at a nationalised bank. They have a daughter who has finished her graduation and is hoping to start a career in interior designing. Their entire extended family is also in Delhi, so there are frequent visits of relatives to their home. Although it has been an arranged marriage, Rajeev and Shiela have always built their relationship on love and compassion for each other. Shiela is of the opinion that at an age when arranged marriage almost sanctioned unequal status to husband and wife, Rajeev stood for equality in their marriage. Even today, her consent matters as much as his in whatever decision they take collectively. She admits that he cooks better than her. Taking care of their daughter in her formative years was also shared by them, unlike in society where child rearing is only a responsibility of women in the house. Financial expenses have been organised through a split account, says Rajeev. Above all, the notion of being one person, is what signifies marriage for Rajeev and Shiela. They feel that the present generation must learn to embrace differences and be patient in their conjugal relationships. This is a trait that is missing in a majority of young people and is absolutely necessary for being in a stable relationship whether it is marriage or a live-in relationship.

The couple do not see live-in relationships as a problem in society. There is so much stress in life for this generation that she feels these newer expressions of marriage are almost inevitable. To an extent, they are also a product of the influence of modernity and exposure to Western lifestyle. They provide testing ground for marriage which has become a phase of lot of stress for youngsters today. The couple also feel that one must not be surprised even if live-in relationships become indistinguishable from marriage like in the West. Understanding is the key to any relationship, “if two people are happy while in love and do not feel the need to get married then

so be it, why should society have a problem with that?” questions Rajeev. When asked what made them form these opinions almost on a resonating tone Shiela replied, “I would consider our educational and professional backgrounds to be the reason for our thought process. Both Rajeev and I belong to upper-caste Hindu families. Growing up, we had many restrictions on what we must pursue academically, professionally and even on the personal front. It is only by luck that we happened to have similar thought process. But we did not want Pihu (their daughter) to grow up in such a constrained environment. I wanted her to be independent and capable of making her decisions. We even encouraged our daughter to fall in love although we did not really suggest getting into a live-in relationship. But if she does eventually, we do not have a problem with that. This is way better than her suffering in a loveless marriage because her life partner was of our choice instead of hers!”

The above narrative of Rajeev and Shiela’s perspective of marriage and live-in relationships reveals an important change in the perception of modernity and globalisation in the Indian context. Modernity and globalisation have always been viewed as processes that have affected the Indian culture negatively. The positive view of modernisation and associated social processes is a humongous change in the way Indian parents perceive the rapidly occurring social and cultural changes. However, the data furnished in this study may not be sufficient to locate this change of perception adequately. A highly representative sample of Indian parents belonging to varied age groups and regional backgrounds must be drawn to illustrate this change in perception of modernity and its associated social outcomes.

Also, there exists a major difference in the perception of live-in relationship between married and unmarried informants. Unmarried young professionals do not view live-in relationships as an aberration or as promiscuous relationships. Most unmarried informants in the general perception

sample were open to live-in relationships and pre-marital romantic relationships. Some of them had experienced dating though they did not experience live-in relationships. This may be due to the impact of globalisation processes on unmarried young professionals.

Though a few individuals see live-in relationships as a necessary aspect for better and compatible marriages in the future, the question of children and stability of family paints a grim picture about the acceptance of live-in relationships on an equal level with marriage. This aspect has been discussed with data from both cities in the next chapter. To sum up, the cohabitation gap or the difference in perception of live-in relationships, is majorly attributed to the extension of conjugal permanency to live-in relationships. The emergence and prevalence of live-in relationships among young professionals is attributed to globalisation processes that affect the marital decisions and the very nature of intimacy between couples. A note on the contribution of globalisation in invoking a liberal outlook towards live-in relationships and pre-marital sex will be addressed. However, the present analysis views globalisation as a process that brings about dynamics of marriage and family rather than as an effect or outcome.

Globalisation and liberalization of sexuality

Although the idea of live-in relationships seems like an influence of processes of globalization and exposure to Western ideas of sexuality, we cannot rule out the possibility of the organic nature of the relationships. It is more of a personal choice however in the midst of migration driven by globalization and westernization. While the terminology may be imbibed, the concept is age old as no culture can influence to get into a relationship. The possibility of live-in relationships in tribal communities where there is no formal marriage at all is highly probable. However, two factors seem to have influenced the rise in live-in relationships that is financial

independence and liberalization of sexuality in India. While the former provides the basis of strengthening of decision making with respect to being in a live-in relationship, it is liberalization of sexuality that actually facilitates different ways of exploring relationships by providing the medium. While social media has done its bit in the regard, it is the online dating applications which have truly revolutionized discourse on sexuality. Applications like Tinder, Truly Madly, OkCupid, happn, Bumble, Badoo and Coffee Meets Bagel let users connect and “hook up” to potential partners according to set preferences. Tinder allows users to specify their sexual orientation thereby catering not only to heterosexual individuals but also to homosexual individuals based on their sexual preferences. With people becoming more open to discussing their sexuality, the taboo associated with pre-marital sex slowly seems fading away. Individuals are comfortable with the idea of their partners having a past in terms of sexual life. However, it does not indicate acceptance for pre-marital sex or pre-marital courtship in Indian society, although it should have been the case. The resistance to live-in relationships has transformed from aggressive to passive in the last few years. The influence of globalisation and the consequent liberalization of sexuality in shaping the idea of live-in relationship in individuals in New Delhi and Bangalore will be explored through the analysis of five scapes that effect the global cultural economy. The significance of employing the global cultural economy framework lies in the analysis of the interconnectedness of all dimensions of globalisation as a process and how this process produces dynamics in marriage and family. Live-in relationships are also considered an aspect of these dynamics. The other point of significance of using this framework is that it brings out an emic perspective of the phenomenon of live-in relationships from the point of view of informants. This could be based on a movie or advertisement that an informant has watched, a dating application that they have used or based on ideas of life and relationships.

Therefore, the mediascapes, technoscapes, ideoscapes and financescapes that have contributed to the normalising of live-in relationships among urban professional unmarried Indians will be discussed briefly.

Popular culture as an influencing “mediascape”

The influence of media especially the new media, on popular culture can be discussed with respect to films, OTT platforms and the increasingly popular medium of stand-up comedy. Informants are exposed to these forms of the new media and the ideas disseminated from these mediums seemed to influence them in not just decisions about marital life and conjugality but also about food patterns, consumer behaviour and political views. Some of the popular mediums that have shaped the idea of live-in relationships in the minds of informants and have etched an opinion on them are discussed further. The references to pre-marital sex and live-in relationships are abundant in the media whether it is films like *Break ke Baad*, *OK Kanmani*; American sitcoms such as *Friends*, *Breaking Bad*, which are streamed on online mediums such as Amazon Prime, Netflix and Hotstar.

The movie *O Kadhal Kanmani* in Tamil by director Mani Ratnam was one of the first mainstream movies to break the stereotype around live-in relationships as promiscuous, pictured in a dramatic way with usually the couple breaking up before getting married. The women who choose live-in relationships are portrayed as morally “loose” and as the people who lose everything, if the relationship is to end. *OK Kanmani* revolves around the protagonists Adithya who is a videogame developer and Taara an architect in Mumbai. While at a common friend’s wedding, both meet each other and later after getting to know each other enough, they decide to live-in together and approach a landlord, Ganapathy who lives with his wife who is an

Alzheimer's patient. Reluctantly, Ganapathy agrees to let Taara stay along with Adithya who is his tenant already. The couple decide to stay together until Tara gets her visa to study at Paris. Adithya also receives an offer at his company to develop games at their US site. Though the couple plan to keep marriage off the cards, during the course of the relationship their love for each other grows particularly after watching Ganapathy take care of his wife while she starts forgetting everything due to the disease. The couple realise that all that their relationship needs is trust and unconditional love and they decide to get married before pursuing their individual careers in different countries.

Mathangi, who was interviewed along with her live-in partner Satish are both Tamilians working in Electronic City in Bangalore. They found the movie particularly relatable and the portrayal of the situation of the couple in the movie as something all live-in couples go through according to them. They mentioned that they along with their friends have always wondered that there will emerge some point in their lives too when they will have to choose marriage as the next step and the movie was a reality check for them.

The web series production companies such as AIB, ChaiBisket, TVF to name a few have attempted to normalise liberalisation of sexuality. The web-series *Permanent Roommates* which was produced by and streamed in TVF Play is perhaps the best example of a sit-com that deals with live-in relationships in the Indian metropolitan city as the major plot. The show was suggested by Vinay Suneja, from Delhi and the show is a huge hit among informants in Delhi and Bangalore as almost all of them have watched it. Running into two seasons with five episodes each, the story revolves around Mikhesh and Tanya as protagonists who decide to start living-in together in a suburb in Mumbai. As the plot progresses, the protagonists go through ups and downs as they try to go about their relationship. The prominent problem that is shown is that

of acquiring a home for tenancy, as they are a live-in couple. Another motif that is shown in the second Season is the pre-marital pregnancy that Tanya undergoes and the couple are convinced by their parents to get married before welcoming their child underlining the importance of marriage before child-bearing for Indian parents. The show was extremely popular on both YouTube (earlier streaming partner) and TVF Play with over a million views for each episode.

On a similar note, the show *Little Things* aired on Netflix, is also an extremely successful show with a great viewership with almost one million views for each episode. This show also revolves around a couple Dhruv and Kavya in a live-in relationship in Mumbai. The show attempts to demystify live-in relationships, trying to show how they are like just any other relationship and that they need not be viewed as alien or imbibed. The protagonists go through some highs and lows in their professions, sometimes that frustration is brought home and situations turn bitter. There are many sweet and romantic moments between the couple as well. The most appealing part of the show is that it does not romanticise sexual intimacy between the couple as the end goal or the most important reason why the couple chose a live-in relationship. Instead, as the title suggests, it is the “little” mundane things that they do together through which they develop an intimate relationship. The protagonists are strong people with their individual careers, families, friends and a social life. The show is about how the two of them lead their together life while negotiating with their individual lives. Therefore, the show subtly deals with the nuances, intimacy and negotiations in a live-in relationship like any other relationship. *Little Things* was also considered as a very relatable show by most informants in Delhi and Bangalore, not just by informants in live-in relationships but also from opinions gathered from informants who were interviewed for general perception of live-in relationships. The informants felt it re-shaped the way they viewed live-in relationships and live-in couples.

In the realm of advertising as well, the concept of live-in relationships has been used widely in branding various products for the Indian audience and consumers. A prime example is the Red Label Tea advertisement released for television viewing as well as on the official YouTube channel of the company in 2015 with the tagline “can hospitality melt away the differences?” (Titzmann 2017). In the advertisement, the parents of the protagonist Chirag surprise him by landing at his doorstep on his birthday. As he receives them in utter shock, his mother hugs him while saying how he has become weak and that she wants to look for a *bahu* (daughter-in-law) in that year at any cost. His live-in partner Pallavi walks out of her room while brushing her teeth to look at who is at the door. Chirag introduces her to his parents as his girlfriend, by using the phrase *hum log saath rehthe hain* (we live together). Pallavi quickly drapes a dupatta and brews tea for Chirag’s parents while he sits them down to explain about their relationship. As Pallavi serves the tea, she keeps the preferences of Chirag’s parents in mind; no sugar for his father and two spoons of sugar for his mother. The advertisement ends with Chirag’s mother saying that the tea does not taste bad, symbolising that she acknowledges and accepts the relationship. Although the advertisement depicts live-in relationships in a positive light, it was criticised for buying into the stereotype of the gendered roles and expectations such as wearing of the dupatta, the woman running to the kitchen to prepare and serve tea. Another aspect of criticism that was levelled against the advertisement was that it would have been a different story if Pallavi’s parents turn up at the door instead of Chirag’s parents (Titzmann 2017). According to Swathi Savaria a resident of Delhi (Noida), who has been in live-in for ten years, the advertisement reinforces the very stereotypes that live-in relationships attempt to break in the first place. The idea of a subservient *dupatta* (scarf) clad *bahu* (daughter-in-law) serving tea according to preference of in-laws while the son sits and chats with his parents is outdated according to Swati who is disgusted

at the appraisal of the advertisement as progressive. There are many more such depictions of live-in relationships in regional languages in films, OTT platforms and other web-content platforms that portray and discuss the paraphernalia surrounding these relationships in daily urban life.

Stand-up comedy as a mass medium has also been a particularly relevant mode of expression to voice opinions on human relationships in general. Stand-up comedy sessions are planned usually on weekends when the urban professionals have two days off work on Saturday and Sunday. Some shows are planned on Friday evenings as well, when people get off work and can relax while watching a show or two until late night. Depending upon the personal lived experiences of the stand-up comic, he/she may choose to present anecdotes, jokes or re-enactments of various topics ranging from politics, relationships, religion, work-life balance and other mundane activities pertaining to urban life to a live audience. The audience also belong to a heterogeneous background, but the common characteristics include being an urban, educated middle or upper middle-class crowd. The audience find the presentations of the comics as funny, entertaining and most of all relatable, as they are fished out of or inspired from real lived experiences.

Live-in relationships are also discussed prominently by stand-up comics as they form a part of the urban lifestyle. Many couples who come to the stand-up comedy shows relate to these jokes as they are made from observing many live-in couples or the comic's own experience in a live-in relationship. The jokes range from men's and women's views about relationships, to how the either gender behave in relationships, the society's perception of live-in relationships, ill-treatment of live-in couples and the problem of familial acknowledgement of live-in relationships. Attending stand-up comedy shows especially of Kenneth Sebastian and Rahul

Subramaniam helped understand how they are a strong medium that reflect on various aspects of social reality of the crowd while also being inspired by the same reality.

The examples cited above; films, web-based shows and stand-up comedy, show how live-in relationships are portrayed in the new media based on true or lived experiences. At the same time, these also inform individuals of live-in relationships and seek to normalise these, consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, popular culture is an effective medium or ‘mediascape’ through which ideas of live-in relationships are normalised and portrayed realistically that makes them relatable to both individuals in and who are not in live-in relationships.

Technological development as an influencing ‘technoscape’

The most important technological device used today is the smartphone with its various applications. 95% of the applications available in Google Playstore or the Apple App Store function only when there is high-speed internet connectivity and an updated operating system. Therefore, this has created a considerable demand for internet connectivity and thereby opening up markets for telecommunication giants like Jio, Airtel and Vodafone to Applications require users to provide permission to access extremely personal data such as call data, contacts, photos and other saved documents. Smart devices such as iPad, Amazon Echo, smart watches run on gesture control and voice recognition. These devices are connected to the smart phone which monitors activity on every single device. Our increasing dependency on digital devices and wearables has almost made the distinction between public and private very permeable. Most applications are location based that capture the location of an individual to almost 10 metre accuracy. There are applications to buy groceries, to get plumbing services, carpentry and electrical services, spa and salon services, shopping applications, exercise applications, financial

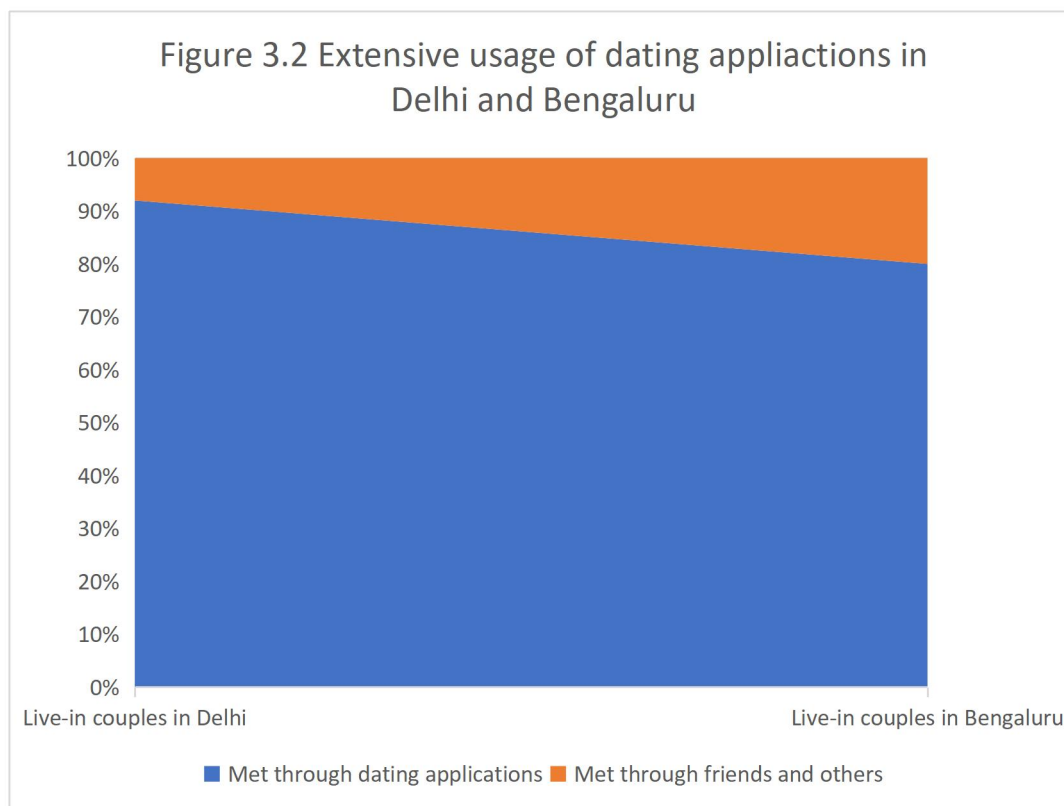
and banking applications, educational applications, maps, mobility applications and a host of other need-based applications to cater to every requirement of an urban public. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a steady increase in the availability of social networking and dating applications that are being used by heterosexual, urban, educated and employed individuals to form romantic relationships. A detailed analysis of these applications will be attempted as follows.

Social networking and dating applications

Popular social networking applications such as Facebook, Snapchat, Twitter and Instagram are used as platforms to create a virtual identity for an individual. The profiles on these applications are used as cross references to create an identity in the dating applications. Facebook has a feature called forums where people having a common hobby or lifestyle can connect specifically over the group. Due to the availability of cross-referencing across the social networking platforms, one can easily post a link to one's Facebook profile or Instagram account in the dating applications for interested people to browse through.

The dating applications such as Tinder and Bumble are very recent introductions to the Indian consumer. According to a leading daily "The Mint" dated June 11 2019, Tinder was introduced in the year 2016 and has attained 5.6 million users ever since. The application allows users to specify their interests and create a profile which includes mentioning one's sexual orientation. The application is location based in the sense that it detects probable partners matching one's interests and prepares a list. The user can swipe right if the profile seems interesting and may swipe left as a symbol of rejection. Similarly, TrulyMadly has 5 million users in India. OkCupid serves as an example for 'glocalisation' of Indian culture, where the company decided to adopt a

survey technique in the beginning of the registration to the application where women can specify if they are signing up for long term or short-term relationships. Questions like whether they would like to work after marriage are included to make it seem like a matrimonial application rather than a dating website. According to the company's statement in "The Mint", there was an increasing women base for the application after they tended to local demands. These applications are available only in urban metropolitan cities and are location based as mentioned earlier. Pune, Delhi-NCR, Bangalore, Mumbai and Ahmedabad rank in the same order in the highest number of Tinder users in Indian cities.



With respect to informants in New Delhi and Bangalore, 94% of the 50 couples interviewed in the cities have used dating applications such as Tinder, Bumble, OKCupid to find their partners. Most informants have felt that the applications provided ease of matching specific interests and

ideas that only provided the users with suitable individuals whom they would like to potentially date. Once both individuals show interest, the algorithm allows the users to chat and exchange numbers and then later meet. The most important feature of these applications is that they are location based, providing details of potential partners in one's city and even narrowed down to one's locality. Unmarried informants who were interviewed for general perception also admitted to using dating applications to meet partners of their choice. Therefore, the 'technoscape' of dating applications has revolutionised the scenario surrounding romantic relationships and has potentially paved way for the articulation of live-in relationships.

Ideological underpinnings as influencing "ideoscapes"

"Ideoscapes" refers to a series of ideological elements such as "'freedom', 'welfare', 'rights', 'sovereignty', 'representation' and the master term 'democracy'" (Appadurai 2008). These ideological elements as Appadurai (2008) suggests have a political undertone and are joined into the rhetoric of various nation-states through their diasporic intelligentsia. Ideas of modern love, intimacy, sexuality, re-imaginings of marriage and family are presented as global ideoscapes relating to marriage and family. These ideas may seem as foreign or imbibed at first, but are slowly integrated into the social fabric and the individuals who wish to adopt these ideas look for emic examples in traditions, mythology or folklore to provide authenticity to what may seem as global or transnational. The media (especially new media) plays a major role in providing an account of the ideoscapes and this in turn informs the agency of the individuals. Individuals then negotiate with their circumstances and debate whether to accept these ideoscapes or reject them.

Liberal economic policies coupled with globalisation and urbansiation have resulted in the introduction of ideas of liberalism in the sphere of sexuality and its expressionism. These ideas

influence the notion of sexuality and romantic relationships. The taboos and tensions surrounding pre-marital sex have gradually diminished and given way to a more liberal approach towards sexual expressionism among young millennials. This is true not only in the case of heterosexual individuals but also homosexual individuals especially with the decriminalization of homosexuality in Indian law. The ideal notion that sexuality must be confined to marriage is challenged by liberal notions of sexuality. The normative preoccupation with the *kanyadaan* (gift of the virgin woman during Hindu marriage) has become a cultural survival with men and women being open to pre-marital romantic and sexual relationships. Therefore, “marital ideoscapes” of liberty, freedom and equality have made imagination of intimacy and love in the form of live-in relationshipsⁱⁱ. The ideas of liberty and freedom to exercise choice in terms of marital decision-making is being deeply embedded in informants in both cities of New Delhi and Bangalore. Informants in both cities have preferences for choosing their life partner apart from the norms spelled out by their kin group, community or religion such as endogamy of caste and religion, economic status etc. The focus of the essence of the relationship is shifting from religious, caste or astrological compatibility to personal compatibility of the actual couple in the relationship.

A note on ‘financescapes’ influencing marital decisions

Although financescapes refers to the flow of global economic resources and economic policies and the resultant economic stratifications, in this case, it is the corresponding financial independence that renders actors to adopt live-in relationships or in taking any decisions regarding marriage and conjugality. With respect to data from New Delhi and Bangalore, financescapes are responsible for marital decision making in two ways. On one hand, acquiring employment opportunities in metropolitan cities, often entails migration and resultant ideological

freedom to pursue individual preferences with respect to choosing a partner and also whether to get into the institution of marriage and family or postpone it. This aspect has been discussed in Chapter Two with respect to migration and its influence on marital decision making. On the other hand, migration brought about by employment opportunity or pursuit of higher education also entails higher expenditure on rent, food and other material necessities. Therefore, financescapes indirectly influence and facilitate live-in relationships as informants have mentioned, to meet the expenditure incurred due to the higher cost of living in metropolitan cities such as New Delhi or Bangalore. As noted from the data from both cities, both partners in live-in relationship are employed and are financially independent. This is also true of unmarried informants who specify that being employed is the first requisite for considering marriage or relationship that they look for in a potential partner. Therefore, financescape forms an operative aspect that influences formation of live-in relationships and marriage decision making.

