The Hindu Family

Lena Edlund*

DRAFT – Please do not circulate or attribute to

March 20, 2025

Abstract

Among the four "big" family forms – the Hindu, the Confucian, the Muslim, and the Christian – the status of women has been particularly low in the Hindu family. Why? The reason, this chapter argues, is that the Hindu family was essentially a (patrilineal) Tribal family, modified for the caste system; the two combined doubly marginalizing women.

The chapter provides a simple model of dowry payments (negative bride price) and sex choice under son preference in a three-caste setting allowing for hypergamy. Under realistic assumptions, the top caste has only sons who marry daughters from the middle caste who pay dowry. The middle caste has both sons and daughters, but a surplus of sons. Further, both sons and daughters pay to marry. Sons pay a bride price to marry daughters from the bottom caste. Daughters pay dowry and marry sons from the top caste. Lastly, the bottom caste has balanced or female sex ratios, some daughters marry up, the balance marries sons from their own caste. Thus, there is bride price at the bottom and dowry at the top, and sex ratios vary with status

*This research has not received any research support and I have no financial relationships or other potential conflicts to disclose.

(the top being more male). The model illustrates that while deselection of daughters co-vary with dowry payments, the relationship is not causal. Both are driven by the low status afforded women in the caste system.

Content

1 Introduction

2 The Caste System

3 Family

3.1 A Tribal Family

- Unilieal and segmentary
- Gentile exogamy
- Endogamy in the jati
- Arranged marriage
- Divorce
- Ancestor worship
- Adoption
- Agnatic inheritance
- The Widow

3.2 Non-Tribal Features

- Monogamy
- Hypergamy
- Female infanticide

4 A toy model of hypergamy, dowry, and female infanticide

5 Discussion

5.1 Violence

5.2 Persistence of Tradition

1 Introduction

This chapter will discuss the "traditional" Hindu family. That is not the family "on the books," the family stipulated by the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 and its successive amendments. Rather, it is the family that went with the caste system and, legislation to the contrary, continues to influence the lived reality in India today. That said, I will use past tense when describing this family, as it is not the family of the Republic of India.

The Hindu family can be hard to separate from its setting, the caste system. As pointed out by Service [1975], while a typical progression in social evolution might be band-tribe-chiefdom-state, an alternative trajectory is band-tribe-chiefdom-caste system, where the caste system is an outgrowth of the chiefdom. In the Introduction I argued that the former is the direction of the chiefdom that results if the family, instead of reforming, stayed tribal. As a(n advanced) version of the chiefdom, the caste system has a lower ceiling than the the state. Elsewhere on Eurasia, competitive pressures drove societies towards state formation, but on the subcontinent, shielded by the Himalayas, the caste system maintained its grip on society for most of the 2nd millennium CE.

In other words, the Hindu family remained at its core a Tribal family. Substitute caste for tribe and the Hindu family, endogamous in the caste, and exogamous in the gotra, emerges. However, the caste system distilled and magnified certain features common enough in the (patrilineal) Tribal family. For instance, brides were not only young, they were pre-pubescent; a woman not only served one husband at a time, but one husband in her lifetime; sons were not only more valued than daughters, they delivered their fathers from hell; daughters were not only supposed to marry up, but were rather killed than married to a peer, not to mention down, etc.

To understand this tendency towards the extreme, we need to look to the caste system, notably its ideologically staked hierarchy topped by a priestly caste, an order that required insulation from the military or economic power of the warriors or merchants, as well as political power.

Therefore, to discuss the Hindu family beyond a descriptive accounting of its attributes and variations thereof, the economic and political history of the subcontinent needs to be engaged, however cursorily. This is of course true of the other family forms discussed in this book, indeed that is its thesis.

Yet, it is particularly true of the Hindu family.

A discussion of the caste system is also required in order to fix which Hindu family we will be talking about. There is not one family, and infinite variations makes generalizations difficult, or as Joan Robinson allegedly quipped – "Whatever you can rightly say about India, the opposite is also true."

We shall mainly be concerned with the brahmin family, not because it is necessarily modal, but because it is normative and what is typically meant by the Hindu family. Still, it should be remembered that it is the family of the caste system's apex creature. Sometimes this meant that the brahmin family was emulation by other castes, sometimes it meant the opposite; for right-of-way is by necessity scarce, *Quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi* [Gods may do what cattle may not].

In short, this Hindu (brahmin) family, is what one might expect from the top (patrilineal) tribe in a pyramid of inter-connected tribes. Notably it was endogamous, but also hypergamous and treated women little better than preferably gifted slaves. It was essentially monogamous, a fact that may be attributed to the brahmins being a priestly caste, i.e., parasitic and therefore wanting to control its numbers.[1] The religious basis for the hierarchy bears on the emphasis on axiomatic status hierarchy, i.e., an order impervious to wealth, military power, or achievement.

Many aspects of the caste system is no more. Formally abolished in 1947, occupational choice has largely been freed from caste restrictions [Milner, 1994]. The formerly "polluting" castes are allowed to share public amenities, including water. Still, to this day, most marriages are arranged in conformity with caste rules. While marriage by individual consent is guaranteed by law, "love marriage" remains the marriage form in need of a qualifier.