The interconnectedness of all dimensions of globalisation have been discussed based on the depictions, representations, and ideological underpinnings of live-in relationships that informants have come across in their day-to-day lives and lived experiences. While some informants have contested against these depictions, others have found them highly relatable. Some of them also mentioned that it was through these depictions of live-in relationships in the media and through dating applications that they were introduced to the idea of live-in relationships. Therefore, the contribution of the globalised cultural economy in introducing newer expressions of marriage and marital decision making has been immense. Globalisation and urbanisation have led to the increase in live-in relationships by creating avenues that support these relationships in the form of media depictions, financial stability, ideological impetus (freedom, liberty and agency) and

most importantly through technological innovations such as location based smart-phone dating applications.

The central theme of the present chapter is to look beyond the heteronormality narrative and locate live-in relationships which are considered against the norm of caste endogamy based arranged Hindu marriage system. The chapter provides a general understanding of live-in relationships from the perception of both actors who are in live-in relationships and those who are not. This provides an understanding that live-in relationships are an aspect of dynamics occurring in the institutions of marriage and family due to processes of globalisation, urban migration and its associated dimensions. Also, this brings us to the conclusion that the five dimensions of global cultural economy, affect internal workings of one another in such a way so as to bring about the adoption of newer expressions of companionship such as live-in relationships. From this case, we can see how mediascape, ideoscapes, technoscape and financescape work on the ethnoscape (read as heterosexual couples in live-in relationships) to produce changes in social institutions such as marriage and family. The resilience of the arranged marriage system and its normative nature are challenged by live-in relationships and this is the operative aspect of conflict with respect to these relationships for the larger Indian society. However, the various dimensions of globalisation have led to the liberalisation of ideas concerning marriage and family to such an extent, that young unmarried urban professionals have adopted these relationships despite cultural restrictions and social dilemmas that portray live-in relationships in a bad light.

Notes

ⁱ The analysis of the global cultural economy in its totality by using the framework provided by Appadurai (2008) envisages “global cultural flows” as influenced by ethnoscapescapes, mediascapescapes, technoscapescapes, financescapescapes and ideoscapescapes. While ethnoscape is the human element, mediascapescapes is the role of the media in helping paint a picture of the global and the unknown. Technoscapescapes and financescapescapes refer to the technology and financial resources that global cultural economy brings along while ideoscapescapes is the ideological impetus provided by these “global cultural flows” (Appadurai 2008, 51).

ⁱⁱ Ideoscapescapes that are an outcome of global cultural flows, influence choices with respect to marriage as they let “ordinary people begin to visualize different life for themselves” (Netting 2010, 710).

Chapter Four

LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS AND PATTERNS OF CONJUGALITY

Live-in relationships are perceived as dynamics of marriage and family in the light of globalisation processes. All dimensions of globalisation that have facilitated the prevalence and acceptability of live-in relationships among young urban professionals of New Delhi and Bangalore have been illustrated in the previous chapter. This chapter aims to look at both live-in relationships and marriage to identify whether the inherent patterns of conjugality characteristic of marriage are common to both types of relationships. This will determine whether live-in relationships have transformed the nature of intimacy and power relations among heterosexual couples or they exhibit similarities to the nature of intimacy and power in marriage. These patterns are manifestations of the normative roles that are expected of a heterosexual married couple that are often cultural constructs. These constructs, roles and expectations are discussed in detail with ample narratives and case studies from the field.

Marriage is a socially recognised union involving two or more people in what is regarded as a composed or permanent relationship that is built on trust, a longing for companionship and at the same time to serve one's biological and functional needs. Depending on the society, marriage may require religious and/or social sanction, although some couples may come to be considered married simply by living together for a period of time. The latter variant that we refer to as cohabitation formally, is understood more predominantly as live-in relationships, thanks to popular culture. A definition that gives an account of how choice operates in marriage is as follows: marriage "can be regarded as involving some cultural restriction on human sexual relations, perhaps restricting access for each individual to a limited number of other individuals-

not always just one-or some cultural direction of such access towards specific individuals” (Parkin 1997: 39). This definition indicates various rules of exogamy and endogamy in determining the marriageable prospects for a person. There are certain prescriptions and rules every community follows through generations which determine who can marry whom. These rules differ from one community to another and determine how much choice the individuals actually have in choosing their life partner. This is particularly true in case of India where diversity exists with respect to religion, caste and geographical region. However, “[If] rules are taken as a sufficient description of marriage and kinship, once the former are known, there would be little to understand other than deviance” (Kaur and Palriwala 2014). When we go beyond analysing these rules and look at real accounts of people and their lived experiences, we may find patterns of conjugal behaviour.

For the above purpose, informants who are in live-in relationship and informants who are married and unmarried have been interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule. Out of the 100 informants interviewed for general perception, 28 are married couples while 3 individuals are widowed. The other 40 individuals are unmarried with 26 single men and 15 single women. 34% of the 50 couples in live-in relationships have transitioned to being married couples. The wedding ceremonies of two couples were attended, where there was an opportunity to observe the religious and social sanction of their relationship while participating in the event. Therefore, their journey from a couple in a live-in relationship to marriage has also been studied to understand if similar patterns of conjugality exist in live-in couples post transition to marriage. The major themes that were addressed (but not limited to) using the schedule are attitudes towards marriage and family of married, unmarried and cohabiting informants; attitudes towards live-in relationships of married, unmarried and cohabiting informants and opinions on the

essence of their relationship of married and cohabiting couples respectively. These themes revealed certain normative patterns that being married or being in a conjugal relationship often entailed from the point of view of informants. The major patterns that have been observed are: the performative aspect of gender perpetuated by marriage, caste endogamy as a prominent feature of marriage, the transactional elements of marriage, the hegemony of marriage in the foundation of family and an institutionalised legal separation mechanism for marriage which is divorce. A comprehensive analysis of these patterns will be attempted in the discussion that follows.

Sacred and Profane dichotomisation of marriage and live-in relationships

The prevailing idea of marriage as a sacred institution has been discussed in the previous chapter. In this discussion, the opinions on the institution of marriage from the perspective of the married and the unmarried will be discussed. That marriage holds the utmost sanctity with respect to intimate relationships holds strong in the minds of both married and unmarried informants. While the married take pride in this associated sanctity, the unmarried resent this association while still acknowledging it, as it prevents them from exploring other intimate relationships outside the purview of the institution of marriage. For most married men and women, the decision to get married was more of a responsibility towards their family of origin, especially their parents rather than a choice that they exercised. Familial support and care are far too important to forego in the pretext of choosing a life partner. As Sunil Sharma, a resident of Gurgaon married for 14 years, expresses, “I depend on my parents and siblings for emotional support and sometimes for financial assistance too. I could have never risked losing their relationship for anything let alone marrying the girl of my choice. So, when the time came, I

decided not to disappoint them by taking that decision myself but leaving it to them and married Seema. Now, at their old age, my parents are living with us comfortably. It never occurred to me that there are better possibilities than arranged marriage”. Therefore, the arranged marriage is believed to be a duty that needs to be fulfilled towards one’s family by most of the informants from both Delhi and Bengaluru.

A majority of married individuals shared the belief that marriage is a secure and stable relationship compared to live-in relationships or open relationships. The stability in the relationship stems from the fact that there is no easy way of walking out of the relationship rather than the exclusivity that the relationship entails towards one another. Samridhi Sinha(35), is married to Satya Maharshi, a software engineer in Bangalore. She explains, “I met Satya at IIT Madras, his alma mater, while attending their cultural fest Saarang. We kept meeting after that and fell in love. Our backgrounds were diverse as he is a Telugu and I am from Uttar Pradesh. I cannot imagine how we would have convinced our parents if we were in a live-in relationship. I definitely think that I would not have received the similar kind of love and respect from my in-laws had we not married. People respect marriage. Marriage makes the whole thing secure, if it is an open relationship like a live-in, I will question it continuously in my head. I will not be happy”. Thus, marriage makes an intimate relationship secure from the perspective of both individuals in the relationship. Marriage is an epitome of commitment and it is definitely a cause of concern for individuals who do not attach permanency as a characteristic feature of intimate relationships.

The most widely shared perspective on the idea of marriage by both married and unmarried informants is the fact that marriage is a bundle of responsibilities towards both the individuals in

the relationship along with their families. This may be understood as an inevitable experience by some along with love and companionship that is part of the relationship, but for others it is often taxing. Another aspect that was spelt out by most informants is that marriage always entails adjustments and meeting expectations of both the partner and the society at large. Especially, in the case of women this is particularly true owing to the widely practiced post-marital residence pattern of patrilocality of the wedded couple. It is a sea of change for women who are supposed to mould themselves to fit into the life of the husband and his family while meeting their expectations. This also includes estimating how much of their relationship is public and how much of it is private. Change in food and dressing habits was one of the major adjustments that had to be made post marriage.

Another major perspective of marriage has been in terms of sacrifice by most informants. The relationship often expected sacrifice on the part of the couple in order to make it work. And these sacrifices had been pertaining to professional or academic decisions. Pursuing an offbeat career role or higher education, being stuck in a monotonous or unappreciative job to provide for the family, not being able to migrate to other cities or countries in search of better opportunities are some of the sacrifices made by married men and women. Therefore, the idea of marriage is that of a sacred duty, which involves the commitment, adjustments and sacrifices of both partners in the relationship often to make the marriage work. However, the security of the exclusivity of the relationship and the respect the relationship entails in society are the probable reasons why marriage is the most sought after intimate relationship when compared to live-in relationships or open relationships. The idea of marriage then leads us to the patterns of conjugality which is the repeated or normative expectations of a heterosexual married couple.

Patterns of conjugality through lived experiences of married couples

The study of the patterns exhibited by both conjugal relationships and live-in relationships calls for outlining the method of understanding. In this study, the narrative technique has been employed both to record lived experiences of informants and also in reproducing these experiences textually. Patterns of conjugality or conjugal relationships in the context of this study refers to the normative expectations and prescriptions associated with married life and the conformity of the married couple towards these expectations or prescriptions. Semi-structured interviews and recording narratives of married couples and couples in a live-in relationship were instrumental in understanding the role of gender, caste, family and the state in the making or unmaking of intimate relationships.

Among the 28 married couples studied, arranged marriage is almost the predominant form of marriage. Out of this, only six couples were in a romantic relationship before marriage as opposed to a marriage arranged in the strict sense of the term, where personal compatibility is given the last preference over caste, economic status and astrological compatibility. This consideration was done to see if there are any distinguished or characteristic features specific to both types of marriages. We cannot observe such marked distinctions in the real world. This almost proves Hart's argument where she discusses love and arranged marriages in a Turkish village. Hart (2007) is of the opinion that "there is a broad assumption among researchers that romantic love is a sign of modernization, which can be further equated with urbanization and a rise in individualism". She further argues that the distinction between love and arranged marriages is not simple but complex. This is particularly true because there could exist arranged marriages in which there is a sense of companionship between the couple and also a love

relationship purely for economic security or sexual gratification or a combination of both. Extending Hart's (2007) explanation of love relationships helps us identify that just like love marriages live-in relationships are also an expression of choice or agency. In fact, it becomes difficult to distinguish a live-in couple who has married and a couple who has had a love marriage as these become redundant under the umbrella identity that they are married. From the observations of informants in Delhi and Bengaluru, both types of couples exhibited similar patterns of conjugality: absence or little adherence to gender roles, disregard for caste endogamy, absence of marriage payments and in case of live-in couples transitioning into marriage- family being founded before the marriage itself.

Exercising choice or agency in courtship or marriage need not necessarily be viewed as deviance from familial ties. The number of couples in live-relationship and couples who have married after being in live-in is almost on the same page, therefore we can see that the success rate of these relationships is quite high. The failed relationships or cases where the couples have separated are few and are very peculiar. While the longing for companionship, support system and developing of better understanding of the couple may be termed as reasons for sustaining live-in relationships, the reasons for failure or separation could arise out of the feeling of temporariness and absence of authoritative control, be it in the form of legal papers or religious rituals or even parental involvement. It has been observed from the experiences narrated by informants that when people are married and do not get along, they try to make it work, there is some sort of effort to make the marriage work. But in the case of live-in relationships that have failed, one can notice that either partners have given up and moved out since it is very convenient to do that. This convenience is what is attractive to some who do not confirm to normative or structured living.

Certain patterns of companionship can be observed in married as well as cohabiting couples. These patterns may be similar or uncommon in both cases. The aim of this exercise is not to distinguish marriage from live-in relationships but to contribute to the better understanding of the functioning of both types of human relationships. Some of these patterns and the similarities or differences with respect to both types of relationships shall be discussed briefly.

Gender as ‘performative’ in marriage

Gender is not just an element of analysis but serves to represent individuals “as a mark of biological, linguistic or cultural difference” (Butler 1990, 9). Butler contests Beauvoir’s understanding of the feminine gender as a “mark of the male subject” and as a derived identity (Butler 1990, 10). She also calls for a revised feminist critique that aims to look at gender as an act that is imposed through formal and informal means and the non-conformity to which is resisted or policed. The normalisation of gender is through repetition of these acts and therefore nobody is a particular gender by birth. An individual becomes a gender through time by the role one assumes or acts (Butler 1990). Butler’s theory of gender as performativity corresponds to social constructivism as her fundamental proposition is that gender is a social/cultural construction that is imposed or enforced. Therefore, gender is moulded and built through its repetitive performance (Butler 1990). Using Butler’s idea of gender as an imposed repetitive performance, live-in relationships and marriages can be observed to understand any emerging patterns in both types of relationships. Various first-person accounts of informants in both live-in relationships and marriage have been analysed to arrive at a conclusion about the operation of gender in both types of relationships.

Prescriptions of conjugal behaviour are loaded with gender specific roles, duties and ideologies. The domestic and public categorisation of activity and responsibilities based on gender leads to further imposition of gender performativity. Informants in New Delhi and Bangalore were interviewed to comprehend whether their families conformed to gender specific roles. This aspect has been a major part of the interviewing process as it is important to note how the respondents' families of origin perceive gender specific behaviour. Questions relating to who does the laundry or dishes, or decisions regarding major financial matters and many more were asked of the respondents to understand the aspect of gender in their formative years. It is not just these physical or material jobs that are assigned or expected to be responsibility of a particular gender, but the very idea that gender as a cultural construct exists is ingrained into the human mind through two ways. Firstly, when individuals conform to these ideas or norms themselves and secondly, when they impose or coerce the conformity on other individuals. Some contextual understanding of how these two ways of imposed repetitive performance of gender occurs in marriage shall be arrived at.

The prescriptions of conjugality begin with the arranged marriage from the data derived from Delhi and Bangalore. The arranged marriage is a device to enforce gender performativity through the restrictions on expression of desire or agency in terms of marital choices for both men and women. After individuals enter the institution of marriage, the gender specific roles become more marked. The husband must excel in the realms of the public by earning and providing for the family, while the wife is responsible for conducting the domestic affairs. In the case of working women, they have a double burden of proving capabilities in both domestic as well as professional spheres (as there is the probability of being regarded as second grade performers on account of being women). Interestingly, though managing the domestic sphere and taking care of

the child socialisation and elderly care are prime responsibilities of the married women, the realm of the domestic is always regarded as subordinate to the realm of the public (Rapport and Overing 2000).

Similarly, exhibiting physical or emotional weakness and not being able to provide for the family is not expected of a married man. It is taught and enforced since early socialisation that expressing emotions such as fear, distress, anxiety or pain is associated with being feminine and therefore employ overt masculinity as men are inherently supposed to be hard and powerful. Power is associated with violence, abuse and the ability to control the weak. Taking control of situations or exercising independent decision-making abilities is not desirable in a married woman.

Another inimical pressure of arranged marriage is the aspect of fertility. The pressure to have children is faced by most married couples and about thirty percent of the total married couples have utilised assisted reproductive technology to have children. Working women seem to be at the end of a higher pressure as there is a conception of the biological clock ticking away as child bearing gets postponed due to work commitments. Therefore, at every stage of married life, there are prescribed milestones that need to be achieved and this exerts pressure on the actual conjugal relationship of the couple.

Apart from enforcing prescriptions, watching the repetitive performance of gender in the form of marriage or conjugal behaviour among intergenerational married couples, subtly and unconsciously leads to the perpetuation of similar behaviour or notions of conjugality by younger unmarried individuals once they enter the institution of marriage. Siddharth Alhan, an unmarried professional working in New Delhi, belonging to the Jat community in Haryana

explains, “In my family and town (Sonipat), married women are supposed to wear *ghunghat* (veil) in the presence of elderly male members of the family and must be efficient as a housewife. Ours is a joint family, so in my *dadaji’s* presence (paternal grandfather), women in the family are not allowed to speak much.” On enquiring if men help the women in the family in domestic chores, he narrates, “Men do not contribute to any domestic activity while women do not have a say in financial or other important decisions of the family. Love marriage is strictly prohibited, it is taken very seriously. When I get married, I want my wife to fit into my family. She must be obedient, only then I will respect her. Otherwise, I will have to groom her like my cousin Parth did. Girls these days expect too much from their husbands. I am not weak to do everything she says”. Siddharth’s response has been specifically reported in the active voice to lay emphasis on his perception of the ‘weak’. In contrast to his perception of an ideal married man, men who fulfil the expectations of their life partners are considered weak. Women who communicate their desires and expectations from their husband are undesirable and need to be ‘groomed’. The aspect of gender enters the sphere of the conjugal relationship. The repeated observance of these normative behaviours dictates the nature of the conjugal relationship between a heterosexual married couple. On the other hand, families born out of marriages where gender performativity is absent, teach their members to be sensitive to the emotions and expectations of the partner. This aspect can be understood distinctly with this narrative of informants from New Delhi.

Vipul and Prachi, both aged 26, met through common friends at the Delhi University in 2013. Vipul hails from Uttarakhand while Prachi is from Jodhpur in Rajasthan. They have been dating for seven years since 2013 and moved in together in 2015. While Prachi has completed her masters and is now working for a media house, Vipul is pursuing his Ph.D. in Physics from JNU. Prachi and Vipul are polar opposites when it comes to how they would want their family to be.

Prachi has always been in a joint family and feels that she needs space as in a joint family there is no room for individuality. Also, there is no tolerance for a love marriage or relationship in her family. Prachi does not let anyone in her family know that she has been staying with Vipul. Nonetheless, she joked about a tradition in Rajasthani folklore about a custom called “hsali” where the prospective groom tries to establish a cordial relation with the bride and her family before marriage, something that loosely translates to courtship in everyday parlance and to ‘marriage by trial’ in anthropological theory. Vipul on the other hand has been longing for a joint family as he comes from a nuclear family. He informs that his parents are ‘progressive’ and Vipul does not hesitate to tell his parents about his relationship with Prachi. Apart from Vipul’s parents, the couple has been open about their relationship only with close friends.

Both Vipul and Prachi have shared their accounts of how they have been subjected to judgement because of their relationship. They narrated an incident when they were asked to leave a park where they were taking a walk, as the residents of the apartment adjoining the park knew that they were unmarried. They have had to change so many houses as landlords often had a problem with their relationship. They pass off as a married couple now to avoid these problems. Vipul also shares an interesting observation that science students are more rigid and judgemental about newer expressions like live-in relationships than students pursuing arts. He has always kept his relationship with Prachi a secret as all his friends and colleagues do not approve of such a relationship. People start behaving as the couple’s relationship reflects on them personally. This was the case with Vipul’s Professor who was very uncomfortable with the idea and keeps taunting him every now and then. Prachi and Vipul do believe in the institution of marriage and would convince their parents to get them married in a few years from now. Prachi feels overwhelmed about her partner’s love and care for her. She says that she has not seen any

woman in her family being treated as an equal. In Vipul's case, right from his childhood, his mother taught him to take part in the domestic chores along with his sister. So, for him it is nothing different when he cooks a meal for them or does the laundry. The couple feels that live-in relationships are a great start for changing the equation of gender inequality in a marriage. They also feel that live-in relationships are not necessarily something that we imbibe from the West, in fact these have been existing for quite a few years now. It is just that people are more comfortable talking about these aspects now. They also feel that live-in relationships will come to be accepted as an alternative to marriage in a decade from now as the number of people choosing these relationships is steadily increasing.

In the case of Vipul and Prachi, we can observe the importance of space or individuality in a family. Every member of the family needs their own space (in terms of expressing their mind), a chance to grow individually while simultaneously participating in the collective sphere. The question of gender equality is of paramount importance here. Prachi has always seen women mistreated in her family and almost equated it with arranged marriage. So, she approved the companionship of Vipul whose upbringing does not mistreat the opposite gender. For her marriage does not hold any value but on the other hand Vipul has a high regard for marriage as an institution as he has seen a flourishing relationship of his parents while growing up. He wants to get married to Prachi one day and be able to convince her to do the same.

The above case clearly shows that it is the regard that people have for marriage through their observations of successful or unsuccessful marriages around them that they form an opinion about the institution itself. The narrative cited above puts forth the perspectives of two individuals whose families of origin are responsible for shaping the idea of marriage and gender.

A family where there is no marked gender performativity is considered progressive while the family that is disrespectful towards a particular gender is considered repressive and traditional. Family and marriage are primary social institutions that produce and reproduce the cultural identity called gender. Aspect of gender is enforced right from early socialisation. Everything from children's toys, games, activities etc are prescribed differently for boys and girls. Non-conformity to any of these notions is policed and enforced with threat of violence or judgement. This is extended to the institution of marriage as well. In fact, according to young (unmarried) informants, in both cities, women are prepared for this gender performativity inherent in marriage through daily anecdotes from other male and female married members of the family. Phrases such as “*shaadi ke baad khana pakana padega, abhi se seekh le*” (you will have to cook your own meals after you get married, so start learning how to cook from now itself) or “*tere sasural waale kahenge ki maa baap ne koi kaam nahi sikhaya ladki ko, thoda kaam kar liya kar kabhi kabhi*” (help in the chores of the house, else your in-laws will taunt us that we have not taught you anything regarding domestic chores) are commonly said to make it clear to the unmarried woman that post marriage, there are prescriptions of her behaviour and that they must be met. From the sample, the conformity and non-conformity to gender specific roles in families of informants has been mapped.

As can be noted from the data furnished in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 above, most informants revealed that their families did conform to gendered roles that were typical of their culture. This is to know whether the family of origin of the informant subscribed to gender specific roles. However, the percentage of families that did not encourage gender specific roles is higher among informants who are live-in couples. This indicates how such individuals are more inclined towards relationships that challenge these repeated and normative behaviours. The most common

marked gender roles are based on the domestic-public dichotomisation. The household chores like cooking, cleaning, laundry and general maintenance of the house are considered the responsibility of women. Caring for elderly as well as children is also considered as necessarily women-centric responsibilities.

Figure 4.1 Conformity or non-conformity to gender roles in live-in respondents

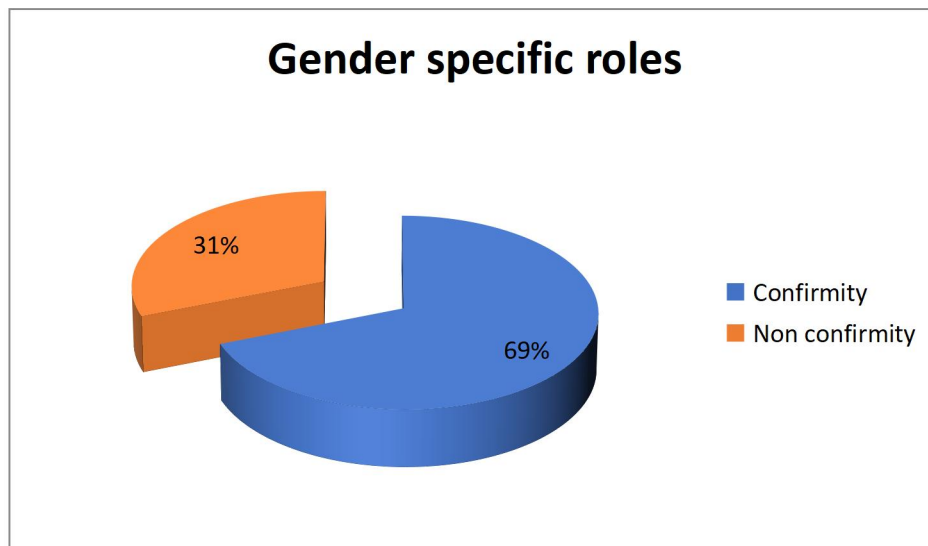
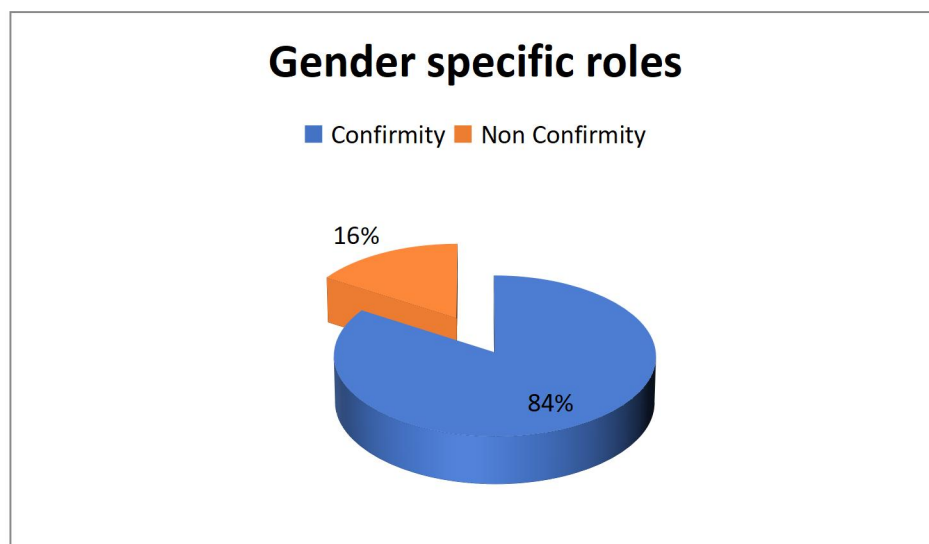


Figure 4.2 Conformity or Non-conformity to gender roles in general respondents



The activities that require physical movement to public sphere are associated with men. Earning for the family, fetching of supplies, buying medicines, etc. are activities that are presupposed as men-centric jobs. However, within the family, responsibility of women is proportional to their age and marital status in the family. Irrespective of whether married women are working or are homemakers, their share of responsibility is higher than that of others. Unmarried women, elderly women and young girls on the other hand, have low share of responsibility in the domestic sphere compared to married women. Gender performativity is thus enforced since early socialisation. These ideas slowly manifest into the public sphere as well. Marriage and family enforce and ensure perpetuation of gender performativity. Marriages that are not performative of gender and the families that arise out of such marriages, raise individuals who do not conform to the normative patterns of conjugality. Naturally, such individuals are not encumbered by the existing norms surrounding marriage and family. Marriage therefore does not become a prerequisite to express love or sexual desire. Live-in relationships become an alternative to such individuals who can imagine conjugality outside the institutionalised framework of marriage and the gender performativity associated with it. Therefore, live-in relationships negotiate with gender performativity associated with conjugality and therefore lead to a restructuring of intimacy of a heterosexual couple. The notions of 'man must provide', while 'woman masters the domestic realm' is challenged by live-in relationships as there is gender fluidity in live-in relationships. From the opinions and lived experiences of the informants, there is an absence of gender performativity in live-in relationships. Both partners are equally responsible to provide for their relationship in whatever ways they can for the relationship to exist in the first place. There is no pressure of giving up on one's personal goals or ambitions and definitely the pressure

to have children is off the relationship as Indian society does not recognise the relationship itself let alone children born of it.

Performativity is not just the prescriptive or normative roles that are ascribed to a particular gender and the enforcement of such behaviours is enforced. It also entails the acceptance of the cultural constructs of gender, especially in the institutions of marriage and family. The notion of being a 'man' or a 'woman' dominates the notion of being a wife or a husband in a marriage. From the perspective of informants in live-in relationships, it may be deduced that the notion of being in a live-in relationships dominates the notion of being associated with a particular gender. This is a major difference that can be observed between couples who are married and couples in a live-in relationship. Live-in relationships may be considered as spaces where there is gender fluidity. However, the larger society is conscious of this fluidity as it is assumed to challenge the balance and coherence of a particular society. Therefore, the cultural constructs are more strictly enforced to contain this fluidity stemming up from the agency of individuals.

The narrative of Maya and Shourya is suggestive of the restructuring of existing power structures of marriage and gender performativity of marriage when the marriage ensues a live-in relationship. But at the same time, it also focusses on the resilience offered by culture to re-establish the gender roles and gender appropriate behaviour and how the couple had to overcome it.

Maya and Shourya are lawyers hailing from Calcutta but have settled in Bangalore since 2013. They have been in a live-in relationship from 2013 and got married in 2015. Both their families are quite liberal when it comes to love, courtship and marriage. However, Shourya's parents were not told that they were living together but that they were just in love with each other. As a

couple they did not seek a validation of their relationship by getting married but had to get married as Maya's father had a terminal illness and he wanted to get his daughter married right away. They always felt that live-in relationship was the next step while they were dating so that they are more exposed to each other and can learn about their differences and similarities. Even after being married nothing has changed between them. They feel that marriage is only important in society's point of view. Maya has dealt with a lot of judgement, sarcasm and negativity at work and with neighbours when they were in a live-in relationship. However, after they got married, suddenly there was so much transformation in the way everyone treated her. Maya finds the perception of live-in relationships as profane very unfortunate and problematic. However, she cautions live-in couples to pay little heed to these societal perceptions of live-in relationships. Couples should be strong enough to deal with the negativity around them, she equips.

Maya and Shourya also expressed that gender roles are blurring in live-in relationships. Both of them have shared all responsibilities alike throughout the course of their relationship (from live-in to marriage). So, when Shourya's father came to live with them after the wedding, he was not comfortable with the way the household is run. "He suggested me to act like the man of the house", equips Shourya. The couple suggested that between them, it did not matter who was the man, or who was the woman. All that mattered was the relationship which gave them the space to be however they wanted to be in each other's company. This is what defines intimacy for both. Shourya ends the conversation by adding that their live-in relationship has helped them achieve this state of comfort and intimacy.

The present narrative is suggestive of two important observations. One is that live-in relationships challenge the notion of gender in marriage, as there is space for gender fluidity. The

couple does not have to confirm to pre-existing codes of behaviour for heterosexual married couples. For Maya and Shourya, the wedding was just an event, they did not need this validation at all, they had to do it to appease their parents. And so even after the wedding, nothing really changed for them. The nature of their relationship and their level of intimacy with each other remained the same even after getting married. Therefore, there is a balance of power in live-in relationships which when transcends into marriage, challenges existing power structures. The idea of understanding gender through marriage is not to brand all marriages as relationships that are constructed on gender inequality or that live-in relationships promote equality. On the other hand, by looking at gender through marriage, we may conclude that such performativity or enforcement of performativity is absent in live-in relationships. The pressures and prescriptions of conjugal behaviour inimical to marriage are absent or are negotiated within live-in relationships. Marriages that arise out of live-in relationships tend to restructure the very notion of conjugality by altering power structures and gender performativity that is inimical to marriage.

Caste endogamy as a prominent feature of arranged marriage

Like gender performativity, caste-system is not just a salient feature of social organisation in India but also an important requisite through which marriage is arranged across multi-regional and multi-religious diversity.

Endogamy of caste is the primary means by which castes maintain their status in the hierarchy. The rules of endogamy and exogamy specify whom one may or may not marry. Although in certain cases, *anuloma* (hypergamy) is allowed as in the case of hill communities in Punjab and the Nambudri-Nayar example (Ghurye 1969) *pratiloma* (hypogamy) is unacceptable in most cultures and is punished with expulsion from the caste or payment of fine. The notion of honour

(for which emic terms such as *paruvu* in Telugu, *izzat* in Hindi exist) is a predominant feature of the caste system and this honour is maintained by regulating the sexuality and behaviour of women (Channa 2007). Although caste is ascribed by birth, it is perpetuated by marrying within one's own caste. Therefore, women are discouraged to explore romantic or sexual relationships outside of wedlock as marriages are arranged within one's own caste. Abstinence from pre-marital sex is a norm as the virginity of the unmarried woman is considered the epitome of honour of the family (Channa 2007). Guarding the unmarried virgin woman becomes imperative till she is married since her sexual purity is perceived as the mark of the honour of the family or clan and at a higher level of the caste. Consequentially, endogamy of caste when viewed from the gender perspective, is a means to establish control over sexuality and expression of desire. It is a tool to perpetuate patriarchy as the responsibility of perpetuating these notions of honour and caste are vested with women while men oversee and enforce the perpetuation of these ideas (Chakravarti 2006). This can be verified from the data from New Delhi and Bangalore pertaining to the perception of pre-marital romantic or sexual relationships. 98% of informants which includes both married, unmarried and live-in couples reported that pre-marital romantic or sexual relationships are considered a sin or associated with profanity. In most North Indian castes, pre-marital courtship is also not allowed even after the couple gets engaged to be married.

Although the origin of caste and the associated customs such as endogamy, prohibitions on inter-commensality are considered as aspects of Hindu religion, anthropological evidence suggests that caste is a pan regional and pan religious phenomena in India. The converted Christians from lower castes are addressed by adding a suffix of their caste name as *Pulaya* (as in the case of lower caste Hindus) as compared to the upper caste converts. In fact, separate Churches exist for the Syrian Christians (upper caste converts) and the *Pulaya* Christians (Alexander 1977). A

similar account is provided by (Bhatty 1978) about a Muslim dominated village in Uttar Pradesh where the Ashraf Muslims dominated over the non-Ashraf castes who were considered as lower caste converts from Hinduism. The main purpose of division was to maintain their foreign ancestry by virtue of endogamy and not inter-marry with the lower caste converted Muslims. Although Sikhism which opposes the caste hierarchy-based society, lower caste converts to Sikhism are addressed as *Mazhbis* and treated lower in status to the *Sardars* and *Jats* who are upper castes (Singh 1977). These instances mirror the fact that caste is a pan-religious phenomenon in India. It is a predominant identity that is ascribed by birth and is perpetuated by endogamous marriages. Since the informants in New Delhi and Bengaluru belong to different religious and regional communities, it could be established that caste is a prominent identity of not just Hindus but also of other religious communities such as Christians, Muslims and Sikhs.

In urban India, most castes today exist as identity markers dissociated from traditional occupations and displaced from rural setting to urban settings (Chakravarti 2006). In such a scenario, one wonders yet how caste is sustained as an identity and a solidarity producing institution. To maintain the caste hierarchy and to achieve this separation from other castes, endogamy is the preferred practice. Caste and sub-caste endogamy still remain an integral part of arranged match-making in urban India. However, education and employment along with personal compatibility have emerged as crucial criteria for arranging marriage. As a result, a form of arranged 'endogamous companionate marriage' has come forth that gives considerable importance to factors such as employment, education and income of partners, 'a system that reproduces caste and class' (Fuller and Narasimhan 2008, 752). A similar account is provided by Nicole Wilson in her assessment of the complicated process of marriage alliance matchmaking for several Tamil youth with a principal focus on match-making accounts of two key-informants,

Radhika and Priya. She describes the entire negotiation ceremony of *pen parka* (arranged match-making) where the family of the prospective groom visits the house of the bride. An assessment of status and economic position is an inextricable part of *pen parka* (Wilson 2013). Arranged marriage therefore is an instrument in perpetuating ideas of caste, class and gender performative behaviour. This can be illustrated using the following narrative of a couple from Bangalore.

Madan and Sowmya were in love for eight years before getting married in 2016. They hail from Vizag belonging to two different castes, which was the main reason why parents on either side opposed to their wedding. Things became worse when Madan had to move to Bangalore on account of his job in a leading tyre manufacturing company. Sowmya's family constantly tried to convince her and arranged for other prospective grooms to come and see her against her wish. The couple went through an extremely emotional ordeal for six years until their parents came to terms with their differences and decided to arrange for their wedding. They mention that it was the worst phase of their lives. They detested this idea of caste and vouched that their children will never have to experience such pain in the eventuality that they choose their life-partner.

Sowmya's father is a man who considers his *paruvu* (Telugu term for honour with respect to caste hierarchy) as an ultimate virtue and as an indispensable part of his identity. Therefore, he tried his best to convince Sowmya to part ways with Madan as he did not belong to the same caste as her. Some of the reasons Sowmya's father cited against Madan are that he did not belong to a higher caste, he has a younger sister and his old parents who he has to support financially and that he was not the right match for Sowmya as he did not seem handsome. It was a little easier for Madan to convince his family because he was the only son, though his parents too protested against this marriage initially.

Finally, after a lot of struggle, Madan's parents convinced Sowmya's parents and the wedding took place in March 2016. Since then, they moved to Bangalore and Sowmya recently began her practice as she is a Chartered Accountant. They hardly have any visits from relatives and hang around mostly with close friends. Sowmya says that this is the life she has been dreaming about for so many years, to have a home of her own with the person she loves the most. With their families coming to good terms, the couple is very happy with the way things unfolded after their wedding. However, making adjustments to suit each other's lifestyle was a difficult task in the beginning, Sowmya narrates. Even though they knew each other for so long, Sowmya says it always felt new. The very act of staying together under one roof was an enthralling experience that even after three years of marriage, it feels afresh. Sowmya says, she values marriage even more than ever. This she says is very dear to her as she has seen many bad and traumatic marriages in her own family. She saw her mother and aunt suffer because there was no equality in their relationships. As it was a joint family, the women silently suffered with no avenue of support or solace. However, things are changing as Sowmya recognises that her cousins of both genders have been adopting to changing times and treating their spouses with utmost respect. Both Sowmya and Madan feel that the patriarchy in marriage that they have been observing since many generations in their families is the main reason why the younger generation is staying away or trying to postpone the phase of marriage in their lives. This is also the main reason behind the increasing number of live-in relationships, they claim. On being asked if they ever considered a live-in relationship they suggested that it would not have worked for them as they were located in Vishakhapatnam which is not a metropolitan city where these relationships were uncommon. They also feel that being in a live-in relationship would have added to their problems as it would have been difficult convincing parents of either sides. As live-in

relationship is considered extremely sinful and unimaginable in both their families. Sowmya and Madan recollect a similar experience of their friends from Ghaziabad (NCR).

Sowmya's friend Mugdha Sharma who hails from South Delhi got married to Binu George from Ghaziabad in 2014. It was a love marriage after the couple courted for over three years. Since Mugdha belonged to an upper caste Hindu family, arranged marriage was the set norm for the Sharma family. Mugdha's inter-religious marriage to Binu George who is a Christian was considered disrespectful towards the Sharma family honour. For several years, the couple were not disowned by Mugdha's family. It was only after the death of Mugdha's father that the Sharma family re-established their ties with after forgiving her mistake of marrying someone she loved. On the other hand, Binu's family did come to terms with his decision to marry outside his religious group though they initially resented the idea.

As noted from the literature and narrative cited above, it is evident that endogamy of caste and sub-caste is an operative feature of arranged marriage in India irrespective of religion or region. Therefore, caste operates and hinges on in urban India through the process of arranged match-making. The notion of honour is associated and perpetuated through caste endogamy. This arranged match-making process reproduces the ideas of caste and class invariably. Those individuals who seek to dissociate themselves with caste endogamy are pushed to the margins and oppressed to fit into the normative narrative of arranged marriage.

Caste endogamy is synonymous with arranged marriage as the data from both New Delhi and Bengaluru suggests. The advent of caste specific or exclusive matrimonial applications has further eased the process of arranged match-making while ensuring that caste and sub-caste endogamy is fulfilled. Informants in Bengaluru who had marriageable children informed of such

examples of caste specific matrimonial smart-phone applications of upper castes such as Reddy Matrimony, Gowda Matrimony, Niyogi Matrimony and other sub-caste specific applications.

When contrasted with marriage, live-in relationships do not perpetuate endogamy of caste. Caste is not a prominent feature of such relationships and in fact live-in relationships provide solace to people who cannot enter the institution of marriage due to inter-caste or inter-religious identities of the couple. In arranged marriage, the negotiations and assessments of caste and class precede the formation of a couple. In a live-in relationship, the couple forms before marriage. Caste consciousness recedes while there is an escalated class consciousness. As the data regarding the married informants suggests, arranged marriages always conform to the endogamy of caste. This is not only true in case of the informants who agreed to be interviewed, but also their extended family members and friends. It is only in the case of love marriages that there is occurrence of inter-caste and inter-faith marriages. Live-in relationships also seem as avenues where individuals can exercise agency with respect to non-conformity to endogamy of caste. Most informants who are or were in live-in relationship in Delhi and Bangalore did not enquire about the caste identity of their live-in partner and neither did they decide to associate with their partners based on their caste. Societal recognition of live-in relationship is very low as live-in relationships challenge the basis of the Indian social order, which is the caste based hierarchical system perpetuated by endogamous marriage. Caste as an identity recedes in live-in relationships as not a single couple who are live-in partners belong to the same caste. Therefore, live-in relationships may be considered as avenues for inter-religious and inter-caste relationships thus breaking away from the pre-requisite of caste endogamy that is inimical to arranged marriage.

The data furnished above suggests that marriage is a necessary pre-requisite to have a conjugal relationship. As the normalisation of marriage is a predominant feature of Indian society, most couples in a live-in relationship usually pass off as married couples to avoid stigma attached to live-in relationships as promiscuous unions. However, there are also a considerably high number of couples who are recognised as couples in a live-in relationship and those who are indifferent to societal opinion. This suggests that slowly the recognition of live-in relationships as independent relationships outside the institution of marriage is improving. The couples who are indifferent to societal opinion are those who do not need marriage as an institution to validate their conjugal relationship. The higher incidence of couples who pretend to be married while in a live-in relationship is suggestive of the hegemony of marriage and the need for individuals to seek validation of society for their conjugal relationships.

Marriage as transactions

Marriages more often than not involve economic transactions as a part of the wedding prestations, gifts and other ritual obligations. The transactional nature of Hindu marriage has also been discussed by Chakravarti (2006, 31) as she analyses the *kanyadaan* ritual as the “greatest gift a man can bestow, from which he acquires the greatest merit, by making a gift of his daughter...”. On observing critically, one may notice how the ritual of *kanyadaan* is a transaction between the woman’s father and her suitor. The father of the ‘virgin’ bride donates her (etymologically implied by the Sanskrit word ‘*kanyadaan*’) to the groom and there seems to be no scope for the consent of the bride in this transaction. The parents of the bride also wash the feet of the groom and then donate their *kanya* (virgin daughter) to the groom in what is considered the highest form of *daan* (charitable gift) according to Hindu mythology. Here, gender performativity associated

with Hindu marriage can be assessed at two levels. At one level, the importance associated with the enforcement that the unmarried woman must be a virgin is stressed. At the other level, the transactional element of marriage as the transfer of productive and reproductive rights of the virgin unmarried woman to a man by her father can be observed. The woman is objectified in this transaction as her consent or her benefit in the transaction is neither implied etymologically nor ritually. However, both ritually and etymologically the men gain in this transaction. Mythology and scriptures suggest that a man attains *moksha* (ultimate salvation) through giving the most righteous of donations which is the *kanyadaan*. Similarly, the man receiving the bride is vested with the productive and reproductive rights of the woman. Thus, it is the woman who does not have a say in the whole process of the transaction.

The arranged marriage procedure in urban Indian context involves the payment of dowry and the cost of arranging the wedding ceremony. Contrary to conventional notions, dowry or *streedhan* is a payment in cash or kind, made to the conjugal couple by the bride's family as a supporting income to start their conjugal life. It is not a payment given to the groom's family, as such an act warrants to be termed 'groom price', though in reality, it is the groom's family that receives this and establishes control over its use in joint families. The demands for dowry and the resultant pressure and humiliation that women's families go through to meet these demands is already known and written about. However, women are increasingly becoming active agents in opposing dowry or in some cases, negotiating for better partners in exchange of higher dowries (Kaur and Palriwala 2014).

In contemporary times, however, dowry has become a symbol of wealthy status to both the party giving it and the party receiving it. The scale of wedding ceremonies is increasing two to three

folds among the middle and upper classes as the scale of the ceremony is a mirror of the class of the families involved (Kaur and Palriwala 2014). Often the scale of the wedding ceremony and the guest list (usually in hundreds as opposed to ceremonies with a few close kin) is negotiated during the match-making phase itself. Terminologically as well there are considerable changes, as dowry is not used in everyday parlance and is instead replaced by words such as ‘gift’. In a match-making negotiation that occurred in an elite upper caste family in Gurugram during fieldwork, it was surprising to note how the family of the groom subtly stated that they do not wish to take dowry but would not mind to receive it if offered from the bride’s family. The mother of the groom said to the bride’s parents that:

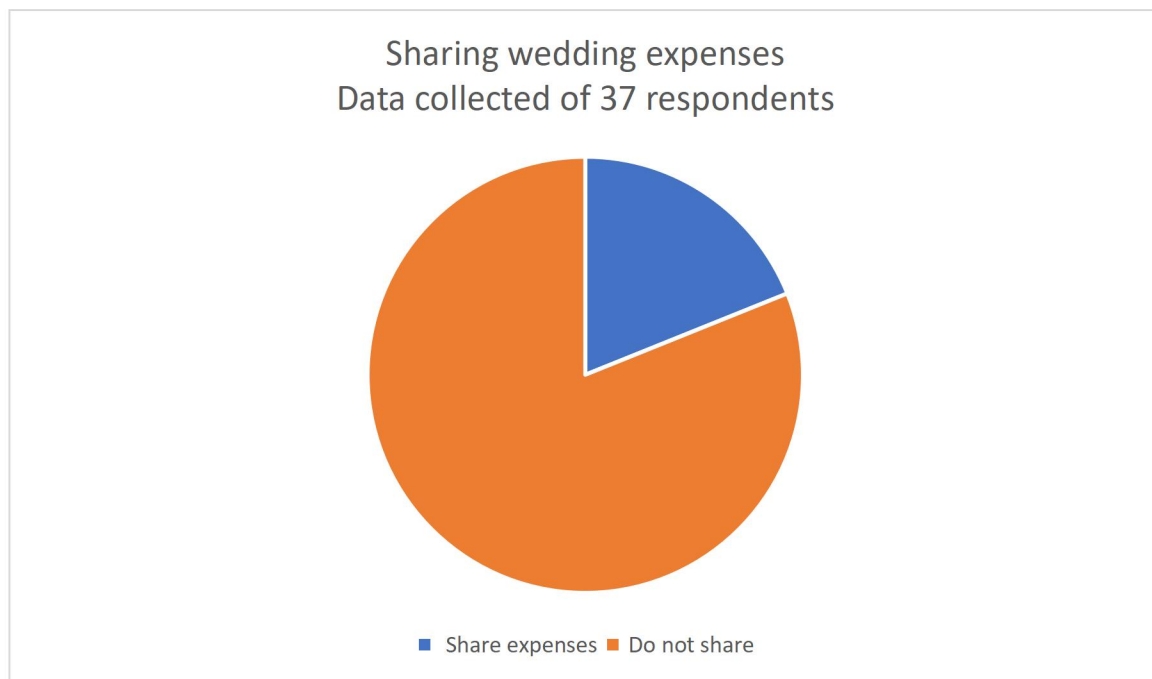
“dahej wahej toh hum lete nahin, kyunki ab modern gharon mein yeh sab nahin chaltha hain.