OVERVIEW – TBA

[1] Wrote Bouglé [1971, page 21] (circa 1800): "A pinch of the cow-dung ash with which he marks his brow is an inestimable gift; his curse is petrifying, his blessing will save. 63 Not all Brahmans lead this royal life but the greater part live at the expense of other castes. In principle the Brahman should live upon the alms of others. If you ask him for something he will reply: 'Get along with you', for he is made to receive and not to give."

2 The Caste System

As perhaps all systems of social organization, the caste system was a system of rule.[2] As is common in chiefdoms, religion assumed an important rule. A theocracy, the caste system presented the natural order from the point of view of brahmanical Hinduism (brahmanism), a strand of Hinduism that stresses the supremacy of the brahmin caste [Bouglé, 1971]. Randall Collins described Hinduism as not just a religion but as a "a full-scale social complex" [Collins, 1998, page 187]. Followers of this religion are often called Hindu, although the term, an exonym, was originally used by Muslims to denote the subcontinent's non-Muslim inhabitants generally.

Another exonym, caste,[3] was used in two related but different ways: *varna* and *jati*.

Varna. The caste system is often expressed in terms of *varna* (sanscrit for color). There are four varnas: the brahmins (priests), the kshatriyas (warriors), the vaishyas (peasants and artisans), the shudras (laborers and servants). In addition to these four, there is a miscellaneous, but numerous, group of outcastes formerly referred to as pariahs, untouchables, or depressed castes. The euphemistic "Harijan" (children of God) was popularized by Gandhi. Other terms are the more blunt "Dalit" (crushed, oppressed), or the bureaucratic Scheduled Castes [Roy, 2017].

The four varnas were first mentioned in the last (and more recent) of the books of the Rig Veda in an oft-quoted verse: "From his mouth came forth the Brahmins; and of his arms were Rajanya made; from his thighs came the Vaishyas; and his feet gave birth to Sudras." Later Vedas would also mention the varnas, but it would not be until the mid-1st century BCE that the varnas would assume their strongly normative and hierarchical meaning. While the term caste is often used for varna, class might be a passable substitute. The ancient texts speak of varnas and they have remained fixed at the above four.

Jati. Caste proper, however, was referred to as *jati*, a regional or more localized group commonly endogamous, commensal, and craft-exclusive, to use the definition of Basham [1959, page 148]. Unlike varnas, jati referred to a fluid entity that transformed through fissure or aggregation. While jati is sometimes referred to as subcaste, two jatis can be referred to as

[2]The original title of Bouglé's work was "Essai sur le régime des castes."

[3]From the Portuguese word casta which means class or un-mixed.

caste and sub-caste, the sub-caste deriving from or being part of the caste. What is said of caste applies to the sub-caste, that is, the rules of endogamy, commensalism, etc., bind at the level of the sub-caste [Dumont, 1970, page 174].

A very compressed time line for the caste system would note that it rose in the mid-1st millennium BCE in the Gangetic plain of northern India as one of many forms of social organization vying for relevance [Thapar, 1995]. It traces it roots to the Vedic period (1500-500 BCE) but only reached hegemonic status under the Gupta Empire (c. 240-580 CE) when it was employed as a form of religious feudalism – geographic expansion was traded for village-level power devolution as the state resorted to land grants to pay its way, a process that picked up in the 4th and 5th century CE [Sharma, 1984, page 31].

Its hold already attenuated, the Gupta empire was much weakened by the 5th and 6th century Hun onslaught. In the anarchy of the post-Gupta period, the caste system gained on the competition. The Buddhist monasteries lost their patronage, and there was a marked de-urbanization and decline in trade (Kosambi [1965], Sharma [1965], Sharma [1984]). The latter can be seen in the demonetization that followed the disintegration of the Gupta empire. Between the 7th and the 10th century, no gold coins were issued and other coins were scarce [Sharma, 1984, pages 32].

It was in this "medieval" period (between the Guptas and Muslim rule) that many of the "immutable" features of the caste system appeared. "Professional castes originate from the 5th century A.D. and that led to the decline in economic and technical progress, to parasitic use of economic surplus and social stagnation" [Thakur, 1981, page 319]. "The coconut, now to be found in every Hindu ceremony and ritual, was rather poorly known in many parts of India before the sixth century A.D. This provides a useful comment upon 'timeless and immutable' Indian customs" Kosambi [1965, page 189].

This is also when the Jajmani system appeared, the system whereby lower castes were essentially enserfed to serve the local upper castes, each village operating in near-autarky as a medieval demesne, except ruled not by an aristocratic family but by the local brahmin caste often in alliance with the land-owning caste, when the two did not coincide [Sharma, 1965, Hershman,

1981].

For most of the 2nd millennium CE, the subcontinent was under non-Hindu rule, first Muslim, then European, but the caste system remained. While the colonizers ruled from the towns, the villages were ceded to brahmin administrative control, thereby making them symbols of "Hindu India." In 1806, Thomas Munro famously likened the Indian village to a "little republic" and India as a "mass of such republics" [Jaffe, 2015, page 209]. Later, Mahatma Gandhi famously declared that "the future of India lies in its villages." But as Bouglé [1971, pages 26-27] noted, even the village was fractured as "the caste system has divided Hindu society into a considerable number of small opposed societies."