Lekin aap agar apni taraf se khushi se denge toh humko koi aitraaz nahin hain.” (Modern people like us will not accept dowry, these things are passe now. But if you insist, we have no problem to accept it on grounds that you pay it contently). *“Gadi toh bantha hain ji, yeh toh har koi de raha hain aaj kal!”* (You may give a car; it is the minimum you can do. These days everybody does that). And the groom settled for a brand-new car. Although the bride’s parents were well-to-do, they agreed to the negotiated demand almost reluctantly.

The Figure 4.3 comprises data collected of 37 informants who spoke about their marriage and wedding ceremony and the negotiations that happened during the match-making process. As the figure suggests, only a few informants mentioned that they shared the wedding expenses with their partners. Clearly, the informants who did not share wedding expenses with their spouses is much higher than those who did. Also, it is noteworthy that those who did share wedding

expenses with their spouses belong to the love marriage category as opposed to those who did not share expenses who belonged to the arranged marriage category.

Figure 4.3 Sharing of wedding expenses



As arranged marriage perpetuates patriarchy, the data furnished in the Figure 4.3 suggests how the wedding expenses are expected to be met by the bride's family. This is a predominant feature of urban arranged marriage irrespective of caste and religion. This was a standard observation in all cases who did not share the wedding expenses of the sample studied .

Live-in relationships on the other hand are not transactional in nature, although the popular opinion imposes such an understanding of the phenomenon. Popular culture, especially cinema of the 90's, as an artform has always painted a negative picture of live-in relationships as promiscuous and existing only to fulfil sexual desire outside the purview of marriage. However, in ethnographic context it is found that live-in relationships are actually based on love, intimacy

and a longing for companionship. The economic interdependence in a live-in relationship is truly an interdependence as both the man and woman in a live-in relationship are equally responsible to meet their expenses. There are no huge expenses to incur as during a wedding, as the transition from a romantic liaison to a live-in relationship usually requires one of the partners to move into the house of the other. In one case, the couple residing in two different cities in Northern India in a long-distance relationship, decided to live together to give their relationship more time. The couple, individually looked for their respective jobs in Bangalore and finally moved to Bangalore. In case of marriage, it involves spending a lot of money for the wedding as a ceremony. And the expenses are most often borne by the bride's family. This sort of biased arrangement is not a characteristic feature of live-in relationship. However, there have been instances where the transition from a live-in relationship to marriage rarely entailed an unequal relationship between the couple. The case study narrated below seeks to explain one such scenario.

Shivani and Prithvi met through an online location-based dating application called TrulyMadly in Bangalore. Both are pursuing careers in an IT based MNC in Electronic City suburb of Bangalore. After dating for two years, they decided to take their relationship to the next level and Shivani moved in to Prithvi's apartment in Electronic City from her Paying Guest accommodation which was practically in the other end of the city. Moving-in together provided the couple a lot of intimate time for them to get to know each other better. Shivani informs that she looked forward to the live-in relationship phase of her life the most which lasted for one and a half year before they decided to get married.

Interestingly, when the couple approached their families to inform them of their decision to get married, their parents agreed to the wedding but with some opposition as they belonged to different castes. However, they finally agreed to get the couple married but decided to inform their extended relatives that it is an arranged marriage. It was a difficult time for Shivani as the whole process became an arranged marriage with Prithvi's family subtly hinting towards dowry. The entire wedding expenses were taken care of by Shivani as she spent her savings to plan all the rituals involved in a Kannada wedding. To all the extended relatives who attended the wedding, it seemed like an arranged endogamous marriage. Shivani says she was unhappy with the whole masking of their relationship as an arranged marriage. Having to pay dowry and meeting all the expenses of the wedding did not feel right to her. She never confronted Prithvi over this issue but feels sad for the fact that Prithvi did not intervene when dowry negotiations were being made. He did not offer to share expenses nor did he oppose the masking of their relationship by making the whole wedding to look like an arrangement. In her words, she felt lost in the entire process.

The narrative is suggestive of how deeply gender inequality is embedded within the institution of marriage. These ideas get reproduced and permeate through marriage even though actors decide to function upon agency and do not conform to ideas of gender performativity. Actors may also choose not to oppose or passively participate in the enforcement of the enactment of gendered roles. Although live-in relationships may provide temporary freedom from the hegemony of marriage, individuals are motivated to finally enter the institution of marriage, as marriage is considered the most stable relationship for the foundation of family. Aspects pertaining to the similarities of the institutions of family and live-in relationships will be discussed below.

Marriage as foundation for family

Family (the nuclear family to be precise) is anthropologically defined as a social group that is based on common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction often involving a heterosexual couple and their biological or adopted children (Murdock 1949). The extended family on the other hand has lineally or collaterally extended relatives of a married couple living with their children. This is atypical of the joint family system in India. The family as a social group is believed to be performing certain functions such as satisfaction of sexual and reproductive needs of the heterosexual couple who are the founders of the family, primary socialisation and care of children and the economic interdependence of the members such as provision of basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter realized through a division of labour within the unit. These functions are believed to be expressed in varying degrees in most societies around the world thus making the family a universal institution. Another definition of family focuses on the way the family is founded (through ties of marriage, kinship or adoption) and the interactions that take place on account of roles played by members of the single household (Burgess and Locke 1976). In this definition, the focus is on the fact that the family is constituted by people living in a single household, and the relationship between each member of the family is clearly defined. There is emphasis on the role each member is associated with and the inter-relationship of members.

Feminist perception of family suggests that it is the institutions of marriage and family that reproduce gender inequality by means of establishing patriarchal control at first through the institution of marriage and further perpetuating control through child socialisation through the institution of family. Ideas of gender performativity are enforced through psychiatric

normalisation and repeated enactment of gender roles and the non-conformity to such performativity is dealt with threat of violence or punishment (Butler 1990). Also, definitions of family focus on the structural and functional aspects of the institutions. Feminist analysis of family also focuses on the criminalisation of sexuality outside of marriage and family. The idea of family is always imagined as involving a heterosexual married couple and their children. This hegemonic imposition of marriage as a founding element of family is heavily critiqued by feminist scholars.

The definitions mentioned above focus on the structural and functional aspects of the institution of family. However, many co-variants of the categories emerge that do not fit into the ‘universal’ categorisation of family. Urbanisation and globalisation have affected the nature and composition of familial and conjugal life. Many families have become trans-national in nature, with the bread winner staying in a different city or country to support his/her family’s economic needs. Married couples may be staying in different cities on account of their professional or academic commitments. Yet, they may be providing each other economic as well as psychological support in the form of love, care and compassion. With the decriminalisation of homosexuality in India, there is a rise in cohabiting homosexual couples. Similarly, heterosexual couples who cohabit are also increasing in urban cities in India. On a different note, there is also increasing incidence of single parent households with biological or adopted children. If we consider the definitions of family in the strict sense of the term, all these variations of the universally consistent ‘family’ become exclusive cases. But, all these cases qualify as family because they perform one or more functions that the universally consistent institution of family performs. According to Murdock’s (1949) definition of family, the characteristic features that form a family are common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction, where the sexual

relationship between the cohabiting adults is socially approved. He also defines that marriage is the only relationship that is a combination of both economic and sexual co-operation (Murdock 1949). The inter-relationship between marriage and family and the fact that marriage is a requisite for cohabiting individuals to be recognised as a family is evident from this definition. However, this is challenged by Spiro's (1954) representation of the Kibbutz of Israel. The Kibbutz provide an alternative to the almost universal model of family and marriage where marriage precedes and is always a requisite for family. When viewed in this sense, live-in relationships may also be viewed as family, as just the absence of a socially recognised sexual relationship does not have to reduce the other functions that the relationship performs.

On the other hand, live-in relationships perform some of the functions of family. From interactions with various informants who were in a live-in relationship in Delhi and Bangalore, it is evident that live-in relationships tend to all functions of family except for child-care and socialisation. A detailed analysis of these functions of live-in relationships will be attempted to show how live-in relationships may also be recognised as a form of family like the other co-variants such as trans-national families, single-parent families etc. that occur in real life.

One of the major functions of family is to meet the economic needs of its members. Members of a family are economically interdependent on one another for various material needs such as provision of food, clothing and shelter. There may be one or two earning members of the family and children or the elderly who are dependent on them for their basic needs. In the case of live-in relationships as well this fact holds true as a couple in a live-in relationship share living expenses or an earning member supports the other. Most live-in couples in both cities of Delhi and Bangalore revealed that they shared a split account for the purpose of equally sharing the

household expenses such as rent, groceries and other personal expenses. They also acknowledged that they would and, in some cases, already had bailed out their partners from a major financial crisis. In a few cases, the non-earning member of the couple were students. However, they were earning a stipend to support their expenses. Therefore, couples in live-in relationships also accounted for the economic needs of one another just as in a family.

Provision of care and psychological support is also a major function that the family as an institution undertakes. Couples in live-in relationships also provided emotional care and support to each another. Many couples decided to start a live-in relationship as they needed the same support and care that family provides in its absence. A live-in relationship lets the individual establish a home away from home. Many such relationships have transited to marriage as the relationship provided them with the support and care that they needed in absence of their family of origin.

Family and marriage as institutions legitimise sexual relationship between a heterosexual couple. Reproduction of offspring leads to continuity of further generations. The sexual relationship as well as the offspring are legitimised socially through marriage and family. Legal and religious recognition strengthen social recognition of the couple's relationship and their children. When we consider live-in relationships in this regard, it may take care of the sexual needs of the couple but the offspring of the couple are not recognised socially. In India, although live-in relationships are accorded the same status as marriage constitutionally, social recognition of such relationships is very low let alone the offspring born to a live-in couple. However, the sexual needs of the couple in a live-in relationship are fulfilled, with the liberalisation of sexuality through popular culture, technological advancements such as dating applications and access and knowledge of

contraceptive measures. Liberalisation of sexuality has addressed the taboo of pre-marital sex, with more and more people becoming congruent with the idea of pre-marital sex or accepting partners who are sexually active. This has also led to the acceptance of partners who have been in previous relationships and been sexually active. Nevertheless, to say that couples choose to be in live-in relationships only to fulfil their sexual needs would be erroneous as clearly live-in relationships also take care of the psychological and emotional needs of individuals along with their economic needs.

One of the major functions of the institution of family is the socialisation of children to make them informed and responsible adults. Family takes care of the needs of children until they become independent. It is during the process of socialisation that ideas of culture, gender etc. are introduced to the child. This process is very important for the stabilisation and development of the child's overall personality. It is this function that delineates and differentiates family from live-in relationships. A couple in a live-in relationship may have children and may take responsibility for them but the whole process is not legitimised socially although legal safeguards are elaborate.

The narrative of married heterosexual couple as the 'stable family'

One aspect of similarity of perception of live-in relationships with respect to both actors and non-actors of live-in relationships is the status of children. When asked if marriage is necessary for childbearing, 98% of the informants felt that it is necessary to do so. Having children outside marriage seems problematic to most informants. There are larger questions to be answered in such cases as whose name the child is going to take, question of financial support and the whole debate about the custody of the child. As a parent, one would want to ensure a safe and stable

environment for one's child. It would be hard to imagine the amount of judgment a child would have to go through when the relationship out of which it was born is not defined and recognized as legitimate by society at large. Although there are no live-in couples who have had children in the present sample, it is not uncommon to think of such occurrences in various cities in India. Biologically, marriage is not a requisite to become a parent but socially, sanctions apply. Child suffers society's judgment as much as the parents. But we cannot rule out the possibility of children out of wedlock. However, there are single parents also who are raising children sometimes out of wedlock, and sometimes even when they are not the biological parents. Debina Chatterjee, an individual in a live-in relationship for the past three years staying in Bangalore is not shy from considering this option. She refers to actress Sushmitha Sen as an inspiration behind her decision of adopting a child. Sushmitha Sen has adopted two daughters and is a single mother who has never married. She has been in and out of two live-in relationships in the past and is in a relationship for the past two years. Debina mentions that her decision to adopt a child is irrespective of the romantic relationship she has in her life. She feels if her partner understands her in this respect all is well, otherwise she would not think twice before moving on beyond the relationship.

Returning to the question of what defines live-in relationships in the Indian context, we understand that the idea of "pure relationships" as Giddens (1992) suggests does not entirely explain the situation of live-in relationships in New Delhi and Bangalore. As Cherlin (2004) argues, pure relationships do not account for the status of children as he critiques Giddens for trying yet failing to embed children within the pure relationship. Although live-in relationships account for the function of sexual, psycho-sociological needs of life, they are inadequate in the Indian context in comparison to marriage to provide the function of legitimization of off-spring.

The debate around adoption of children by live-in couples can be clearly observed, that also got published in leading newspapers clearly depicts how the perception of the state reflects the perception of the public regarding adoption of children by live-in couples. The first article published on June 14th 2018, in The Hindu informs how the nodal agency for adoption in India, the Central Adoption Regulation Authority equates live-in relationships as unstable relationships and imposes a restriction that adoption in and from India is only for individuals who are married.

Figure 4.5 Article in The Hindu regarding adoption by live-in couples, dated 14-06-2018



The extension of the regulation to foreign nationals where live-in relationships outnumber marriages was a move that did not go well with adoption agencies abroad. Furthermore, live-in relationships have been recognised as legal by the Supreme Court of India in many landmark

judgements and the women in live-in relationships are provided security against domestic violence and abuse with the same law that governs married women i.e., Protection of Women against Domestic Violence, 2005. The error that the CARA committed in this regard is assuming marriages as the only stable relationships eligible to adopt children when the apex court provides similar legal safeguards and recognition to live-in relationships was uncalled.

Figure 4.6 Article in The Hindu regarding lifting of ban on adoption by live-in couples dated, 22-09-2018

Ban on adoption by live-in partners lifted

CARA decides to withdraw circular issued earlier this year

JAGRITI CHANDRA
NEW DELHI

Individuals in a live-in relationship will once again be able to adopt children from and within India after the country's nodal adoption agency decided to withdraw a circular issued earlier this year disallowing them from doing so.

The Child Adoption Regulatory Authority (CARA), in a circular issued on May 31, barred applicants in a live-in relationship from adopting a child on the ground that "the Authority would like the children to be placed only with a stable family and individuals in a live-in relationship cannot be considered as stable family."

"We have decided to withdraw the circular and applications from prospective adoptive parents will be examined on a case-by-case basis," Secretary, Women and



Applicants have to be physically, mentally and financially stable to raise a child, as per the adoption rules.

Child Development Ministry, R.K. Shrivastava told *The Hindu* on Thursday.

The decision was taken at the last meeting of the steering committee of CARA, chaired by Mr. Shrivastava, in August, and will benefit both domestic and international applicants.

The eligibility criteria under Adoption Regulations, 2017, permit single women to adopt a child of any gender, while single men can adopt only boys. When a married couple seeks to adopt a child, it needs to give its consent for adoption and should be stable marriage for at least two years. Applicants have to be physically, mentally and financially stable to raise a child.

Perhaps, the agency was also greatly influenced by public opinion on the status of live-in relationships as unstable rather than the opinion of actors or individuals who are in live-in relationships and who wish to adopt. Therefore, the agency recalled its regulation on September 22nd, 2018, just a few months after passing it initially. This ambiguity and suspicion about the purpose and stability of live-in relationships in the minds of the general public is perhaps the reason why couples in live-in relationship also agree with the wider perception that marriage is necessary for rearing children.

The informants who are in a live-in relationship and interviewed in Delhi and Bangalore, agreed unanimously that marriage is essential for childbearing or adopting. With the kind of low-acceptance and recognition of the live-in relationship in both cities revealed from the general perception of such relationships, it is hardly surprising that couples in a live-in relationship prefer not to have children. Most couples cited that it would be problematic for the child to grow in an environment that does not recognise the relationship of its parents. Even for couples who stay in a live-in relationship, as they assume that marriage is a validation of their relationship by the society, validation of the legitimacy of their children is of utmost importance to them. This validation becomes important for the benefit of the child, else it would lead to a traumatic childhood. Therefore, when asked if marriage is necessary for childbearing, all informants agreed to it as a pre-requisite to think about childbearing.

When we turn towards the definition of family by Murdock (1949), it leaves out a vast majority of social groups that do qualify to be included as family and may perform most functions as that of family. To consider what these variants of family mean or signify for the members is of significance. In that sense, live-in relationships also qualify as family as they provide

psychological and emotional support to the couple as well as heeding to their economic and sexual needs. However, live-in relationships do not account for social legitimisation of offspring or for child socialisation. The couples in a live-in relationship do not see this as an impediment to their relationship. They consider each other as family. As stated earlier, live-in relationships are not always entered into with a pre-informed notion of getting married or having children. In most cases, it is a natural outcome of love and the desire for companionship as stated by informants in both cities of Delhi and Bangalore. The hegemonic normativity of marriage as foundation for family is challenged by live-in relationships. Just as how individuals who can imagine conjugality outside the institution of marriage prefer live-in relationships, similarly, individuals who can imagine familial connect outside the traditional institution of family prefer live-in relationships as an alternative.

Divorce as a legal separation mechanism of marriage

As marriage is recognised legally, provisions to end a marriage also exist legally. However, legal separation often entails payment of alimony and separation of material assets. Child custody is also a main element of legal intervention. Although elaborate legal provisions exist to provide divorce, most societies do not recognise divorce as a separation mechanism. Religious scriptures and customs also do not recognise divorce. In Indian society as well, divorce is not considered an option, the couple is expected to work out differences and most often are asked to compromise for the future of their children. Family and caste honour is also associated with successful marriages in the kin unit and divorce is assumed to be affecting the reputation of the entire family. Separation is most often sought when divorce is not an option. Social stigma associated

with divorce discourages individuals to think of it as an option. The following narrative enumerates the process of separation in a live-in relationship of an informant.

Vijay Suneja aged 29 is a resident of Bangalore and is a mechanical engineer. He hails from Rampur, Uttar Pradesh and comes from a moderately liberal family. He has been in two live-in relationships (one while in Delhi and the other while he resided in Bangalore). But both relationships have been utter failures according to him. Although he made sure he gave his partner their space and based the relationship on equality, he did not find solace as he felt his partner was very demanding. He noticed that his social circle kept diminishing and he always had her for company. He constantly felt that she was eating up a lot of his time. She was too clingy. That is when he decided to break the relationship.

Phobia of commitment to marriage, culture of ‘no strings attached’, openness to physical intimacy and no social circle outside love life may be some of the reasons why couples are in live-in relationships. Also, a strong will to take relationship till marriage could also be the reason according to Vijay. When asked if live-in relationships will be more acceptable with time, he said it may improve drastically. However, marriage will not lose its sanctity. People in live-in relationships fall apart, marriages also fall apart but the rate is what matters. Vijay also states that it was extremely difficult for him to move ahead post separation from his partner in both relationships. However, it is much easier to deal with separation from a live-in partner than dealing with the institutional mechanism of divorce. This is because, the separation mechanism involved only him and his girlfriend, as it was a live-in relationship and they ended the relationship on a mutual agreement over their differences.

We can observe the fluidity of live-in relationships as it is so easy to move on if things do not work out. There is no effort for making things work and it is an end as there is no involvement of third person who can probably resolve the issues or suggest some modifications, like we have in the case of marriage counselling or intervention of extended family to keep the marriage intact. In the case of live-in relationships, separation entails only emotional turmoil and does not involve legal repercussions if children are not involved in the relationship. Since, the relationships do not usually account for childcare or socialisation, child custody does not become an issue in case individuals want to end a live-in relationship. Therefore, live-in relationships are critiqued by the wider society as it is perceived an easy ordeal to walk out of live-in relationships.

Contrary to popular perception, live-in relationships also have similar constitutional safeguards that apply to marriage. The Supreme Court has always maintained through its judgements that live-in relationships are not illegal in India. However, there are no specific legislations that govern the rights of individuals in a live-in relationship. The laws that govern Hindu marriage are extended to include live-in relationships by equating them as “relationship in the nature of marriage”. One such provision is the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, where live-in relationships are not included but the provision covers live-in relationships. The Section 2(f) of the Act includes all domestic relationships as:

“Domestic relationship means a relationship between two persons who live or have, at any point of time, lived together in a shared household, when they are related by consanguinity, marriage, or through a relationship in the nature of marriage, adoption or are family members living together as a joint family” – Section 2(f) of Pwdva 2005.

Another provision is the right of the woman in the live-in relationship to claim maintenance under the Section 125 Cr. P.C. but with few conditionsⁱⁱ that need to be fulfilled. Further, to protect the rights of the couple and especially children born to such couples, the Supreme Court in November 2013 ordered the Parliament to enact a legislation that accounts for the rights of women in, and children born out of live-in relationships giving a set of guidelinesⁱⁱ based on which the legislation shall be arrived at. Although in many historic judgements such as ⁱⁱS Khushboo vs. Kanniammal & Anr, Indra Sarma vs. V.KV. Sarma and Tulsa vs. Durghatiya the Supreme Court has attempted to tell Indian society that live-in relationships are not illegal, the legality of the right to live-in is ambiguous as the Supreme Court also treats these relationships as “relationships in the nature of marriage” but there are no legislations which treat the relationships as on their own.

With respect to the knowledge of the constitutional safeguards of live-in relationships, most informants are either unaware of the safeguards or feel that the safeguards are too vague to be interpreted and there need to be proper legislation in this regard. Maya, a law practitioner in Bengaluru, who is now married after being in a live-in relationship informs that the provisions that are currently in place for live-in relationships are in terms of equating them with marriage and not treating them as independent relationships. Only proper legislation regarding these relationships will reduce the stigma attached to the relationships and normalise the relationships in Indian society.

In conclusion, this chapter focuses on the patterns of conjugality and their comparison with patterns of live-in relationships to look for similarities or differences in these patterns. Marriage enforces and ensures perpetuation of ideas of gendered roles. Caste endogamy is a tool through

which gender performativity is ensured in Indian society. The nature of caste as an identity is redundant in live-in relationships and is in fact a promoting factor for inter-caste and inter-religious unions. The transactional nature of marriage also seeks to perpetuate gender inequality. Finally, marriage as an institution is the foundation for family which in turn induces the idea of gender through child socialisation. The hegemony of marriage and the idea of the married heterosexual couple as the stable relationship model for founding a family is the reason why live-in relationships are considered unstable and not functional enough to provide for childcare and socialisation. On the other hand, live-in relationships are independent of the performative aspects of gender and all the associated tools through which it is enforced such as caste endogamy, dowry or wedding expenses or through the institution of family. Therefore, the patterns of conjugality seek to further the idea of the hegemony of marriage by othering live-in relationships. The subsequent chapter further discusses the agency of individuals in live-in relationships and the factors that influence agency to choose live-in relationships over marriage or to delay marriage in the light of the othering of live-in relationships by Indian society.

Notes

The conditions that must be met by a live-in relationship to be qualified as marriage in the case of women complainants seeking maintenance are:

1. “A live-in couple must hold themselves out to society as being akin to spouses.
2. They must be of legal age to marry.
3. They must be unmarried or
4. Be otherwise qualified to enter into a legal marriage” (Laha 2016, 50).

ⁱⁱ The guidelines issued by the Supreme Court of India to the Parliament in order to formulate a legislation for recognising and issuing provisions to women in live-in relationships and children born of live-in relationships in 2013. These guidelines are to determine period or duration of the live-in relationship; whether the couple shares a household; whether the couple has common economic resources and other economic arrangements such as joint accounts, immovable properties, sexual relationship; children born out of the relationship; public socialisation of the couple and intentionality of the couple with respect to their relationship - <https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/india/historic-supreme-court-approves-live-in-relationships-asks-par-30912>

ⁱⁱ S Khushboo vs. Kanniammal &Anr, Indra Sarma vs. V.KV. Sarma and Tulsa vs. Durghatiya are historic cases dealt by Indian courts with respect to couples in live-in relationships. The Indian legal framework considered live-in relationship as equivalent to marriage and extended the Hindu Marriage Act to govern and resolve disputes with respect to live-in relationships as well.

Chapter Five

LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIP AS AN EXPRESSION OF AGENCY

The previous chapters have established the definition, nature and perception of live-in relationships and how essentially live-in relationships are similar or different in structural and functional aspects from the institutions of marriage and family. The ethnographic scenario where live-in relationships burgeon and the perception of the general public with regards to the implications such relationships may have on the institution of marriage have been particularly interesting to note. Nonetheless, the operative analysis of the study has been the envisaging of live-in relationships as an expression of agency in marital choice. This chapter deals with the depiction of how live-in relationships provide an avenue for urban professional middle-class and upper middle-class Indians to exercise agency with respect to marital choices. Since agency does not exist in a vacuum, the aspects such as temporality, contextuality and the cultural milieu that informs agency will also be discussed briefly.

Understanding live-in relationships as agency

Human agency as a methodological approach has been predominantly used in Sociology, Psychology and other behavioural sciences although its use in anthropological analysis in the recent past is quite limited. Frank (2006, 283) quotes Molino while arguing that “anthropology actually has a long history of ‘othering’ psychoanalysis, homogenizing psychoanalytic thought, and drawing on psychologically reductive approaches to understand the relationship between individuals and culture”. Agency as an approach to study socio-cultural phenomena has been credited with use to explain a multitude of situations across a multitude of disciplines spanning a few decades. Therefore, it makes the analysis of dynamics of a traditional institution like

marriage a very interesting task. The application of ‘practice’ as an approach in anthropology can be credited to Ortner (1984). She invokes Giddens as he suggests that the analysis of practice is not necessarily a critique of the analysis of structure but an element of a holistic analysis of social phenomena (Ortner 1984). In reality, both structure and practice may co-exist, transform or negotiate with one another. While structure highlights the coherent aspects of society, practice highlights the incoherence inimical to society. Ortner (1984, 147) dubs this aspect of attending to “social asymmetry” of practice theory as its obvious Marxist influence. Not just live-in relationships, but the expression of agency with respect to negotiating with the institution of marriage may be considered as the study of practice. Therefore, while marriage is given the status of the sacrosanct heterosexual relationship, live-in relationships transform or negotiate with the institution of marriage. Individuals may then choose to embrace the institution of marriage on completing the liminal phase of reflecting on the institution of marriage while in a live-in relationship. The role of study of practice in this scenario is the study of the process of interaction between culture (as a larger representation of the institution of marriage) and agency of the individual. Quintessentially, the theory of practice does not entail the categorisation of social institutions, which makes the holistic understanding of phenomena a possibility. It is an ideal approach to study institutions like marriage and family which encompass the norms that form structure but at the same time, also function as avenues where individual agency is also at its highest level. To understand the major contribution of practice theory in analysis of social phenomena, the following definition may be considered: “So the study of practice is after all the study of all forms of human agency” (Ortner 1984:149). The units of analysis are individuals or actors and the researcher “takes these people and their doings as the reference point for understanding the processes involved in the reproduction or change of some set of structural

features” (Ortner 1984, 149). When this is applied in the context of live-in relationships, the individuals in a live-in relationships become the reference point of the study and their doings (choosing live-in relationships over marriage or to delay marriage) are studied to understanding the dynamics of marriage in Indian communities.

However, not everything that people do is operative for analysis but there are certain boundaries set to identify dimensions of action that qualify as parameters for analysis as in that these actions either recreate or make considerable changes to existing structures situated in a temporal context. What are the considerations that need to be employed to define these boundaries? There are three such considerations. Firstly, the units of analysis need to be specified, which is individuals. Secondly, the temporality of action needs to be determined as in the short-term or long-term goals vested in the actions. Finally, the kinds of action need to be emphasized. Whether it is the reproduction of shared understandings or creating alternative understanding as a means to negotiate with emerging situations, motives of individuals to act form important aspects of analysis (Ortner 1984). While the first of the three boundaries have been defined in the previous chapters which is the units of analysis i.e., the individuals in live-in relationships, the other two boundaries which are the temporality and the kinds of action itself (reproduction of existing structures or creation of alternative understandings) will be determined in the following discussion.

Broadly speaking, agency is the ability of human beings to make rational and independent decisions. It heavily draws upon concepts such as “subjectivity, the individual, the person and the self” (Frank 2006, 281). It is not merely the binary opposite of social structure which is the consolidation of all factors that influence an individual’s independence with respect to decision

making. Agency serves as an analytical tool with characteristic features and distinguished ethnographic presence varying with time. However, the treatment of agency as just habitual, monotonous and mundane as popularized by Bourdieu or Giddens or as goal seeking and purposivity as popularized by rational choice theorists and phenomenologists or as providing a sense of deliberation as popularized by feminists must not be considered in isolation but as an organic whole (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). In fact, the dimensions of structure and agency always inter-play and counter play in the everyday lives of individuals.ⁱⁱ This interaction has been discussed in two dimensions. Firstly, the way culture interacts with agency and secondly how agency affects culture. The former “shapes, guides and even to some extent dictates behaviour” (Ortner 1984, 152). However, it is more interesting to note what culture does not allow or permit rather than what it allows or perpetuates. When we look at the process of how the latter occurs, i.e., how agency affects culture; agency either reproduces culture or transforms the way culture operates in a society (Ortner 1984). Similarly, as we have noted from the previous chapters that arranged marriage is considered a significant aspect of Indian culture (irrespective of caste, region and religion), individual agency either reproduces arranged marriage (along with its inequalities) or transforms the way conjugality is imagined in marriage.

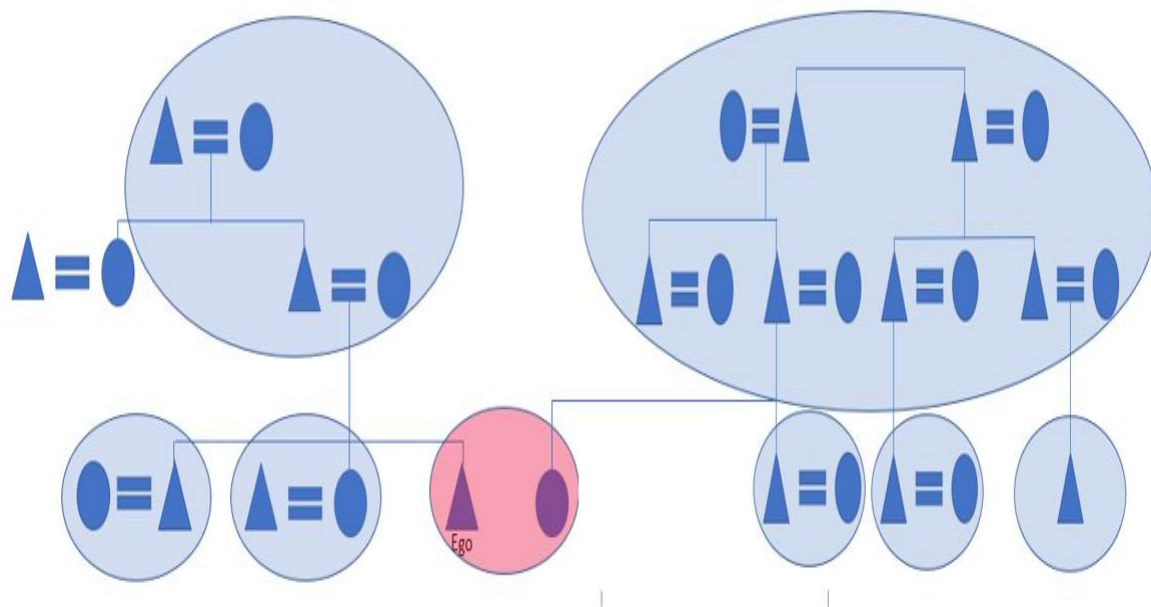
Both actions of reproducing or changing culture entail agency of individuals. The best form of reproduction of culture is ritual and the analysis of ritual thereof provides the motives of agency (Ortner 1984). Similarly, while discussing about change as a process, Ortner (1984) invokes Sahlin’s model where he dubs change as an essentially failed reproduction. His model talks of change of relations in an asymmetrical society as the revolution and as Ortner (1984) specifies, this model is a less extravagant account of dynamics of social institutions without breaking them up into components such as base, structure and super structure. However, by stating that change

is failed reproduction, the creative aspect of agency of individuals is undervalued and dismissed. Rather, change can be viewed as informed creation. In the case of live-in relationships, the creativity of individuals lies in how they choose to delay, postpone or negotiate with arranged marriage and its perpetual inequalities instead of a monotonous reproduction of arranged marriage. This conclusion was arrived at after observing the marriages in the families of origin of the individuals in live-in relationships. The reproduction of arranged marriage was studied to at least two to three generations ahead of the ego. The Figure 5.1 is a genealogical depiction of the reproduction of arranged marriage in the families of origin of Hussain Dalal (32), a UX research designer belonging to a Parsi family and Prateeksha Virk (27), a software engineer who belongs to a Punjabi family. It represents data regarding the marriages and type of family of couples of three generations in both Hussain and Prateeksha's respective families. Arranged marriage is indicated through blue coloured representation of the marriage and the circular depiction indicates a residential unit. As Hussain and Prateeksha are not married but in a live-in relationship, they are represented in the colour pink and the encircled depiction indicates a common residential unit.

Both Hussain and Prateeksha belong to rural Punjab but migrated to Gurugram after getting employed post higher education. Zoroastrianism (whose believers are termed Parsi) does not recognise inter-religious marriages or relationships and non-Parsi are not allowed to enter the Fire temple, which is the place of worship of the Parsis, equips Hussain. Due to this closed kinship and marriage network of the Parsi religion, love marriage is rare and not considered virtuous. Therefore, it is evident from the data regarding married couples from Hussain's family that right from his grandfather's generation up to his own generation (including his siblings),

members have opted for an arranged marriage keeping in regard the Parsi customs of endogamous arranged marriage.

Figure 5.1 Genealogical depiction of arranged marriage in Hussain Dalal and Prateeksha Virk's families



Prateeksha belongs to a fraternal joint family, where her paternal grandfather and his brother live along with their sons and in turn their children. They belong to the Jat Sikh caste, which is an ethno-religious community in Punjab. The grandchildren, i.e., Prateeksha, her sibling and cousins have migrated to various cities in Northern India on account of pursuing higher education or due to employment. Her grand-parents, uncles and her cousins have all opted for arranged marriage within their caste. The preference of the arranged marriage as a norm since several generations, Prateeksha equips, is rewarding in terms of the respect the individual attains in the community for choosing one's caste and status compatibility over personal compatibility.

On asking what prompted her to choose a live-in relationship over arranged marriage, she exclaims that growing up in a joint family, where the women were subjected to toxic masculinity, she needed a personal compatibility with her partner to make sure she does not have to suffer in a relationship that has skewed power relations. That said, she wants to get married one day, only after getting to know whether the relationship is based on comfort and an equal footing instead of a powerless relationship. The idea behind discussing the marriage history of the families of Hussain and Prateeksha is to highlight the aspect of agency of individuals to either choose to replicate or modify structures or normative expectations. A brief discussion ensues to understand agency theoretically and then the history of marriage of Hussain and Prateeksha's respective families may be revisited to facilitate the application of the definition to a lived experience from the field. The most comprehensive definition of agency that takes into account the aspect of temporality is that by Emirbayer and Mische (1998: 970) who define agency as:

“the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments- the temporal relational contexts of actions- which, through the interplay of habit, imagination and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations.”

Therefore, agency can be defined as the interactive response of individuals located in shifting time and space to problems arriving from dynamic structural environments.ⁱⁱ Of particular significance is the fact that the definition also takes existing social structures into consideration while also accounting for the dynamics of these structures as a result of agentic action by actors (again whose structural environments are varied). There is emphasis laid on the aspects of time

and context as the major influences on agency. Therefore, in situations of conflict between the existing and emerging structures, actors employ their ability to choose to either reproduce or transform existing structures. This ability to choose is situated in a temporal context. Therefore, what makes agency an important aspect of social science research is what makes agency itself – the historical, cultural and situational conditions of actors in the context of the choices they make. Emirbayer and Mische (1998) also discuss “iteration, projectivity and practical evaluation” as “constituent elements of agency”. While iteration refers to the re-incorporation of past actions to maintain the coherence of existing structures, projectivity corresponds to the re-organisation of existing structures in anticipation of future situations. Finally, the practical evaluative element facilitates, as the name suggests, practical evaluation of present situations to create substitutive actions. However, these three elements may predominate each other in a given situation as an individual’s actions may be more driven to the past, more conscious of the future or more responsive to a present scenario. Also, it may be deduced that these three elements are not a set of chronologically occurring events i.e., past, present, and future. As mentioned earlier, the ‘chordal triad’ of agency may be used to explain behavior of individuals in emergent events in a given space and time.

On applying the concept of agency as an interactive response of individuals in dynamic structural environments, the marital choices of both married as well as live-in couples may be understood. Time and space (context) may determine the cultural contours, which is the gauging of how resilient culture is to change. In the case of the married couples in the families of Hussain and Prateeksha (case discussed above using Figure 5.1), the resilience of the cultural normative prescriptions of marriage holds strong with respect to time and context of their native town. The ability to reincorporate past actions (passed down uncritically through many generations) to

maintain existing coherence is also agency of individuals, although iterative in nature. Though Prateeksha's siblings and cousins have also migrated along with her, their iterative agency is higher than their practical evaluative judgement. Therefore, they chose reproduction over creative alteration. This could be due to lack of financial independence, little or no exposure to urban life and also the rewards that society grants in the case of reproduction of normative roles and expectations. In the case of Hussain and Prateeksha, their evaluation of their present (on account of migration) and past (on account of hailing from patriarchal joint families) circumstances, their evaluative and creative aspects of agency dominate over iteration to give rise to creative alternatives to arranged matrimony i.e., live-in relationships.

In a similar vein, the briefly discussed theoretical impetus of agency as an approach can be applied to understand marital choices in a truly global cultural economy. Marriage as an institution with its transactional, ritual and normative elements is an essential dimension of social structure. While looking at marital choices of urban Indians, two important factors influence the decision to get married: social learning and social influence (Billari et al, 2007). A combination of aspects of agency inter-play and sometimes dominate one another while choices are made especially with respect to marriage and family. Therefore, from the ethnographic examples at our disposal, let us try and understand how live-in relationships can be viewed as an expression of agency and certain dynamics of marital choices that suggest the role of agency and reflexivity of the self.

Dynamics of marital choices: a few parameters

The key indicators that explain a change in the marital choices from the present data set are increase in age at marriage, changing preferences of post-marital residence and access to new

reproductive technology. These factors influence or rather inform agency of individuals to make rational choices with respect to marriage, family and intimate relationships. Each of these factors may be examined to understand how they inform agency or how agency shapes decision making with respect to marital choices.

Increasing age at marriage

The aspect of increasing age at marriage can be viewed as an exercise of agency with respect to delaying or postponing the entry into the institution of marriage by individuals. It shows the shifting priorities associated with reaching a certain age. The pressure that society and normative structure imposes on individuals that a certain age is right for getting married and one must not exceed it is challenged by the statistics that imply increasing age at marriage. Therefore, individuals are increasingly choosing when to get married, rather than the institution of marriage imposing a right age to get married. A natural tendency towards exploring higher education, a form of art, advancing one's career, owning a house or just travelling within the country or abroad form major short-term goals for most informants that were interviewed in Delhi and Bangalore. It is an indication of the sense of reflexivity of the 'self' where priorities of the person take prominence over normative prescriptions. Especially in the case of women, marriage has been used as an avenue to exercise agency whether to delay, postpone or create marriage as an opportunity for personal gains. An important aspect that comes into picture here, is migration whether linked to marriage or not. Women have been portrayed as passive in the process of migration, especially in terms of marriage migration (Palriwala and Uberoi 2008). However, women are not dependents but carve out alternative identities by using marriage as "a means of achieving a measure of autonomy" (Giddens 1992:57). This can be supported from the data

furnished in Chapter 2, where we may notice that migration to metropolitan cities is very high among both men and women of middle and upper middle classes in search of better job opportunities, higher education and for entrepreneurial ventures. Earlier notion that women migrate only on account of getting married is challenged by these statistics. Women may therefore be viewed as active participants of the changing situations rather than as victims of the processes of change. The increase in age at marriage is also one such change where women are active participants in deciding when they want to get married instead of the decision that they must get married on reaching a certain age being imposed on them.

Figure 5.2 Respondents notion of increasing age at marriage

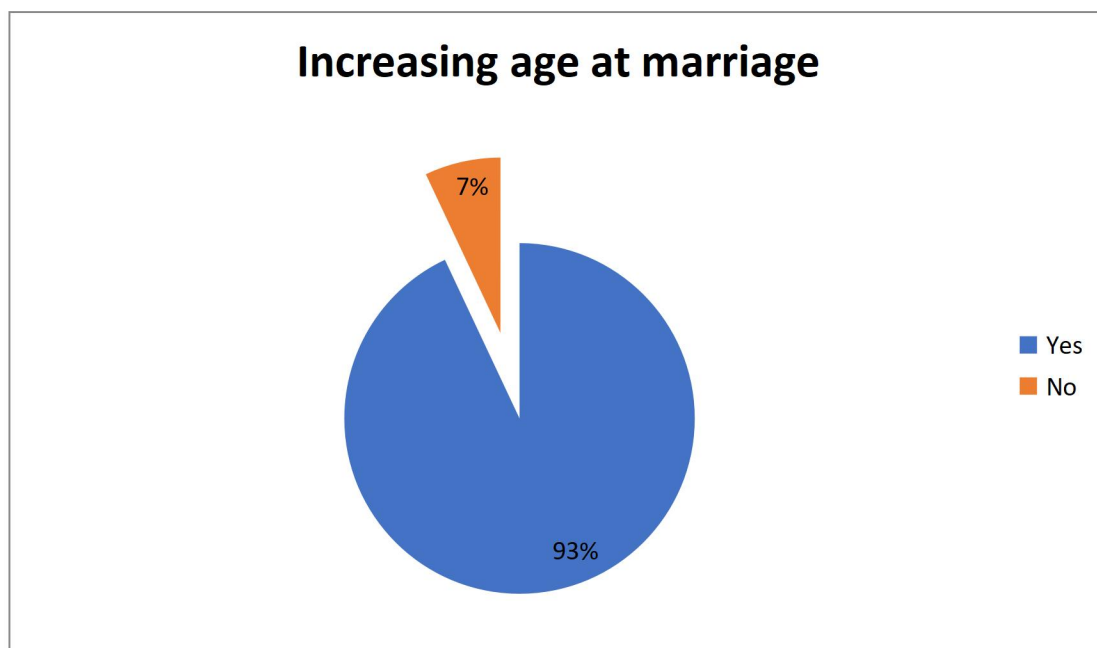


Figure 5.2 presents an account of how increase in age at marriage has occurred across different communities, religions and regions (i.e., Bengaluru and Delhi) in India. As can be read from the data representation, 93% of informants out of 106 informants, noticed a rise in age at marriage while a 7% of the sample responded by indicating a partial increase or no increase at age at

marriage. The data includes equal representation of both men and women. This includes the data regarding age at marriage of informants (including that of siblings and cousins of informants). The average age at marriage for men has increased from 24-26 to 28-30. With respect to women there is a much higher increase that has been noticed from the data from both New Delhi and Bangalore. There is a significant rise in age at marriage for women from 21-23 years of age to 25-27 years of age. Education and a strong desire to establish one's career have been cited as the main reasons for the significant increase in age at marriage.

The optimum age-set of married informants is between 25-45 as can be deduced from the data furnished in Chapter 2. This suggests an increase in the age at marriage for both men and women irrespective of caste, educational and professional background. An aspect of homogeneity that may be inferred is urbanisation on account of professional or personal commitments. Socio-economic indicators such as education, profession and urbanisation have led to an increase in age at marriage. However, the number of unmarried individuals decreases considerably as age increases (above 40). As age increases, the societal pressure on the individual to embrace the institution of marriage also increases. Gayathri who is a programmer for a leading health insurance company in Bangalore narrates,

“My parents care more about what my neighbours would think if I don't get married before I am 30. I have many plans and ambitions. I'm sure marriage will not help me achieve all those goals because it is a huge commitment. I have made it clear that I will get married only when I want to and not because it is expected of me. This pressure to settle down with someone is too much. I understand their concern also, they are getting old and want to see me set up my family. So, I tell them that I will definitely get married, but when I think the time is right”.