2.1 Status-based Hierarchy

One way to characterize the caste system is as a chiefdom of tribes paying tribute according to their position in the pecking order. But instead of each tribe occupying a distinct geography, the caste system is collapsed in space. If tribes spread in space like cookies on a cookie sheet; castes were arranged vertically, each stack its own self-regulating universe of exploitation.

As essentially a system of exploitation, the "tribes" in a caste system relate to one another in a hierarchical fashion. The lower castes, as everywhere, were indigent. While poverty is its own bane, in the caste system the poor were also lawless and axiomatically dirty, see ritual pollution below. Social mobility was not a thing.

This method of extraction required there to be no exits, no alternatives, no towns to escape to or virgin land to occupy, no king to appeal to, no arms to take up. Thus the caste system is predicated on the absence of alternative sources of authority. In the caste system, caste status is status [Milner, 1994]. It is ascriptive, thus primitive and impervious to individual achievements.

It is true that a caste's status could change, but it was a slow process (could be several generations), and tellingly, it was not by individual achievements, but by the group's emulation of brahmin conduct (regarding family, diet, occupation, etc.), distance to the brahmin caste being the measure of social status, wrote Thapar [2014, page 34]:

> Caste as the dominant organizational structure of Indian society was not the rigid, frozen system that we have been made to believe at least at the upper levels. It evolved over time, changed with reference to historical changes and adjusted to these. What was constant was the theoretical and ideological framework which it carried and which enabled the upper strata to control the rest.

With caste as the unit of observation, the caste subsumes the individual, and an individual's status is that of his or her caste's. Further, caste essentially being tribe, it is clear that status is ascriptive, that is determined by birth, as an individual is born into a caste (tribe).

2.2 Theocracy

The chiefdom leans heavily on religiously sanctioned status stratification. As the chiefdom develops into a kingdom or state, a separation between secular and religious authority typically occurs, with the religious authority taking a back seat. For instance, while Muslim rulers since the Abbasids styled themselves defenders of the faith, they were essentially military men. The same could be said of Medieval Christian kings.

The caste system, harking back to the more primitive and often theocratic chiefdom, retained the religious connection, to the point that observance of the caste system may have been the principal way in which bramanical Hinduism, or brahmanism, manifested, wrote Bouglé [1971, pages 52, 55-56]:

> The uncontested superiority of this class [brahmin caste] is then one of the constituent principles of social organization in India; it has even been said that it is the most sure characteristic of Hinduism.
>
> [...]
>
> from the moment we try to define the true religion of the Hindus in dogmatic terms, we are acutely embarrassed; we note that it lacks an orthodoxy, that it is defined by its rites rather than its dogmas, by practices rather than ideas, and that finally, *respect for the Brahman united with observance of caste custom, is the essence of Hinduism.*

[emphasis added]

Reference to the Vedas, the doctrines of caste duty and reincarnation, and the notions of ritual purity and pollution upheld the caste hierarchy. Reference to Vedas, ancient religious scriptures, afforded the brahmins privileged status; caste duty and reincarnation justified the social order; and ritual purity and pollution amplified the social distance between the castes.

Religious Law Religious law draws its authority from the Vedas, e.g., the Parashara Smriti, Chapter 8:

> The institutes of law form the car on which the Brahman mounts; the Veda is the sword which he wields; whatsoever he says is to be taken as the highest rule of law,
>
> If four or three Brahmans, whose knowledge of the Veda is thorough and complete, unite in expounding a rule of law, — the exposition is to be taken as the law to be followed; — not what is declared by a thousand men of a different character.

But the Vedas are hymns and contain very little of value pertaining to the dispensing of justice. Therefore, the main function of invoking the Vedas was to give brahmins the authority to act as judges and lawmakers. Accordingly, wrote Kosambi [1965, page 173]:

> The brahmin never troubled to record and publish the caste laws he defended. The basis for a broad, general common law on the principles of equality or like the Roman *ius gentium* was lost; crime and sin stand hopelessly confused, while juristic principles are drowned in an amazing mass of religious fable which offers ridiculous justification for any stupid observance.

The law being what the "good" and "Veda-knowing" people of the community (viz. brahmins) say it was – a "realist" or "radically empirical" approach to law legal "theory" [Davis, 2006, page 293] – frustrated the British. In an attempt to obtain a better grasp, the British settled on The Book of Manu as the Hindu equivalent to English Common Law,

and commissioned a translation undertaken by Sir William Jones, a judge in British India and polyglot. Famously, the project lead to the discovery of what is now known as the Indo-European language family.

Varnashrama-Dharma Key to the caste system is the notion that duties are owed according to ones station (varna) – varnashrama-dharma. (In addition to varna, appropriate duties depend on the person's stage in the life-cycle (ashrama).)

Analogizing to the human body, the brahmins are the head and therefore are tasked with seeing and talking. The kshatriyas are the arms and should defend. The vaishyas are the belly (or thighs) and provide the material support. Last and least, the shudras are the legs (or feet) and carry the afore mentioned groups.

The importance of varna and varnashrama-dharma became stressed in the second half of the 1st millennium BC, as its teachings of obedience aligned with the growth of a more stratified society [Sharma, 2007].

Reincarnation The doctrine of reincarnation both encouraged conformity with caste duties, and justified inequities. A low status today was the result of failings in past lives. The bug living in ordure may have in a previous life been a brahmin who let his daughter stay unmarried past puberty. A woman in this life could have been a sinful man in the past. Those toiling today are expiating a sin in a past life, hidden by the amnesia of death, but no less just than the criminal sentenced handed down to the person found guilty. The Bhagavad Gita stresses the duty to act in accordance with *dharma*, the sacred Law. What that would be, conveniently, was articulated by brahmins [Thapar, 1966, page 134].

This system was a system for men. Women should assist their husbands. If they did so successfully, they could be reborn as men. Although an exception seems to be made for women who became satis. By committing suicide through self-immolation, a woman could redeem herself sufficiently to earn a pleasant afterlife.

Ritual Purity and Pollution Caste inequality (separation) is maintained by the application of the concepts of ritual purity and pollution. Purity

conveniently aligns with caste status, the most pure are the brahmins. Purity is of course good but also very fragile, so lower casts need to keep their distance (thus Bouglé's repulsion or separation). Commensality, the sharing of meals, is out of the question.

Direct contact is polluting, but so is indirect contact. The shadow of an untouchable can be polluting, a pretext for keeping water wells and public roads the preserve of the upper castes.

[Hutton, 1946, page 81]

> [I]n the district of Tinnevelly there were a class of unseeables – a caste of washermen known as Purada Vannan, who washed the clothes of untouchable castes and were therefore doubly polluting. They had to work between midnight and daybreak and were not allowed to come out during the daytime because the very sign of them was polluting.

2.3 Resilience and Fragility

The caste system as intimately tied to Hinduism is seemingly challenged by the observation that in India even Muslims and Christians have caste. But these examples may be the exceptions that prove the rule. The caste system builds on the tribal organization, which together with its decentralized nature, give it the ability to operate independently.

The caste system runs on religious merit, a currency issued by brahmins. For the smoke-and-mirrors show to work, there can be no alternative power sources of note. Its inefficiencies (e.g., birth-given occupations) and contrivances (e.g., hyper sensitivity to "polluting" elements) make it vulnerable to alternative forms of social organization, be it market mediated relationship, the centralizing power of a state, or raw military power. For the caste system to work it needs to be the only game in town.

In such an environment, the best thing outsiders can do is to form a caste themselves, giving the individual some herd protection.

Michael Mann [1986] identified four types of social power: Ideological, Economic, Military, and Political. In the caste system we have the triumph of the first over the last three. The caste system can rise when they are weak,

and once in place, its continued existence is predicated on their staying thus. Weak economic, military, and political power also generally characterized the situation in the medieval and colonial period (between the Guptas and the current Republic of India).

Economic power Why did the Industrial Revolution happen in Europe? Why not in China or the Muslim world? These questions, in some corners known as the "Needham question" and the "Great divergence" respectively, are commonly asked. By contrast, this question is rarely asked of India.

But India was not always an economic backwater. India's second urbanization (c. 600-300 BCE, second after the Indus Valley civilization) was predicated on agricultural surplus and trade, an economic upswing driven by the spread of iron production [Thakur, 1981]. While metallurgy had not advanced as far as in China, iron implements were produced at scale. Herodotus (5th century BCE) tells of Xerxes army containing an Indian battalion, referring specifically to their iron-tipped arrows. Later, Alexander the Great went to India lured by its reputation for abundance.

Military power Caste systems are rare, but not entirely unique to India. At the time of contact with westerners (late 18th century), Hawaii and Tahiti were caste-like theocracies upheld by notions of taboo and mana [Service, 1975]. Not an island, but isolated nonetheless, Arabia Deserta on the eve of Islam showed signs of a budding caste system [Donner, 1981]. Further, many otherwise caste-less societies have had a bottom group of "exploitables," de facto out-castes.[4]

However, only in India was the caste system practised on a (sub)continental scale. It bears noting that India is not only an "almost island" (a *presqu'île*), but it also lies behind a mountain range home to the world's highest peaks.

The almost-island mention is relevant because the elevation of ideological power meant that the caste system could operate without military power, but this feature left it vulnerable to external aggresion.

[4]Some examples include the Japanese burakumin and the Pyrenean Cagots.

Throughout history, the pattern has been clear. India did not invade, she was invaded.

Between the fall of the Guptas and the Republic of India, almost 1500 years, pan-Indian rule was the business of foreigners. To the colonizers, none of them Hindu, the non-military, nature of the caste system may have made it convenient as it ensured an indifferent but non-rebellious subject population.

Thus, while competitive forces buffed the rest of the Eurasia, these forces were weaker on the subcontinent, inviting a cycle of conquest and colonial rule. Each new ruler found something to fix but left the caste system in place. Eventually, the competitive advantage of outsiders triggered a new round of conquests for the cycle to repeated itself.

Political power

> One might say that they [the brahmins] have no part in government and yet are obeyed by all; they possess nothing and yet have all.
>
> How can we explain this amazing power?
>
> Its development has, no doubt, been encouraged by the absence of a political organization worthy of the name.
>
> There is in India, M. Senart notes, no rudiment of the state, India, adds M. Sylvain Lévi, has always lacked a central history. It is not that it has not known great empires. But it seems as though they have passed over Hindu civilization without penetrating its depths.
>
> Bouglé [1971, page 54]

The rise of the caste system mirrored the decline of indigenous state power.