Gayathri's opinion is shared by many young men and women in both cities of New Delhi and Bangalore. However, the number of people getting married is higher than the number of individuals who remain unmarried. The normative nature of the institution of marriage is thus established as the idea of an unmarried individual is unthinkable particularly in the case of women (Pappu 2011). On the other hand, parents of young professionals also support the idea of marrying at a comfortable time after becoming financially stable. There is a gendered application of this practice as often young male professionals are given more time and resources to advance their career or academic pursuits whereas the pressure to get married and settle down starts early on for women professionals as in the case of Gayathri. Nevertheless, there is a considerable change in attitude of parents with respect to age at marriage. Exercising agency in this aspect is respected on the part of the young professionals, provided they are successful in their career prospects as this aspect is believed to accentuate the family's status in wider social circles.

According to Nandan, who is a programmer at Infosys in Bengaluru, "I have a flourishing career here at Infosys but photography is my real passion. I am planning to quit my current job to open my own studio and design centre. I am not sure how long that will take and whether I will be successful. Marriage is a huge responsibility and with all these ideas in mind I am not ready now. Nobody will agree to marry me also, given that I am leaving a secure job and getting into something risky." There are many individuals like Nandan for whom marriage is a very important choice in life and the need to make the right choice is always a huge responsibility and duty towards one's parents and kin group. Not just in the Indian context, but this attribute of agency as responsibility, instead of the Western notion of freedom or liberation is a common phenomenon associated with South Asian countries (Abeyasekara 2016). Naturally, in such cases, agency becomes a tool to evade such a responsibility or a coping mechanism to deal with the

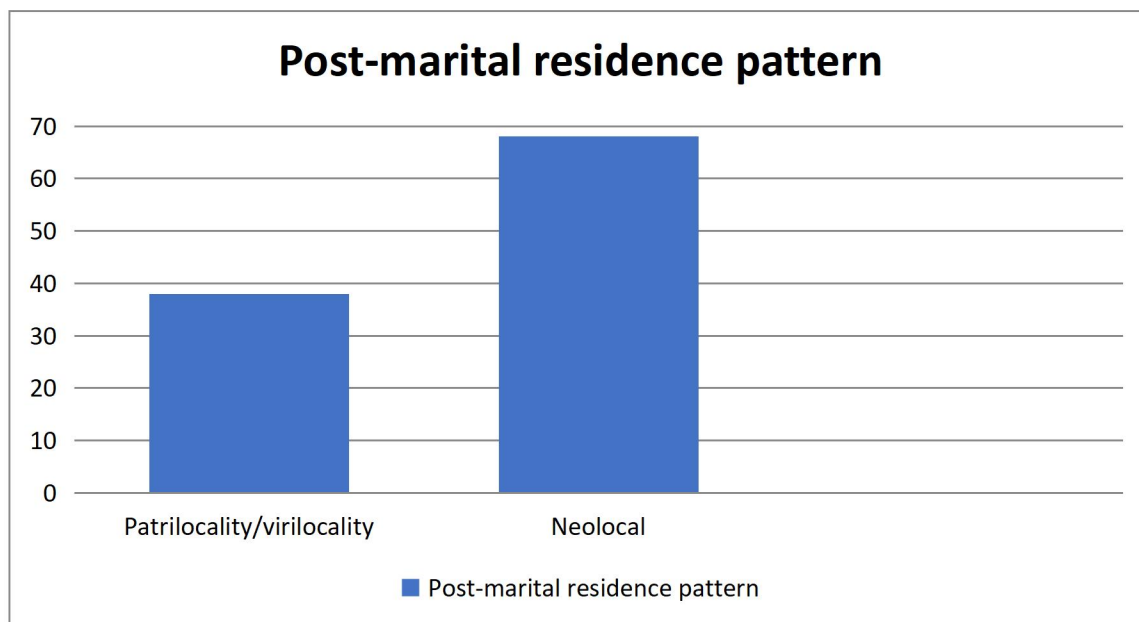
anxiety to make the right choice. Therefore, increasing age at marriage is an indicator that young urban professionals have their personal priorities such as pursuing higher education, advancement in career or leaving an established career to try another promising field. These short-term or long-term goals and ambitions hold a mirror to the increasing sense of “self” or internal reflexivity of individuals induced due to education and financial independence. But at the same time, they also reflect the embeddedness of the individual within the socio-cultural matrix (in entering the institution of marriage and meeting the expectations of parents and family) as the agency that they exercise is in fact a responsibility rather than a freedom. The major implication of increasing age at marriage particularly for live-in relationships is that it shows a growing trend towards exercising choice with respect to marital decisions. Because, the delayed onset of arranged match-making gives individuals time to explore other personal relationships such as live-in relationships and finally leads to exercising agency in choosing marital partners. It is this ability that gives informants the impetus to adopt live-in relationships eventually.

Changing preferences of post-marital residence

Another steady indicator of dynamics of social learning has been the increasing preference for neolocal post-marital residence rather than patrilocal or virilocal. This seems to be a prelude to the increasing preference for live-in relationships as well. Although preference for patrilocal residence is still significantly high, respondents revealed that neolocal pattern suits their relationship with spouse as it is more flexible and incorporative of their modern lifestyle. The rise in preference for neolocal residence pattern is again suggestive of the reflexivity of self of the individuals against normative structuring. Figure 5.3 shows the gradual increase of preference for neolocal post-marital residence compared to patrilocal or virilocality as the

preferred form of post-marital residence in a sample of 106 informants (of which 50 are couples and the remaining 6 are single). The preference of neolocal residence over patrilocal or virilocality has been observed in the case of 68 individuals (about 64% of the total sample) and the rest of the 38 individuals (36% of the total sample) exclaimed that patrilocal or virilocality will be or is their preferred or informed choice.

Figure 5.3 Post-marital residence pattern



The subset of informants who preferred neolocal post-marital residence explained that it gives their relationship with their spouse more stability especially in the early years of marriage. In the case of earlier live-in partners who eventually got married, they noticed that the transition from a live-in relationship to marriage seemed much easier when the couple retains their previous living arrangement rather than moving to the husband's home or ancestral house.

The other subset of informants opted for virilocality over neolocal residential arrangement due to prior commitments to family such as taking responsibility of old parents, owning common

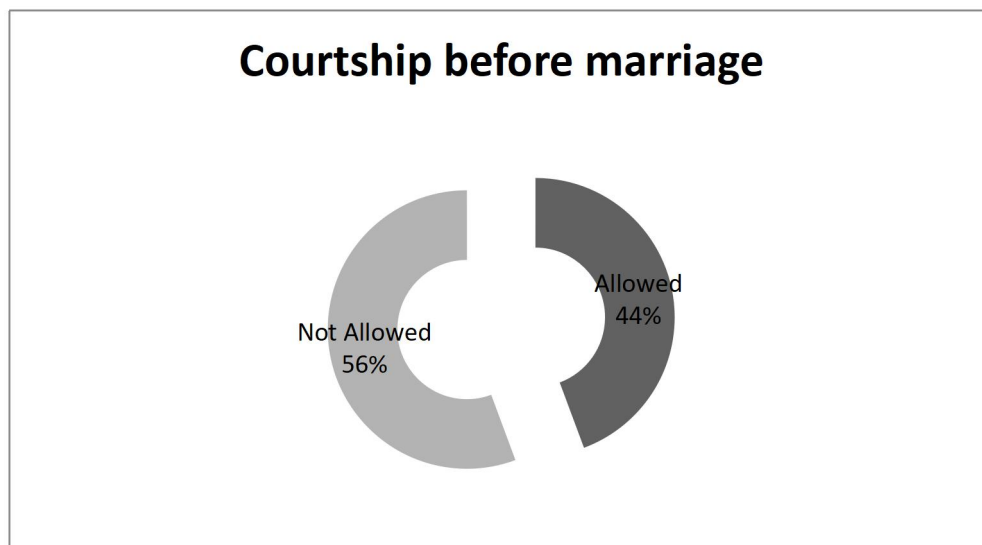
property or in general the intention to stay in a joint family. This pattern of residence often entails greater changes and stress in the life of the newly married woman. However, it may be emphasized that the preference for a patrilocal or virilocal residence pattern was a collective decision rather than an imposed one on either of the partners from the conversations with the women informants in live-in relationships. This subset includes married informants after being in a live-in relationship and also informants who are in a live-in relationship and are considering marriage in the future. Both subsets of informants exhibited exercise of agency in terms of preference of post-marital residential arrangement.

On the one hand, one subset of individuals preferred neolocal residence, as it eased the process of transition from being a live-in couple to a married couple. This may be regarded as exercising their agency which encompasses projectivity, an action that is a creative response to estimated future situations by the individual. This projectivity does not mean disrespecting existing norms or severing ties with kin but a thoughtful action that expresses the desires, hopes and fears that the individual feels about the future, in this case, the post marriage situation. On the other hand, we have the category of informants who have chosen to challenge the normative patterns of conjugality inherent in marriage by being in a live-in relationship. Yet, they exhibit an iterational element of agency as they reintegrate themselves (along with their partner) into the institution of marriage and virilocal residence but with a renewed sense of intimacy developed due to their live-in relationship. Both groups are therefore exhibiting a strong sense of decision making with respect to marital choices and are suggestive of dynamics in the institution of marriage.

Increasing preference for pre-marital courtship in arranged marriage

Formal courtship before marriage in the context of Indian arranged marriage may be understood as a pre-marital partnership phase for a couple engaged to be married. The formal acknowledgement and encouragement of the parents and wider kin network of this phase is another characteristic feature. It has become an accepted and widely practiced feature of arranged marriage in India, as a means to familiarize the couple with each other as typically arranged marriage is often between two strangers in most cases. Figure 5.4 presents us with the important feature of dynamics involving marriage, that is, pre-marital courtship. The data is observed from the attitude towards pre-marital courtship in the family and wider kin group or caste group of informants in live-in relationships.

Figure 5.4 Response regarding courtship before marriage



Although a significant proportion of the sample (106 respondents) reveal that courtship before marriage is not allowed strictly, there is a reasonable proportion of people whose parents allow it or are indifferent to it. In most cases, courtship before marriage is allowed after the couple is

engaged although there are very few cases where parents have indirectly encouraged to ‘live-in’ with their engaged partner (in case they are working in the same city) to get to know them before getting married. In other cases, the couple is encouraged to meet and go on ‘dates’ (short term romantic meetings) to restaurants or the cinema or to the mall, exchanging gifts, and in the case of long distance relationships, conversing over the phone. The steady increase in courtship before marriage shows an acceptance of the articulations of desire and compatibility of marriageable partners by their families. This also stems from the fear of incompatibility in the future. Therefore, courtship is encouraged by most families to rule out possibility of incompatibility before marriage itself rather than deal with divorce and separation later. This could further lead to an increasing acceptance of romantic love that could be translated to marriages. Middle aged and old-aged informants interviewed for general perception, perceive pre-marital courtship as a sign of modernity, comparing the situation to their ‘times’. It is interesting to note how modernity is always imagined as ‘the new’ in comparison to ‘the old’ (Abeyasekara 2016). Nevertheless, they also seem to acknowledge that pre-marital courtship is necessary to ensure compatibility post marriage in these ‘changing times’. Many couples who were in romantic love relationships convinced their families and extended relatives to get married. All these indices, i.e., increase in age at marriage, preference for neo-local post marital residence and courtship before marriage help us identify the dynamics of marital choices. This is because these parameters decide the temporality and contextuality of marriage in the life of an individual. The dynamics in these aspects indicate dynamics thereof in the perception of marriage as an institution. These changes also indicate an increasing tolerance for dynamics in the arranged endogamous marriage system. However, these changes are not desirable by the

larger society in the prevailing times and therefore there is an aggressive reinforcement of traditional norms associated with marriage.

Access to new reproductive technology

The emergence of reproductive technology and methods of assisted reproduction have revolutionized the rhetoric around sexuality in the Indian context. This has occurred in two ways. Firstly, effective contraception has opened up the discourse on sexuality and secondly, the meaning of reproduction itself has changed considerably owing to assisted reproductive technologies. Effective contraception is helpful in avoiding unwanted pregnancy and controlling family size while sexuality becomes “malleable” or open to being shaped (Giddens 1992: 27). On the other hand, due to new and assisted reproductive technology, “sexuality is separated from reproduction” (Giddens 1992, 27). Therefore, the true sense of intimacy is achieved where sexuality is independent of the reproductive function.

Let us consider what these two aspects of effective contraception as well as assisted reproduction have done to inform the agency of individuals in live-in relationships. Effective contraception for both men and women has been the major driving factor for indulging in pre-marital sex and the articulation of sexual desire for informants in live-in relationships. This has limited the chances of unwanted pregnancy and encouraged sexual life of the couples. However, there have been few cases, where abortion was considered as the couple were not ready to become parents or take the decision of getting married. Several gynecologists from reputed hospitals in both Bangalore and New Delhi suggested that they observed a surge in their patients who are live-in couples and exercising pro-choice as they preferred not to have children. Live-in couples have reported to

have consulted gynecologists in assessing the best possible options of contraception that suits their requirements and also in cases of unwanted pregnancy when contraceptive measures failed.

Secondly, the very fact that conception can happen artificially without sexual intercourse has greatly informed the agency of women in matters of marital choices and childbirth. The notion that the biological clock is ticking for women post a certain age and that this is reason enough for them to get married and get “settled down” by having children is challenged by the possibility of producing a human offspring in a test-tube. This is a “true liberation for sexuality” according to Giddens (1992, 27). Assisted reproductive technology such as Intra-Uterine Insemination, In-Vitro Fertilisation and surrogacy have helped women delay and postpone marriage and childbirth according to their priorities. Many working women have considered the possibility of freezing their eggs in egg banks while the quality of the egg is at its best to time their experience of child birth according to their convenience. Medically, the procedure is known as oocyte cryopreservation. However, this is a very expensive process at the present moment in multi-specialty hospitals in urban India costing anywhere between Rs.1,50,000 to 2,00,000 for egg retrieval and storage (according to Dr. Shalu Sharma, a reputed gynecologist in Bangalore). She also mentions that in spite of being an invasive and expensive procedure, many young professional women who are extremely busy in their career prospects are considering the option of freezing eggs around the age of 30 – 32 (as most such requests come from this particular age group of women). Another common problem that was informed by 62% of the young women professionals were the presence of auto-immune disorders such as Hypo/Hyper-thyroid, Poly Cystic Ovarian Disease and Endometriosis. These conditions were partly due to the sedentary work lifestyle and unhealthy food choices, and partly due to exposure to toxic air pollutants and other toxins of everyday travel in the city. Young professional women are therefore considering

the option of both freezing eggs in hope of having a healthy child at a later stage in life, without the quality of the eggs being unaffected by these auto-immune diseases. Other couples also considered adoption post marriage in the case of associated fertility problems.

Women in live-in relationships especially found these methods of oocyte cryopreservation extremely beneficial as they did not want to have children without being married. This brings us back to the discussion on legitimacy of offspring of couples in live-in relationships. As discussed in Chapter Four, most couples in both cities where fieldwork has been carried out, were of the opinion that having children out of wedlock was a risk that the couples are not ready to undertake. Societal judgement should not be extended to children and they were concerned this would affect the mental health of the children.

While discussing the accessibility of both new reproductive technology as well as effective contraceptive techniques, live-in couples notified that the internet is the first source of information as it is private, non-judgmental and efficient. Some couples also informed that specialist such as Gynecologists from reputed hospitals understand the problems and concerns of individuals in live-in relationships and provide real time medical advice without judgement. Therefore, accessibility of effective contraception and related advice has not been a hassle though decisions of pro-choice are still met with sarcasm and judgement.

The very notion of intimacy and sexuality undergoes an enhanced meaning formation. Therefore, both effective contraception and assisted reproductive technology have affected the articulation of sexuality and agency of individuals in live-in relationships. On the surface, the changing nature of intimacy may seem like liberation. But in reality, it is only a re-imagining of intimacy

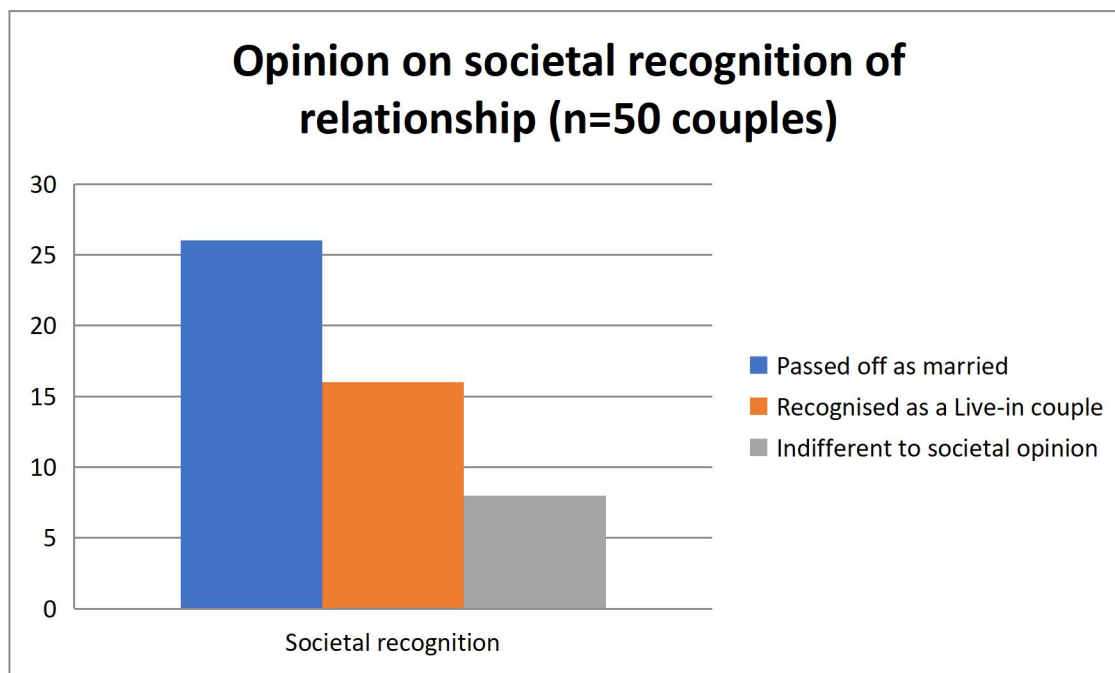
between individuals and not a disregard for the normative structure of society. The individual is very much embedded within the social matrix. This may be explained in the following discussion.

Agency as suggestive of embeddedness of the individual

From the dynamics of marital choices of the sample population, it is evident that individuals in live-in relationships are a minority in Indian context with a steady increase in the numbers over the last decade. The gap between the resilience of cultural tropes surrounding marriage and an individual's agentic ability is what we can conclude as cohabitation gap. Soons and Kalmijn (2009) suggested that cohabitation gap depends on the country's cultural characteristics. Indeed, they found that married people were significantly happier than cohabitators only in countries where cohabitation is not common. On the one hand, the selection into cohabitation might be even stronger in these countries. Cohabitators represent a small selective group of people who significantly differ from the majority of the population in countries where cohabitation is not common and are a marginal social group that deviates from the norm of the married majority (Stavrova et al, 2011). Unlike in the West, where live-in partners are not much likely to get married or commit to one another in terms of marriage, the Indian situation is quite different in response to what is the status of the live-in relationship after a point of time.ⁱⁱ Live-in relationships may lead to temporary delaying of marriage instead of affecting the rate of marriage (Newcomb and Bentler 1980). Therefore, though individuals do not enter into live-in relationships with the sole idea of getting married in the future, in Indian context, the idea to culminate the relationship in marriage has been relatively strong as can be understood from the statistics in Chapter Three. There is a high incidence of couples who have transitioned from live-in relationships to marriage and also a good number of couples who consider undergoing this

transition in the future. This goes to prove that live-in relationships provide temporary relief from the pressures inimical to the institution of marriage and the construction of intimacy itself in the context of a globalised cultural economy. However, the embeddedness of agency as both a responsibility along with individuality is reflected in the importance attached to opinion on societal recognition of live-in relationship by individuals in them. Figure 5.5 presents data collected from 50 live-in couples in Delhi and Bengaluru and their views on the societal recognition of their live-in relationship.

Figure 5.5 Opinion on societal recognition of relationship



The fact that culture plays a major role in exercising one's agency is undeniable. However, greater agentic capability can almost be equated with lower cultural influence and an indifference to societal validation of one's decision-making abilities. This is rightly reflected so in the Figure 5.5 where it can be observed that all three subsets of the sample are agentic in

nature but with varying levels of agentic elements. The subset that passed off as married although they were in a live-in relationship (also the highest in number) are advocates of the iterational element of agency as their thought process is determined by their culture (shared ways of acting). Yet, they would not shy away from exploring their agentic capabilities in deciding to be in a live-in relationship instead of an arranged marriage, but would pass off as married as an attempt to not disrupt the existing structure. Similarly, the subset of actors who are and want to be recognized as live-in partners, are advocates of the projectional element of agency whereby they are trying to ascertain their hope towards a future trajectory of action where such relationships will be fully accorded a status similar to marriage. Here, the cultural influence becomes slightly less prevalent as there is a presence of strong agentic influence. Coming to the subset of actors who are indifferent to societal recognition of their live-in relationship, are modestly affected by cultural influence and are advocates of practical evaluative elements of agency in its truest form.

Figure 5.6 Typology of live-in relationships

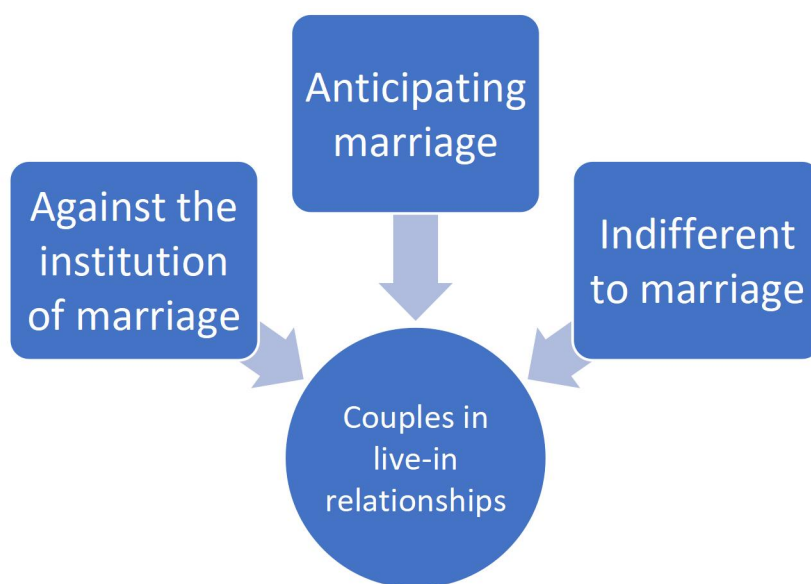


Figure 5.6 presents the types of live-in couples that the data from Delhi-NCR and bengaluru presents. When examined critically, agency with respect to marital choices in the context of urban professionals in India, cannot be regarded as anti-structure or liberating the individual from the resilience of culture. In fact, agency is greatly influenced by responsibility towards culture and the actions that individuals take do not defy norms or shared understandings but enrich them with newer expressions. All the parameters discussed earlier i.e., increasing age at marriage, increasing preference for neolocal post-marital residence pattern, acceptance of pre-marital courtship, access to effective contraception and new reproductive technology and finally having an opinion for societal recognition of live-in relationship are actually actions that reflect the embeddedness of the individual in his/her culture. In fact, culture also allows for creative restructuring of shared values, understandings and ways of acting though only the resilience for change is visible in the forefront. This is reflected in the actions of parents of young individuals who are encouraging pre-marital courtship after engagement or the acceptance of neolocal residence pattern instead of joint family setup post marriage etc. On the other hand, young professionals also take into account the aspirations and values of their parents and the wider society though they are open to negotiating with norms surrounding marriage. This is reflected in their actions such as passing off as married though in a live-in relationship, keeping their live-in relationship a secret from parents and extended family etc. Both sets of actions involve the display of agency with respect to marital choices. Observing similar changes in the institution of marriage in Srilanka, Abeyasekara notes that parents of the young professionals facilitate agency by envisioning them as “thinking actors who are capable of making right choices without parental coercion” (Abeyasekara 2016:14). Therefore, the pressure to make the ‘right choice’ is also inimical in the person when he/she exercises agency. The following section discusses a few

more reflexive narratives of informants to generate a comprehensive image of agency with respect to marital choices.

Women as active agents in marriage

There is an apparent dichotomisation of marriage into arranged vs. self-choice (more commonly understood as love marriage). The latter is associated with agency while the former is a normative representation of caste endogamy believed to be unconsciously replicated from one generation to another. This is particularly emphasised with respect to women in arranged marriage. Although women do seem to exercise agency to restructure power relations in marriage, “they may also choose to take decisions which reinforce traditional power relations” (Thapan 2003: 82). Marriage therefore becomes an integral part of “women’s identities as embodied gendered selves” (Thapan 2003:82). The following narratives from the field are suggestive of how women choose to either challenge existing gender norms associated with marriage or the decision making around marriage or choose to perpetuate the gendered norms in such a way as to benefit from them. Both situations hold a mirror to women as active agents in the institution of marriage.

The account of Barkha Yadav is a gruelling story of how she empowered herself through domestic violence and a traumatic marriage to find true love in the midst of a very rigid and unsupportive family and society from a small town in Haryana to a cosmopolitan city like Gurgaon where she resides now. Barkha was underage, approximately 17, when she was first married off to Rishab Ahluwalia who hailed from a joint family of 10 people in a village in Haryana. The Ahluwalia family were politically influential in their village as Rishab’s father’s brother was the Sarpanch of the village. Rishabh claimed that he was working in the city before

the match was made but later Barkha learnt that he was never employed anywhere. He would drink all day and when questioned would beat her up. They did not provide her enough food even when she was pregnant. Everything she said was a crime, she was never asked for an opinion and neither was her opinion considered when she gathered courage to voice it. She was forced to do a lot of household work throughout the day even when she complained of pain and soreness of her muscles. When she approached her parents, they always scorned upon her telling her to mend her ways instead of talking to her in-laws or husband. She always felt helpless and suicidal. In her own words, she even hated the fact that she “existed”. When she gave birth to a healthy girl child, her husband and in-laws wanted her to kill the child as she was a girl. This was atrocious and Barkha could not take it anymore. Her parents did not support her even at this point but she refused to keep quiet and lodged a police complaint and applied for a divorce. For a brief period, she stayed with her parents and moved out after she found a job as a teacher in a school in Gurgaon.

In Gurgaon, she met Anil Yadav, a civil engineer who was her colleague’s brother. They married a year later and had twins. Initially, Barkha’s parents were not comfortable with the idea of her marrying for the second time and that too to a younger person. However, she convinced them and they took about a year to accept the marriage and visit her. Barkha says that Anil has gracefully accepted her past and her eldest daughter has always been part of the family. The younger twins however do not know that she is their half-sister. Barkha says that she is so happy in her second marriage that she cannot ask for more. She faced a lot of problems like domestic violence, marital rape and gender discrimination that her second marriage felt special and stable. Barkha today is so proud of the decisions she has taken for her own happiness. She says that marriage is about trust two individuals have in each other and it is a very pious relationship. In

her case, she feels that even more and considers Anil a gift from God. However, she has a very different take on live-in relationships. To the extent that she feels that while marriage is a natural phenomenon, live-in relationships are artificial or made-up. Especially in Haryana, which is highly patriarchal, she doubts if anybody accepts these relationships, let alone equate them with marriage. She narrates, that she refused a couple who were in live-in as tenants as she did not want her children to know that such relationships even exist. She strongly feels that live-in relationships will never be respected as she feels they exist only for physical intimacy. In the case of marriage, separation legally requires divorce which is a big formality. In the case of live-in it is so easy to move out. That is why there is no respect for such relationships according to Barkha. She says that a woman has no character if she is in a live-in relationship. Her opinion on the possibility of love in live-in relationship cannot be ruled out, she says that even she was in love and got married. So marriage must be the end goal for any love relationship. She also says that nobody should approve of such relationships which are an excuse for today's generation and their commitment phobic nature. Marriage as an institution will suffer if we approve such relationships.

Barkha's experiences give us a vivid picture of how violence and love are contrasted in the same person's life. Domestic violence in the purview of marriage is a very traumatising experience and it takes a lot of courage to stand up against your own life partner in a court of law. When Barkha decided to walk out of her troublesome marriage, nobody supported her. However, when she wanted to remarry after finding someone who loved and respected her, she was critiqued as a greedy woman. This does not go well with existing gender structures, as women who are conscious of their sexuality are often ridiculed. However, we can also see how Barkha does not approve of live-in relationships as she thinks the after effects are more damaging for women and

she has been through such harsh judgement in her life. She does not realise that by thinking that way, she is also unconsciously perpetuating the same gender stereotypes that she has been subjected to. Women exercise agency in terms of carving out alternative identities for themselves in the face of adversity like in the case of Barkha. However, it may also be noted that she is critical of the women who are in live-in relationships as she believes in the boundaries that are set for women by the society at large and that women must abide by them. The complexity of understanding agency is very aptly illustrated through this narrative as the individual seeks to choose as a rational self but at the same time, feels embedded and conscious of one's culture. The following narrative serves to illustrate how being uncritical of norms and playing into the resilience of culture is also understood as agency of the individual.

Sunil and Seema Sharma got married 14 years ago in Gurgaon and have been living in their ancestral home ever since. It was an arranged marriage that was negotiated through distant relatives of the couple. It is a joint family of six people, the couple, their daughters and Sunil's parents. Seema's parents also stay nearby as she is their only child. Sunil is a manager in an MNC while Seema is a homemaker. Seema once worked as a ground staff for an airline but later discontinued her job as she had to look after her kids. She left her job at a time when her career was flourishing, she mentions. On the other hand, Sunil is very content with his job and has plans of starting a small-scale business venture in the future years.

A typical day starts off for the Sharma's with the kids going to school and Sunil going to work. Seema takes care of the household chores like cooking, laundry etc with a little help from her mother-in-law. She helps her mother-in-law to take care of Sunil's father who has had a paralysis stroke. Seema also takes care of the well-being of her parents who live nearby. She visits them

every afternoon. Once the kids return from school, she starts cooking once again and the process continues.

We can see that there is a very clear demarcation of gender roles with respect to matters of the Sharma household. The women have to take care of the domestic work and Sunil takes care of the public sphere. However, the couple does not recognise this demarcation. It is almost normative according to them. When asked about what is the driving force of their marriage, Sunil replied that it is Seema's patience. Seema feels that what keeps them together is the fact that Sunil is very responsible. He takes care of his parents and in-laws alike and that is what Seema adores. Family is more important for both of them than individuality. Some neighbours do feel that Seema is overworked and tired most of the time, with no time for a social circle in the neighbourhood or a quick walk to the park. Their opinion on why couples get into live-in relationships when they can get married, is that today's generation finds marriage very confusing and complicated. That is why they get into these live-in relationships. Seema does not approve of them at all but for Sunil it is quite acceptable as there may be people who find their situation complying with the idea of live-in. However, Sunil adds that the level of acceptance is still very low as people feel that having such couples around affects the sanctity of their space. When asked what they think would make marriage different from a live-in relationship, they said that for live-in there is no recognition of the relationship. Sunil adds that when a couple is married, they refer to each other as husband and wife but no such terms exist for a couple in live-in.

The account of Sunil and Seema is the epitome of the allegedly stereotypical arranged marriage in India. There is a very clear demarcation of gender roles in the domestic and public spheres and everyone in the family adheres to these rules without question. Love might have developed

between the people over the years but the possibility of equality in the relationship is absent. The relationship confirms to all set norms of conjugal behaviour. However, it also rejects the notion that women are passive, powerless and victims of gendered normativity as Seema voices her opinions and is comfortable in doing so while negotiating with the gendered inequality in her marriage and family. In fact, she derives her identity and assumes that she will be respected if she is uncritical of inequality in the relationship. She believes there is a coherence and balance when the relationship is based in this way and seeks not to disturb it. This may also be accounted as agency. However, resistance to change or acceptance of a position of subordination may also be considered as agency.

From the narratives presented earlier, it is evident that women are active agents in marriage, instead of passive, subdued or powerless as is the Western perspective of Indian women (Leslie 1991). At the same time, married women may exercise their agency with different goals and actions than their unmarried counterparts. They may choose to perpetuate normative stereotypes of conjugal behaviour prescribed for women and derive their identity thus, or they may choose to restructure norms through their actions and reject notions of normative conjugality. This is rightly depicted from the accounts of Barkha and Seema who have created their sense of self deriving from their marital life. Therefore, the present study emphasises on presenting contexts where married Indian women (who are often projected as powerless victims of patriarchy) have exercised their agency to carve an identity for themselves in a patriarchal social structure. Thus, marriage promotes social asymmetry by setting forth limits of behaviour (Ortner 1984). The study of agency is employed to understand the process by which this asymmetry is replicated or restructured. In terms of marriage and live-in relationships, both may co-exist as structure and practice. Practice may influence the existing structure or the structure may be reproduced by

practice (Ortner 1984). At the heart of this process, is the individual trying to derive a sense of self. Therefore, the following discussion entails the depiction of agency of informants in live-in relationships as a complementary approach to study how practice reproduces structure after identifying how structure shapes practice (from the accounts of agency of married women). This gradual deinstitutionalization of marriage can be understood as “the weakening of the social norms that define people’s behavior in a social institution such as marriage” (Cherlin 2004). Cherlin further argues that when social change gives rise to new situations, actors do not depend on shared understandings but negotiate with the situations by finding new ways to act. This is a solution as well as a conflict (Cherlin 2004).

Live-in relationships as a means to achieve the sense of ‘self’

This section talks about the individual placed at the center stage and how the idea of the ‘self’ is derived for individuals in live-in relationships. The individual derives a sense of self always in relation to ‘the other’ (Mead 1934). In terms of individuals in live-in relationships, they derive their identity as opposed to those who are married. The ‘self’ therefore is a “reflexive project – a more or less continuous interrogation of past, present and future” (Giddens 1992:30). Individuals are also conscious subjects where they are reflexive about their own sense of self and their agency (Ortner 2005). Here, individuals in live-in relationships are subjects of globalisation and thus induced urban migration and this subjectivity has shaped the agency of the individuals. The following narratives may prove beneficial in realizing how live-in relationships promote reflexivity and provide a sense of self to the individuals who adopt them.

Sahil and Kushneet met as colleagues during their orientation programme of their company in 2014. Since it was a start-up that took care of logistics, it was a small firm, with practically

everyone knowing each other in the company. As freshers, both Sahil and Kushneet were often put on similar projects to help each other out on various issues and as a result, they were bound to spend time with each other a lot while at work. Sahil hails from an upper middle-class family in Surat in Gujarat while Kushneet is from an elite business family from Chandigarh, Punjab. Both of them migrated from their hometowns in search of a job after their post-graduation until they were selected for their present roles in Gurgaon (NCR). Sahil's elder sister was married to a wealthy business man and the marriage was arranged in the strict sense of the term, where the astrological compatibility of the couple was believed to be more important than personal or familial compatibility. However, the marriage ended in divorce in a few years. This incident played an important role in shaping the picture of marriage in Sahil's perspective. He does believe in marriage but he has a sense of disregard for the rituals and norms associated with Hindu marriage such as 'kundali milan'(astrological reckoning of compatibility as in the matching of horoscopes), the concept of 'kanyadaan' (a Hindu ritual where the father of the bride donates his virgin daughter to the groom) and the practice of dowry as a marriage payment. Helping his sister recover from the trauma of her earlier 'abusive marriage' made Sahil realise that at first, he did not want to enter into the institution of marriage. On a later thought, he felt even if he did, he would want the marriage to be on an equal footing with both he and his partner having an equal say in the relationship.

On the other hand, Kushneet hails from an orthodox Sikh joint family with her *dadaji* (paternal grandfather) as the head and her uncles as the second in command. Kushneet lost her father at a young age and it was her mother who was a strong sense of support throughout her formative years as a child. The role of her father was assumed by her *dadaji* who always wanted her to maintain an elite decorum; she was always corrected for her behaviour, was asked to talk a

certain way, walk a certain way and even sit in a manner appropriate for a girl. Therefore, Kushneet always longed for an independent life where she could live the way she wanted without being dictated on what to do and how to behave. She also has a particular outlook towards marriage that it inhibits personal freedom and choice as she has seen her mother compromise on many of her likes and dislikes to guard their honor in their joint family. Although her mother wanted to work, it was not allowed stating that the women of an elite family must not step out of home to work as it would be a shame for the men in the family that they could not provide for their late brother's family. So, Kushneet had in mind that she would not want to marry until she finds the right person of her choice and that she would be financially independent to support her mother and sister to live their dreams at least at a later stage in life.

Both Sahil and Kushneet migrated to Gurgaon for their job opportunity. At first, they were just friends and along with their other colleagues went out for lunch or dinner occasionally. Since, both of them worked together most of the time, they realised that their relationship had transitioned from friendship to a romantic relationship. At that time, Sahil was living with his roommates in a flat in suburban Gurgaon while Kushneet was staying at a relative's house. On asking the couple on what was the motive behind living together or who initiated the conversation, Kushneet says, "it felt like the most practical thing to do. We were spending most of our time together anyway while at work. Moreover, we were spending a lot of time on commute every day. So, we decided to stay close to the office to reduce our time spent on commuting every day and at the same time we got to spend time with each other while off work doing mundane things. We did not have to meet each other at a mall or at the cinema on a Saturday or Sunday. Instead, friends came over on the weekends and chilled at our place. I finally got the much needed 'me' space after so many years of staying under surveillance of

somebody. This might seem crazy, but I finally have a house that I can decorate the way I want, keep my bed the way I want and I always have for company the most lovable person, Sahil”. Sahil cites his own reasons why live-in relationship works for him. He says, “I have lived with room-mates since my engineering days and I have had enough. I always felt that I need my own space; and Kushneet also feels the same. So, it works for the two of us. I have also informed my parents and sister that I am living with her. They are not happy about it, but I cannot compromise on my life choices”. He adds, “This is how it is going to be, until we outgrow the relationship or we decide to get married one day. And I would like to say that we are not doing this to test our compatibility or not. There is nothing like testing compatibility. It either works or no. It is as simple as that. I am going to inform at home about my relationship with Sahil only when I am sure that we will get married”.

On asking what plans they have for future, both of them informed that they would want to pursue Business administration in the UK or Canada and are in the process of applying for their visas. Kushneet says, “I would love to have a career in Human Resources Management. That is my priority now. Sahil also wants to pursue a career in Analytics. Marriage does not even figure in our priorities right now. This is the best part of a live-in relationship. You are not bounded by responsibility. You are only responsible towards yourself and your relationship”.

Sahil and Kushneet’s views on live-in relationships and marriage can be extended to understanding the growing perception of the institution of marriage as a normative institution which culture imposes on individuals through the interviews of informants in both New Delhi and Bangalore. This is seen as a pressure and an inhibitive force on the exercise of the agency of the individual. Marriage is no more a milestone that has to be reached on the onset of a certain

age. Career and financial independence top the priority list of most urban Indians belonging to the middle and upper middle classes. Aspiring to move upwards in the class hierarchy and negotiating with the circumstances that come in between is the essence of the class struggle that these individuals go through. Marriage is therefore, replaced temporarily by live-in relationships that do not come in the way of exercising of this creative agency while aspiring to lead a certain progressive life. Here, live-in relationships bear an uncanny resemblance to the concept of “pure relationships” as envisaged by Giddens (1992). Pure relationships have been defined comprehensively by Giddens and the definition may be examined meticulously to understand live-in relationships in the Indian context most precisely.

“It refers to a situation where a social relation is entered into for its own sake, for what can be derived by each person from a sustained association with another; and which is continued only in so far as it is thought by both parties to deliver enough satisfactions for each individual to stay within it” (Giddens 1992, 58).

The definition aptly describes the nature of live-in relationships in the context of a global cultural economy where individuals like Kushneet and Sahil exercise their agency (which is in turn shaped by various social, economic and cultural aspects and processes) in forming live-in relationships. This relationship provide for one another and it sustains for as long as there is satisfaction and motivation for each individual in the relationship. This aspect of the temporariness of the relationship is pellucid to both individuals and they sub-consciously recognise and accept it before entering the relationship itself. In fact, the unboundedness is what seems appealing to individuals in a live-in relationship. Again, this is in no way critical of the permanency associated with marriage. It is a temporary alternative to marriage for those who are uncomfortable with the transactional, gender performative and ritualistic nature of marriage.

Although, the definition provided by Giddens may be misunderstood as extremely transactional in nature, talking of needs, benefits and satisfaction; the definition actually captures the essence of the dynamics involved in the way a relationship is construed itself in the context of a globalised culture. This is what he terms the “generic restructuring of intimacy” (Giddens 1992, 58). As individuals, both Sahil and Kushneet derive their sense of self from their ability to negotiate with marriage and its normativity.

Similarly, the following narrative also presents the contextuality of agency of informants in choosing conjugality outside the purview of marriage, restructuring intimacy and power relationships within the live-in relationship and then stepping back into the purview of marriage as an institution with a heightened sense of reflexivity (both of the individual and the relationship).

Divya Kasbekar and Ardhendhu Bhattacharjee were in a live-in relationship for four years before getting married in 2018. Divya is pursuing her PhD in Economics at the time of the interview while Ardhendhu worked for the ILO’s India Chapter. Divya and Ardhendhu met during a symposium hosted at Delhi University in 2014. Divya was a member of the organising committee of the symposium and Ardhendhu was a participant. Later, they met for lunch and dinner along with their friends for a couple of occasions such as Divya’s birthday and Arindham’s treat on getting his first job. A few months later, the couple decided to take their relationship to the next level by living together. Ardhendhu rented an apartment and asked Divya to move in with him vacating her University hostel accommodation. After two and half years of living in the apartment in South Delhi, Ardhendhu left to Sweden on a work assignment and Divya who happened to apply for a student exchange programme in a Nordic university was

offered the scholarship. The couple then lived in Sweden for a period of six months. Throughout this time, they were a strong sense of support to each other emotionally as well as financially as they were in a new country altogether. It is during this period that both Divya and Ardhendhu had to reveal to their parents that they were in a relationship because they had frequent video calls and it was not quite possible for each other to stay out of the phone frame while they were going about their work.

Initially, Divya's parents were very skeptical of the idea of live-in relationship as it is against "Indian culture". However, Divya quickly addressed their concerns stating the fact that she is very comfortable in her relationship with Ardhendhu and she feels an emotional connect with him especially because they are in a foreign country amongst strangers. Divya says, "It was a wonderful time for us, away from all the questions and the justifications we had to face while we were in India. Here, the landlord or the neighbours did not mind that we were in a live-in relationship. As soon as we got back home, we had to get married. Our families could no longer wait as they felt it was inappropriate for us to live together without getting married. We got engaged a couple of weeks after we returned from Sweden and in six months, we got married."

The couple wed in both the Maharashtra style for Divya's parents and in the Bengali style for Ardhendhu's family. The Marathi wedding took place in Pune and the Bengali wedding took place in Delhi as Ardhendhu's parents and extended family lives in Delhi. On attending the Bengali wedding in Delhi in December, a pompous celebration was witnessed. It was an evening event. The parents of the couple received guests and relatives while taking part in the rituals. It was not revealed to anyone other than the couple's parents that they were in a live-in relationship.

It was only told to the extended family and friends that the couple met while in college and fell in love and later decided to get married.

There was no sense of transition in both Divya or Ardhendhu before or after getting married, as they seemed to be on a similar equation in both contexts. Except for the event and the rituals, both agreed that there was no major change in how they felt in their relationship. Post marriage, families of the couple met once in a while, and there were visits from relatives on festivals or occasions. Their relationship prior to the marriage, helped them form a better perspective about marital life according to Divya. As a couple, they never gave themselves the tag of a live-in relationship. They felt it was just a natural phenomenon to want to stay together and did not want to make “a big deal” out of it as Ardhendhu puts his opinion across.

Divya and Ardhendhu’s narrative is suggestive again of how individuals negotiate with the norms associated with marriage as an institution. Here, two sets of agentic action is at play. On one hand, the couple decided to live-in together as a natural outcome of their relationship. They evaded marriage and the institutional baggage that comes along until they could and resorted to step into the institution when they felt it was necessary to hold on to other relationships as well. On the other hand, the families or the parents of the couple to be precise, assessed the situation with their children though they went against the norm, became assertive of their relationship though they did not approve of it first and came to terms with the entire situation. While Divya and Ardhendhu are subjects of globalisation, their parents are subjects of culture (normativity of arranged marriage). The wedding ceremonies both at Pune and Delhi were extravagant to say the least and this indicates how the parents of the couple wanted to normalise the relationship as if it were an arranged marriage.

Therefore, both contexts entail the “practical evaluative element of agency” where individuals create alternative ways of negotiating with norms in the context of novel situations that arise due to processes of modernisation and globalisation. The sense of self promotes reflexivity in individuals where the past, present and future is interrogated continuously by the individual to derive at a best suitable response to emerging situations.

Finally, this leads us to understanding live-in relationships in the Indian context as a liminal phase in the trajectory of marital decision making.