Northern India, the mid-1st millennium, was teaming with polities vying for influence and by 500 BCE, 16 Mahajanapadas had formed, governed as aristocratic republics or kingdoms. In the 4th century BCE, the Mauryan empire arose, the first of two pan-Indian empires and the most centralized of the two. This period was also one of religious ferment, with Buddhism arising in the 5th century BCE. Unlike the then Hindu orthodoxy, Buddhism criticized animal sacrifice which was

suitable for a herding economy, but extravagant with the expansion of field agriculture and it downplayed varna, thus giving the growing commercial class and the king more headroom. Unsurprisingly, Buddhism was favored by the stronger polities. Notably, after the bloody Kalinga wars (fought over iron deposits), Ashoka the Great (r. 268-232 BCE) became a follower.

Megastenes (c. 300 BCE) described the Indian farmer's indifference to soldiers traversing his fields, contrasting it with the Greek tradition of the citizen soldier who in the face of foreign threats raced to mobilize. The suggested lack of nationalism (observed under Chandragupta Maurya nonetheless) continues to resonate.

The struggle for Independence gave India a common goal and interest in national cohesion, but whether from attachment to Gandhi's strategy of non-violence or the strength of the caste system, Gunnar Myrdal [1968] labelled India a "soft state," on in which the yawning gap between "precept and practice," was met with indifference.

Perhaps incidental, but save for cricket, sports, a popular source of national pride has been left largely untapped. For instance, in the 2000 Summer Olympics, India, the world's most populous country, tied for 71th place, a position it shared with Iceland (population 0.28 million v. India's 1.06 billion). Recently, some have see in the BJP party's revival of Hindutva an attempt to forge a national identity [Basu, 2020].

3 Family

We can now turn to the Hindu family. As is often remarked, marriage in India is between two families, not two individuals. Perhaps more correct would be to say that marriage was between two lineages, not two families.

The law books recognized eight different types of marriage, in order of meritoriousness: Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajaptya; and Gandharva, Asura, Rakshasa, Pishacha. The first four were considered righteous, the first two of which were reserved for brahmins. All four were marked by ceremony and the bride was gifted by her father. In one, Arsha, the her father received a payment (a cow and a bull), but he was no selling his daughter as the price

was not a market price but fixed by tradition and thus symbolic. Generally, Hinduism emphasized the merit of gift giving (to brahmins). The last four marriage forms were non-righteous, the wife being obtained, respectively, through seduction, purchase, capture, or trickery.

The Hindu version of *mater semper certa est, pater est, quem nuptiae demonstrant* was that the child belonged to the owner of the mother, her husband if married (cf. *svamin*: owner, master, lord husband), for "[a]s with cows, mares, female camels, slave girls, mileh buffaloes, she goats and ewes, it is not the owner of the (bull or other) father who owns the offspring" [Sarkar, 1891, page 13]. Or "when she was married for the first time the husband received by a sort of special manumission from her father, the ownership of his wife" [Bouglé, 1971, page 91].

3.1 A Tribal Family

We now turn to this chapter's characterization of the Hindu family as a Tribal family. This is a claim about the location of power. In the Hindu family, and this goes for all castes, not just the brahmin caste, it is clear that individual leeway was heavily circumscribed. And this was true also of fathers. Fathers, as the enforcers, had some discretion, but the rules were set at the level of the jati. For instance, in a Patriarchal family, a father who wanted to keep his daughter unmarried until puberty would be at liberty to do so. In the Hindu family, the brahmin who did so faced collective ostracism, e.g., Kapadia [1966].

Given that power is with the jati, it is not surprising that there is substantial overlap with the rules identified for the patrilineal Tribal family. To recap, that family was unilineal and exogamous in the descent group, the gens, and endogamous in the tribe. Marriages were arranged; ancestors were worshipped with an emphasis on father-son succession; absent sons, adoption allowed for the continuation of the ancestral line; property was held collectively by the gens and was inherited in the gens; and for women, death did not terminate marriage, rather the widow belonged to the estate of the deceased.

Transposed to the case at hand, we have a patrilineal family, exogamous in the gotra, and endogamous in the jati. Marriages were arranged; ancestors were worshipped with special emphasis on father-son succession; absent a

son, an adopted son could step into the breach; land was held collectively and passed down father to son, not daughter; and the widow was treated as property of the husband's agnates.

Senart [1930] noted similarities to the Greek and Roman kinship organization, as did Kosambi [1955] and Basham [1959]. Another comparison that offers striking parallels is with the Confucian family whose "three obediences" (*san cong*) mimic the Hindu injunction that a woman should be kept dependent on men: her father until married, her husband when married, and her son when widowed. Other than serving her husband, a woman had no religion (cf. Book of Manu Chapter 9:1, 2, and 18). However, despite these superficial similarities, the Greco-Roman and the neo-Confucian families were Patriarchal, not Tribal (and thus open to a bilateral drift).

We now discuss above features in more detail.

Unilineal and segmentary The Hindu family was patrilineal and segmentary, givin the caste the ability to mobilize at the requisite level, be it for maintaining internal discipline or defending its position in the caste hierarchy.

Gentile exogamy For a straight-up version of gentile exogamy, we need to look no further than the gotras. The gotras may be viewed as the equivalent to patrician gentes, as noted by [Senart, 1930], and marriage has to be outside the gotra. To this day, a within-gotra marriage can result in the couple being murdered.[5]

Originally a brahminic institution with only a few gotras, gotra was emulated by the Ksatriyas and the Vaishas, and among brahminical texts the term came to be applied to families as well as clans or subclans [Brough, 1953, page 7]. Perhaps as a result, exogamy requirement were increasingly expressed in terms of sub-branches of the gotra, *pravaras*, wrote Basham [1959, page 153-154]:

> The original meaning of gotra is "a cowshed", or a herd of cows"; in the Atharva Veda, the word first appears with the meaning of "a clan". which it has retained with a special connotation.

[5]"Caste-Council 'Explains' Honor Killings, While India Still Reels From Gang-Rape Tragedy." International Business Times [U.S. ed.], 16 Jan. 2013.

> Some ancient Indo-European peoples, such as the Romans, had exogamous clans, as well as generally endogamous tribes. It may well be that the gotra system is a survival of Indo-European origin which had developed specially Indian features.
>
> [...]
>
> The chief importance of gotra was in connexion with marriage, which was forbidden to persons of the same gotra.
>
> [...]
>
> In the brahman's daily worship he mentioned not only the name of the founder of his gotra, but also the names of certain other sages who were believed to be the remote ancestors of his family. The formula generally contained three or five names, and set up a further bar to marriage, for the same names would occur in the pravaras of families of other gotras. According to the custom of some gotras, marriage was impossible with a member of another gotra having one pravara name in common, while others barred intermarriage only when there were two common names in the pravaras. Thus matrimonial choice was restricted, especially when in the Middle Ages the endogamous caste system was fully established.

It bears noting that while gentile exogamy is often expressed in terms gotra or derivatives thereof, gentile exogamy rules are common to the Tribal family and thus likely predated the Aryan influence.

The gentile-exogamy origins of village exogamy, observed in many places by all but perhaps the lowest groups, can be appreciated once we consider that many villages were originally settled by one lineage (for an example, see e.g. Hershman [1981]). Incidentally, village exogamy doubled as a convenient tool of patriarchy by isolating the in-marrying women. It also created useful alliances across geographic space; tools available to the mid to higher castes, the lowest castes being too "polluting" to marry anyone other than themselves.

Another example of gentile (tribal) marriage prohibitions may be seen in the South-Indian Hindu practice of uncle-niece marriage; the uncle in question invariable being mother's brother, never father's. Marriage to a

paternal uncle would contravene gentile exogamy. By contrast, a mother's brother is a cognate, not an agnate, and therefore permissible.

In addition to the gentile (unilineal) prohibitions, there are also bilateral prohibitions. Sapinda is a concept associated with the sage Yajnavalkya (dated to c. 700 BCE) who worked out a system of prohibitions based on the idea of the interrelatedness of bodyparts (*pinda*). Individuals related to a common ancestor were sapinda and should not marry. Both male and female links counted. Viewed from the common ancestor, if the last link to ego was male, sapinda extended seven generations, five if the last link was female. As ego was included in the count, seven generations meant relatives within a generational span of six (four) were not allowed. While links through fathers were stronger (spanning more generations), the sapinda system was bilateral – male and female links created sapinda.

Of course, there is overlap between the gotra (pravana) and the sapinda. Combined, the rules may be summarized as follows, wrote Brough [1953, page 2]:

> Marriage is prohibited within the joint-family up to several (usually five) generations on the mother's side, up to seven on the father's side where descent is through a female. And without limit in the direct male line.

As always, there are regional variations. From Bengal we have an example of what may be a cross between the two systems – *both* parents' agnates created possible sapinda links, but note that only agnates counted, wrote Fruzzetti [1982, page 17]:

> [T]he first Bengali marriage rule: there cannot be a marriage alliance between two *ghars* whose members share blood. Blood relatives are persons in the male lines of one's father and mother, with the blood ties counting back to the seventh generation on the father's side and to the third generation of the mother's side.
>
> ...
>
> Outside these seventh-degree and third-degree relationships, one is free to marry "relatives" provided that they do not belong to the same *gotra*.

The sapinda system has a clear parallel in the seven-degree marriage prohibitions under the Catholic Church (ended in 1215), where the seven degrees were motivated by an analogy to the inter-connectedness of body parts [Goody, 1983]. Further, the Church used Germanic counting based on generational distance (and not the Roman one, which counted the number of links), pointing towards common Indo-European tribal origins.

Marriage prohibitions in the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 was based on sapinda, the degrees reduced to five and three respectively, and allowing for local customs (e.g., uncle-niece marriage).

In sum, the marriage prohibitions include lineage exogamy but there were additional prohibitions based on bilateral kinship accounting.

Endogamous in the jati

> Caste is then endogamous in the image of these large groups of kin - clans or tribes[.]
>
> Bouglé [1971, page 50]

Caste endogamy is perhaps the best known feature of the Hindu family. Its centrality is well recognized, e.g., Ambedkar 1936, cited in Abraham [2014]:

> The real remedy for breaking Caste is inter-marriage. Nothing else will serve as the solvent of Caste.