Live-in relationships as the ‘liminal’

The concept of liminality can be employed to understand the transition involved in live-in relationships. This can be answered when we look at the notion of structure and anti-structure as advocated by Victor Turner (1969) building on Van Gennep’s model of rites of passage. Turner looks at society not as static but as an outcome of various ‘processes’ unbounded where there is transition between fixed and floating boundaries. If society is too bound by normative judgments then there is no scope for innovation. ‘Communitas’ is the undifferentiated common aspect of living he equates with structure and then the anti-structure is the space provided by society that promotes innovation of an embedded individual to exercise their agency. Turner (1969) looks at this ‘liminal’ phase as an arena to express freedom and become reflexive about one’s own culture. The liminal phase caters to the individual’s emotional appeal when actors cannot depend on shared understandings but look for alternative trajectories of action. Thus, providing a space for reflexivity of reality, norms stand suspended in the liminal phase. While discussing the Isoma rites of the Ndembu of Zambia, he proposes the “tripartite diachronic structure” through which the balance of structure and anti-structure are maintained (Turner 1969). When live-in

relationships are looked at from the perspective of structure and anti-structure, we cannot help but notice the possible equation of live-in relationships as the 'liminal' phase of the structured *communitas* of the institution of marriage. Individuals separate themselves from the realm of hegemony of marriage, to the liminal phase of moving into live-in relationships where there is scope for reflexivity and an opportunity to exercise one's agency that is not so in the presence of normative structure. Here, the individual deals with gender, power, agency and reconstructs the idea of marriage. With the reorganization of existing structure, the individual either chooses to step in to *communitas* (that is if the individual feels that a live-in relationship cannot provide for legitimization of offspring that marriage can) or can look for more meaning and reflexivity in the liminal phase. This way, anything that is against the norm does not become a deviation but a creative expression of one's agency. This approach tries to explain the context for live-in relationships in Indian cities of New Delhi and Bangalore. The Figure 5.5 seeks to explain the trajectory of transition of live-in couples to the stage of marriage and others who are yet dealing with reorganization of the reality in their liminal zone. If we revisit Cherlin's (2004) alternatives of the future of marriage as an institution now, we will probably be able to position the present data in one or multiple trajectories. The first alternative would be a re-institutionalization of marriage which will be possible if there is a reversal of individualization to more belonging towards collective ethos and the restoration of the traditional family setting where there is a single breadwinner, and the woman is responsible for child-rearing and homemaking. This cannot be true in the current context as there has not been complete deinstitutionalization of marriage in Indian society in the first place for it to be re-institutionalized. The second alternative is the current situation that is prevailing; that is marriage is deinstitutionalized but it remains operative and distinctive. This aptly describes the current situation where a transitional phase is

in operation. It does not become just another form of relationship but remains the most prestigious one. Finally, the third alternative he suggests is something of the likes of “fading away of marriage” and its replacement by cohabitation or “pure relationships” which seems a far-fetched reality and almost impossible in the context of New Delhi and Bangalore. The Figure 5.5 depicts the statistics of 50 couples who have married after being in a live-in relationship, who continue to be in a live-in relationship at least over the last two years at the time of the interview and who are considering marriage in the near future.

Figure 5.7 Transition from live-in relationship to marriage

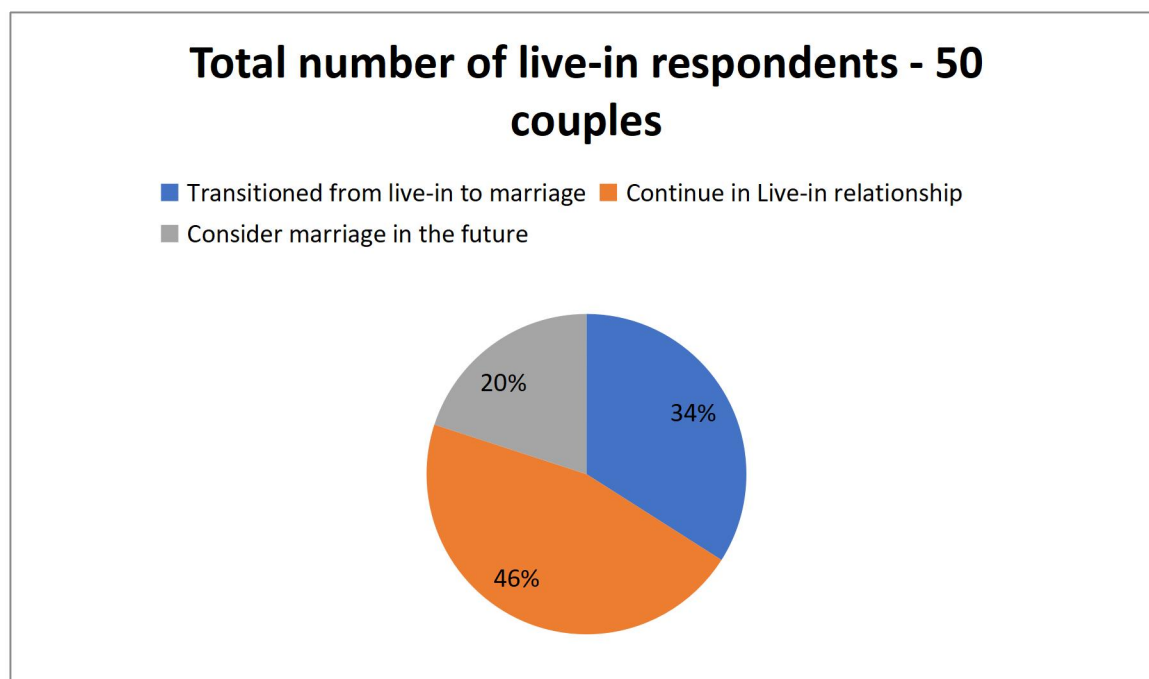


Figure 5.7 is suggestive of the couples who are in a live-in relationship, and in the liminal phase in terms of marital decision making. In this phase, the individuals do not cease to become part of the society but are in a reflective zone. Here, the couple does not live according to already pronounced norms or structure associated with the institution of marriage. They reflect and reorganise the idea of marriage and make necessary changes that suit their case and then decide

whether to enter or exit the institution with their newfound perspective. Existing patterns of conjugality (which are discussed in the subsequent chapter) are suspended and re-negotiated with. Post this phase, individuals are re-integrated into the structure by entering the institution of marriage, as can be seen from Figure 5.5, which is the ideal situation that is expected out of them. Couples who are considering marriage may also be assumed to be leaning towards the re-integration into structure but with a different perspective about marriage and conjugality that works best for them. The couples who are in the liminal phase of being in a live-in relationship may or may not transition into a married couple depending on their choice and circumstances. Therefore, from the data furnished in Figure 5.5, it can be considered that live-in relationships in India may not be an alternative or indistinguishable from marriage like in developed capitalist Western countries such as Sweden, USA or Britain but a liminal phase that is conducive to promote reflexivity regarding marriage and marital choices among individuals who enter them.

Agency as a methodological approach has accounted for many social and cultural phenomena in social science research. In anthropological theory, the practice approach has been credited to studying social asymmetry as a complementary approach to studying structured systems. Therefore, agency as a theoretical approach has been applied in this chapter to understand live-in relationships as an aspect of asymmetrical phenomena by a complementary analysis of a structured institution such as marriage. Live-in relationships analysed thus, can be envisaged as an interactive response of individuals to changes occurring in wider socio- cultural setting brought about by processes of globalisation and modernisation. Some of these changes are the increasing age at marriage, changing post marital residence pattern (a strong preference for neolocal residence), increasing acceptance of courtship before marriage and access to effective contraception and new reproductive technologies. While agency is an individual's decision-

making ability, it is also suggestive of the embeddedness of the individual in his/her culture. As the ethnographic data from this chapter suggests, agency does not necessarily mean freedom or liberation from structure or norms but it may contribute to the enriching of norms by restructuring or negotiating with existing ones. When viewed in such a way, live-in relationships can be comprehended as a “reflexivity of the self” of individuals adopting as subjects of a global cultural economy.

Notes

i The concept of envisaging agency as a whole and the embedded temporal aspects can be well perceived from the following excerpt. “Theoretically, our central contribution is to begin to reconceptualize human agency as a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past (in its habitual aspect), but also oriented toward the future (as a capacity to imagine alternative possibilities) and toward the present (as a capacity to contextualize past habits and future projects within the contingencies of the moment). The agentic dimension of social action can only be captured in its full complexity, we argue, if it is analytically situated within the flow of time” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998).

ii This definition calls for three different constituent elements of agency: iteration, projectivity and practical evaluation (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). “The Iterational element - It refers to the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, as routinely incorporated in practical activity, thereby giving stability and order to social universe and helping to sustain identities ,interactions, and institutions over time.

The projective element - *Projectivity* encompasses the imaginative generation by actors of possible future trajectories of action, in which received structures of thought and action maybe creatively reconfigured in relation to actors’ hopes, fears, and desires for the future.

The practical evaluative element - It entails the capacity of actors to make practical and normative judgments among alternative possible trajectories of action, in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of presently evolving situations.” (Emirbayer and Mische, 1998).

iii Cohabitors, compared with engaged and already-married couples, have lower levels of commitment to marrying their current partners and it has been claimed that this may indicate that cohabitation will significantly reduce the marriage rate (Lewis et al 1977). Such a consequence of cohabitation seems unlikely, since the difference in commitment levels seems to be due primarily to cohabitators' lack of intention to marry their current partners and not to any difference in their desire to eventually marry (Newcomb and Bentler 1980).

Chapter Six

Summary and Conclusion

The study of live-in relationships in New Delhi- NCR and Bangalore is a qualitative research to comprehend live-in relationships in its entirety in the urban context among educated, financially independent and middle and upper-middle class individuals. The objectives of the study primarily have been framed on this premise, firstly, to understand the prevalence, perception and factors that motivate live-in relationships; secondly, to situate live-in relationships in the urban Indian context as an outcome of the post-globalised cultural economy; thirdly, to place live-in relationships alongside marriage in an attempt at comparison to identify emerging patterns in both types of relationships. Finally, the aspect of creative agency of individuals in negotiating with the institution of marriage and marital choices has been studied looking at live-in relationships as an expression of agency in marital choices.

Both the cities of New Delhi-NCR and Bangalore have great significance in terms of historical and administrative aspects. Both cities also have a major number of migrant population and settled natives. This makes both the cities ideal places to conduct fieldwork to evaluate perceptions regarding the dynamics of an institution such as marriage. Both the cities have a considerable population of individuals working for world renowned Multi-national Corporations and IT companies in various domains of expertise. It is this truly cosmopolitan nature of these cities that provides an interesting landscape for motivating dynamics of social institutions such as kinship, marriage and family. Both cities also exhibit characteristics of heterogenetic transformation, negotiating between existing and emerging structures. Although progress may be associated with urbanity, actual progress is the measure of agency exhibited by individuals in the

midst of social structure. The city is only an avenue for expressing this agency. Once the landscape is determined, it is the 'ethnoscape' that must be enlisted to conduct ethnographic enquiry.

Aspects of age, sex, educational background, professional profiles, annual income, cultural background and migration status of informants were operative in forming an ethnographic profile of the study. Educational background is suggestive of an aspect of homogeneity in the sample where all informants are at least graduates with post-graduates and PhD's in considerable numbers. Similarly, professional profiles also suggest a measure of autonomy in terms of economic aspects. The religious affiliation of individuals has been recorded to see how religion shapes ideas of marriage and family. The practice or non-practice of religion determines how the individual responds to notions of marriage, kinship and family. A rise in the number of agnostic individuals has been a major finding in this mapping of religion as a factor of influence. Globalisation, exposure to world cultures and liberalisation of thoughts may be the causal factors for this change. Finally, another aspect of the ethnoscape has been the status of migration. A prominent finding has been that 85% of informants in live-in relationships are migrants in the cities suggesting that migration entails not only physical movement but provides space for reflection of self and expression of self-choice. Gender, region and political outlook are operative dimensions of the cultural background of informants that greatly inform the creative agency of informants to choose live-in relationships. Therefore, education, economic independence and migration to urban settings are the major characteristic aspects that motivate the informants to choose conjugal life outside the purview of marriage. This background has provided a greater understanding of the socio-economic and cultural milieu of informants to move ahead and study the set objectives.

The emergence of 'pure relationships' as an alternative to marriage has been theorised in the Western context. The changing nature of intimacy itself has been noted that is inclusive of reflexivity of self as well as being free from the performative aspects of gender. However, the importance of marriage has not diminished but is only impeded temporarily in the midst of live-in relationships in the Indian context. From the perceptions recorded, it can be deduced that marriage has not been deinstitutionalised in the Indian context due to the emergence of live-in relationships, but is only complemented by live-in relationships. Questioning conventional norms surrounding marriage may be regarded as one of the major factors of the emergence and sustenance of live-in relationships. Sharing economic responsibilities such as rent and other domestic expenses may be termed another important reason. Live-in relationships serve as a sense of reassurance for people who are commitment phobic while providing the similar love, care and emotional belonging of a conjugal relationship. For couples belonging to inter-caste and inter-faith identities, live-in relationship provide solace by helping them imagine conjugality outside marriage as conventional marriage norms do not recognise their relationship.

The major gaps in perception of live-in relationships by individuals in these relationships and the wider society arise in few parameters. While those in live-in relationships do not essentially see them as a Western centric phenomena, those who are not in live-in perceive them as an influence of Westernization, globalisation and migration to urban areas. While individuals in a live-in relationship suggest that it is the relationship that matters in providing love and companionship, those not in live-in relationships believe that live-in relationships are promiscuous in nature and exist only to encourage pre-marital sexual relationships. While liberalisation of sexuality has opened up the discourse on sexuality and its expression, individuals are comfortable with pre-marital sex and accepting partners with a past. This liberalisation is believed by informants who

are not in a live-in relationship to deconstruct existing structures and norms. This liberalisation of sexuality, emergence and predominance of live-in relationships can be attributed to the globalised cultural economy that has introduced these dynamics in the institution of marriage and marital decision making through various dimensions. These dimensions are media induced normalisation of liberal sexuality, technological culture such as the introduction of dating applications, ideological impetus such as the ideas of liberty, freedom of choice, sexual expressionism and finally liberal economic policies.

However, one aspect on which there is congruence in perception between both sets of informants is the aspect of legitimisation of children as a distinguishable function of marriage from live-in relationships. The gaps in perception therefore, can be attributed to the vagueness and temporariness associated with live-in relationships. This does not go well with the permanency associated with marriage. Sexual relationships outside marriage are viewed as a perversion by the Indian society. Therefore, individuals in a live-in relationship are expected to enter the institution of marriage eventually. Pre-marital sex cannot be justified in the pretext of testing compatibility. After a cautious analysis and after delineating live-in relationships from other inter-personal romantic relationships, live-in relationships may be defined as the pre-marital cohabitation by unmarried heterosexual individuals who wish to experience conjugality outside the purview of the institution of marriage. Rather than viewing live-in relationships as 'pure relationships' entirely existing for the satisfaction of the bio-psychic needs of the couple, they may be viewed as a stage of liminality which is a consensus between what the society wants (structure) and what the individuals want for themselves (agency). Once the couple makes this negotiation with the institution of marriage and create a relationship on their own terms, they seem to be re-joining structure as married individuals.

On comparing marriage and live-in relationship, it is noticeable that conjugal behaviour prescribes to follow and perpetuate gendered performativity whereas live-in relationships are relatively free of this performativity. While endogamy of caste is a characteristic feature of marriage across regions and religions In India, live-in relationships help individuals of inter-identities imagine conjugality through them. Marriage often involves transactions for it be legitimised such as dowry and bridewealth while this is absent in live-in relationships. While marriage is the founding element for the formation of family, live-in relationships also provide certain similar functions as family. These functions are economic support, satisfaction of sexual needs, provision of psychological and emotional care and support. However, one function that cannot be accounted for is the socialisation of the children and care for the elderly. Therefore, marriage as a requisite for child bearing is a common perception that has been expressed by all informants.

Certain parameters can be viewed as the expression of agency with respect to marital choices. Increasing age at marriage is one such expression with respect to delaying or postponing entry into the institution of marriage. This instance helps us understand resistance to marriage as also agency. Another instance is the increasing preference for neolocal residence as opposed to patrilocal or virilocal residence patterns. This is also suggestive of the increasing notion of reflexivity of self against reproduction of normativity. Increasing courtship before marriage and its acceptance and encouragement by wider society to rule out incompatibility is also a change that directs towards a future trajectory of acceptance of live-in relationships as well.

Another avenue which has greatly informed agency with respect to choosing live-in relationships for individuals is the access to new reproductive technology and effective contraception. As a

result of effective contraception and its accessibility, sexuality has been freed from reproduction. As new reproductive technologies and assisted reproduction have facilitated conception without sexual activity, expression of sexuality need not be in the bounds of marriage and can be imagined outside of marriage as well. Therefore, both these aspects of reproductive technologies have greatly informed agency of individuals with respect to choosing marriage or live-in relationships independent of the expression of sexuality. While agency is an individual's decision-making ability, it is also suggestive of the embeddedness of the individual in his/her culture. As the ethnographic data from the previous chapters suggests, agency does not necessarily mean freedom or liberation from structure or norms but it may contribute to the enriching of norms by restructuring or negotiating with existing ones. When viewed in such a way, live-in relationships can be comprehended as a "reflexivity of the self" of individuals adopting live-in relationships as subjects of a global cultural economy.

In conclusion, live-in relationships can be envisaged as an interactive response to emerging socio-cultural situations in the context of globalisation and modernisation processes. They are one step closer towards marriage but not against the institution of marriage. Live-in relationships are a constructive critique of marriage as an institution while also recognising marriage as an important and necessary institution. Therefore, live-in relationships in actuality can be seen as a complementary approach to marriage rather than its structural opposite. Live-in relationships are intermediary *liminal* phases which prepare individuals for the *communitas* inherent in marriage which is the ultimate expression of conjugality.

However, live-in relationships transform the nature of intimacy and power in marriage based on the articulation of love and desire rather than norms and customary performative roles. Moreover,

live-in relationships are the truest expression of the self and an avenue for reflexivity. Individuals in live-in relationships do not oppose marriage but are against the gendered normativity and performativity imposed by the institution of marriage. If live-in relationships are viewed as modernity in contrast to a traditional institution such as marriage, our perspective becomes a linear model of the dynamics of marriage or family. In reality, this is a process and globalisation, and resultant urbanisation are catalysts for this process to occur. Live-in relationships and marriage are not opposite ends of a continuum but independent choices of individuals. Agency of individuals gains prominence over norms and customary practices. Live-in relationships can be regarded as an expression of agency of individuals who are subjects of globalisation. The problem arises when creative agency of individuals is misunderstood for a lack or degradation of morality. Therefore, there is a need to delink morality and rights and treat live-in relationships as stable independent relationships and not just as “marriage like”.

The present study contributes to the understanding of a dynamic institution such as marriage that is going through enormous changes in a developing South-Asian nation like India caught between traditional social structure and outlook on the one hand and a liberal globalised outlook on the other. Since the study is only representative of heterosexual unmarried couples, it is not entirely accommodative of the lived experiences of various other sexual minorities in India. This study could be expanded to include the experiences of the LGBTQ+ communities. Although homosexuality has been decriminalised in Indian Law, the social stigma associated with identification or expression of desire of alternative sexual orientations apart from heterosexuality, is still rampant with individuals being ostracised from kin groups and communities. Therefore, like individuals in live-in relationships, the impact of globalisation on the expressionism of sexuality could be further examined in urban and rural populations.

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APPENDIX I - INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	☐
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	☐
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	☐
6.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	☐
7.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	☐
8.	Select only one of the following: • I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. • I do not want my name used in this project.	☐ ☐
9.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	☐

Participant:

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

Researcher:

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE (INFORMANTS IN LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIP)

General Information

- Age
- Sex
- Native place
- State and city of Domicile
- Religion
- Married/Unmarried/Live-in relationship
- Educational Qualification
- Parents Occupation

Attitude towards marriage and family (with respect to family of origin)

- The predominant form of marriage and type of marriage payment in your community.
- The ideal age for marriage in your community.
- The predominant type of post-marital residence in your community.
- Whether courtship before marriage or interaction with spouse before marriage is a common practice in informant's family.
- The informant's perception of what constitutes a family.
- The number of people in the informant's family.
- The head of the household.
- Gender roles within the family
 - Who does the laundry, dishes and cooking?
 - Who bears the financial expenses of the family (rent, grocery, medicines etc)?
 - Who takes care of children in the family?
 - Is there a differentiation of domestic chores with respect to gender

Attitude towards live-in relationship

- The informant's idea of a live-in relationship
- Whether the informant has been married before.
- Whether the informant was or is in a live-in relationship.
- How exactly has the informant met his/her partner?
- Duration of the relationship/ marriage.

- The informant's perception of how a live-in relationship is different from marriage or if it is similar.
- Whether the informant makes it a point to tell family and friends that he/she is in a live-in relationship.
- What term does the informant use while referring to his/her partner.
- Whether the informant's parents approve of his/her relationship with live-in partner.
- Whether society approves of the relationship
 - Relatives, friends (wider social network)
 - Most important support group for the informant as a couple and why (family, friends or other).
 - Did you ever have any problems or issues because your relationship is not legally or ritually recognized? (denied a space on rent, denied entry to a public or religious place etc)
 - Maid
- Whether the informant is a practitioner of his/her religion
- Particular guidelines of conjugality as propagated by informant's religion.
- If these tenets are in conflict with existing relationship/ in marriage.
- How does the informant deal with these?
- Whether the informant shares rent or other economic expenses with live-in partner.
 - Who does the laundry, dishes and cooking?
 - Who bears the financial expenses (rent, grocery, medicines etc)?
 - Is there a differentiation of domestic chores with respect to gender
 - Would you support your partner in a major financial crisis?
- The major reasons why the informant chose a live-in relationship over marriage.
 - Is it a casual decision or an informed decision?
 - Is it because you do not believe in the institution of marriage?
 - Is it because you do not support or approve of a formal system of marriage payment such as bride price or dowry?
 - Why did you choose a live-in relationship with your lover when you can live separately and still be in love?
- The informant's perception of a live-in relationship
 - What could be the reason why couples engage in such relationships?
 - Could it be a fad?
 - Do you consider these relationships as an influence of modern or western lifestyle?
 - Do live-in relationships provide testing ground for marriage?

- Have they become acceptable as an alternative to marriage or have they become indistinguishable from marriage?
 - What kind of problems live-in couples may face in society?
- Whether the informant would ever like to take the relationship forward, i.e. live-in relationship culminating in marriage.
- Whether the informant believes that marriage is necessary for child-bearing.

APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE 2

General Information

- Age
- Sex
- Native place
- State and city of Domicile
- Religion
- Married/Unmarried

Attitude towards marriage and family (with respect to family of origin)

- The predominant form of marriage and type of marriage payment in your community.
- The ideal age for marriage in your community.
- The predominant type of post-marital residence in your community.
- The informant's perception of what constitutes a family.
- The number of people in the informant's family.
- The head of the household.
- Gender roles within the family
 - Who does the laundry, dishes and cooking?
 - Who bears the financial expenses of the family (rent, grocery, medicines etc)?
 - Who takes care of children in the family?
 - Is there a differentiation of domestic chores with respect to gender

Attitude towards live-in relationships in general

- Whether the informant is married or unmarried.
- Whether the informant is single or is in a relationship.
- Whether the informant is aware of live-in relationships
- The informant's perception of a live-in relationship
 - What could be the reason why couples engage in such relationships?
 - Could it be a fad?
 - Do you consider these relationships as an influence of modern or western lifestyle?
 - Do live-in relationships provide testing ground for marriage?

- Have they become acceptable as an alternative to marriage or have they become indistinguishable from marriage?
 - What kind of problems live-in couples may face in society?
- Whether the informant approves or disapproves of live-in relationships with reasons.
- The informant's perception of children born to live-in couples.
- Whether the informant would choose to encourage or discourage live-in relationships.
- Would the informant ever lease or rent his space to a live-in couple.
- Whether the informant believes that all live-in relationships should culminate in marriage.

The reasons why these relationships might work or fail according to the informant.