At the same time, marriages were hypergamous (women were sourced from lower castes), requiring a flexible application of the notion of caste.

Arranged marriage Marriages were arranged for both sons and daughters. One of the easiest ways to ensure parental authority is to marry the children young. In his autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi said of his wedding at age 13: "As we didn't know much about marriage, for us it meant only wearing new clothes, eating sweets and playing with relatives."

Child marriage was often couched in terms of the need to not waste a girl's reproductive capacity, each menstrual cycle representing a fetus that could have been. The safe delivery of a virginal bride may have been another consideration. The risk of rape before marriage was likely non-trivial. In her

home, taught to obey and occupying the lowest rung, a girl could easily be the victim of advances by cousins and uncles and the fear of incest hung over the unmarried girl [Fruzzetti, 1982]. And even if she managed to dodge relatives, a girl could be kidnapped or raped before safely ensconced with her in-laws.

There was also the risk of rape by strangers, especially for lower-caste girls [Habib, 2012, page 101]).

Child marriage was not always *de rigueur*. The Arthashastra, the book on governance developed under the Mauryans (4th to 3rd century BCE) and reaching its now known form in the 2nd century CE, did not mention any particular age by which a girl needed to be married. Furthermore, it states that a girl not married after three years since the onset of menses can chose a marriage partner (Book 4:chapter 12:10 [Olivelle, 2013, page 247]). While popular at least through the mid-1st millennium CE, the Arthashastra lost influence and was little referenced in the literature from the 9th century until its rediscovery in the early 20th century [Olivelle, 2013, page 51].

Later literature would emphasize the importance of the bride being young. The Dharmashastras [200 BCE to 300 CE] made marriage within 3 month of puberty obligatory for girls [Kapadia, 1966, page 139]. The Book of Manu (9:94) recommended that a man of 30 marry a maiden of 12, and a man of 24 marry a girl of 8, unless his duties compelled him to marry earlier (age of bride unspecified).

Social ostracism faced deviators. Parashara Smriti, Chapter 7:

> 5. When the twelfth year is reached by the female child, if the guardian does not give her away in marriage, her forefathers drink, without interruption, during each succeeding month, whatever blood is passed in her courses.
>
> 6. The mother, and the father, and likewise the eldest brother, all these three relatives will go to hell, if before menstruation they neglect to marry the girl.
>
> 7. If a Brahman, deluded by ignorance and pride, comes to marry a girl of the aforesaid kind, he does not deserve to be spoken to; food should never be partaken in company with him: that Brahman becomes the husband of a Shoodra girl.

If that was not persuasive enough, wrote Yadav [2006, page 21]:

> her father, grandfather, and great grandfather are born insects in ordure.

Under British rule, social movements against practices such as child marriage, widow chastity, and sati gained steam. Child marriage was criticized as morally and physically injurious – the early deaths of child brides forced to consummate their marriages attesting to the latter [Forbes, 1979, John, 2021]. Wrote Yadav [2006, page 23]:

> At the time of the British Reform movement in the 1880's scholars and politicians reported girls being married at 8 and 9 years old to men three times their age, and ancient Hindu, and apparently Mohammadan and Parsee custom. The practice of marrying girls before they were thirteen was all but universal. According to various authors many of the marriages were consummated before puberty. Malabari [1853 - 1912] himself said that, "The nuptial ceremonies, I think, are a direct inducement in 95 out of 100 cases to a too early consummation. Even the utmost precaution taken by sensible parents fails to keep the pair from mischief." The English called them "victims". Anglicized Hindus called them "willing victims in the vast majority of cases."

In addition to ensuring parental control and the intact delivery of a virgin bride, child marriage can help shore up the supply of brides in an environment where parents view raising a daughter as "watering another man's garden." By marrying children young, perhaps as young as five or six, the cost of raising daughters were shifted to their end users (a logic not dissimilar to that underpinning the Chinese "minor marriage, " e.g. Cheung [1972]).

Since 1978, the minimum age for brides has been 18 and child marriage has been curbed. Still, the 2001 Census revealed 1.4 million married girls in the 10-14 age bracket. Furthermore, the 0-9 age group may count additional brides, reported as daughters rather than brides (as the latter is, after all, against the law). Here, family composition may be revealing. Absent doctoring, to a first approximation, offspring sex-ratios do not vary with birth order or the sex of older siblings. However, a large nationally representative

household survey found sex ratios of the second child to vary with the sex of the first [Jha et al., 2006]. The headline finding was that if the first child was a girl, the second child was more likely to be a boy (than nature would have it). Less discussed, was the finding of the converse pattern: if the first child was a boy, the next child was more likely to be a girl. There is little evidence (even anecdotal) to suggests that sons are "deselected." How then can unnaturally *female* sex ratios be explained? One possibility is that the surplus girls are not daughters but daughters-in-law.

Divorce Marriage was considered an indissoluble religious sacrament, a bond that for women was not even undone by death. Obviously, the indissolubility made the arranged marriage final.

Ancestor worship An important role of ancestor worship is to give men an interest in marriage, for themselves and for their sons (so they can have sons). The importance of a son was expressed in many ways, from the celestial: "By a son a man conquers the heavenly regions, by a son's son he secures the enjoyment of them for an endless period, and by a son's grandson he reaches the solar abode" Sarkar [1891, page 43], to the more mundane: 'Thus Vasishtha declares: "If a father sees the face of a son born and living, he devolves his debts on him and obtains immortality; it is ordained in the Sruti, Endless are the heavenly regions of those having sons, heaven awaits not one who has no male issue" ' Sarkar [1891, page 44]. Even in the very word son, *putra*, some sages saw the importance of the son "as the deliver from the eternal hell called *put*."

As carrier of the father-son chain, the son naturally assumed a key role at a man's funeral. Only a son could light the funeral pyre and preside over the wake, wrote Basham [1959, page 155]:

> ...sraddha, the rite of commemorating the ancestors, at which balls of rice called pinda were offered. Sons, grandsons and great-grandsons of the deceased joined together in sraddha, and three generations of the dead were believed to participate in the benefits of the ceremony. Thus the dead and the living were linked together by this rite, which, like the ancestor worship of the Chinese, was a most potent force in consolidating the family. Srad-

> dha defined the family; those who were entitled to participate in the ceremony were "co-pindas" (sapinda), members of the family group. The rite, which is still practised, goes back to Vedic times.

Husband worship. Veneration of the male ancestors suggests the apotheosis of male family members. In the Hindu family, the approximation included husband worship [Milner, 1994].

Writing circa 1800 from Mysore, Abbé Dubois [1906, page 339] remarked on the gulf that existed between husband and wife as captured by the manner of address. The nouns "servant" or "slave" would be common ways for a husband to call the attention of his wife. The wife, by contrast, only addressed her husband with utmost humility, calling him "my master," "my lord," even "my god."

The god-like position of the husband was more than a manner of speech. According to the Book of Manu, a women had no role or religion other than as a helper in her husband's religious journey, and should live for her husband only:

> 154 Though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure (elsewhere), or devoid of good qualities, (yet) a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife.
>
> 155 No sacrifice, no vow, no fast must be performed by women apart (from their husbands); if a wife obeys her husband, she will for that (reason alone) be exalted in heaven.
>
> Book of Manu 5:154-155

The husband as a divinity may appear strange, but as noted by Fruzzetti [1982, page 13-14]:

> [...] there is no clear-cut division between men and the gods in Hindu ideologies. Deities, incarnate gods, god-kings, and ancestors are all sacred, divine beings, related respectively to different levels of action in society. They are all worthy of worship. This is also true of Brahmans, gurus, family priests, and fathers, who are on a continuum between gods and mere persons. Similarly, the husband should be addressed with devotion by his wife.

> [...]
>
> A woman's husband is her first god. A married woman begins her day by touching her husband's feet (*pranam kara* – a sign of respect) before she even steps down from her bed.
>
> [...]
>
> In sum, Bengali Hindu marriage expresses devotional and physical love; the husband is both a deity and a male companion for whom one conceives children to continue the *bangsa*. [male line]

This phenomenon is not limited to Bengal, wrote Kapadia [1966, pages155-56]:

> A Hindu female child is brought up in an atmosphere where the husband is most respectfully looked to, is most obediently served, and is loved with the utmost devotion. She is expected to enhance the prestige of the family by treating her husband in the same way and never to bring ill-repute to the family by any sort of defiance of her husband.

Adoption The emphasis on the importance of a son creates a problem for men who for some reason or the other failed to have one (marriage was for life and typically monogamous, but an exception could be made in the case of sonlessness). As in the tribe, the solution was found in adoption. An agnate (e.g., brother's son) was the ideal candidate. The adoption of non-agnates was resisted, commensurate with the interest in keeping property in the gens. True to its purpose, adoption was of males by males and could be done posthumously [Sarkar, 1891].

As with the Greek epikleros, or the Chinese uxorilocal marriage, the possibility of obtaining "a son through a daughter" existed. The *putrika* was a daughter who, in the absence of a son acted as a placeholder and she was married such that her son continued the lineage (of mother's father). This arrangement, one might surmise, was no favored as it went counter to the emphasis placed on the necessity of a son, as well as involving a, from the male perspective, inferior marriage.

Adoption is a special event the world over, but in some parts it treated as a private matter, thus celebrated and without ceremony. However, when

lineage looms large, adoption is not a private act but one that needs the approval of collateral agnates to be acknowledged publicly for it to be valid, requiring a public ceremony [Hershman, 1981, 77].

Agnatic inheritance Proximity to the tribal organization can be seen in the treatment of property. Land was the most important form of wealth, and it was passed down following tribal principles, which for the most part meant that it was held jointly with (up to) four generations of males as co-parcenaries [Agarwal, 1994, chapter 3]. Death of the oldest directly ascendant male triggered partition, as it would in the Patriarchal family. But unlike the Patriarchal family, ancestral land was inalienable. Depending on the legal of thought school (Mitakshara and Dayabhaga being the two main ones), adults males could demand partition before the death of ascendant males. There were also local customs. But as a generalization, "inheritance practices were essentially patrilineal, and women had few and highly restricted rights in land" [Agarwal, 1994, page 84].

While the main legal school (the Mitakshara) gave the widow, and then daughters, inheritance rights if there were no sons, these rights were undercut by other currents. First, absence of sons may have been rare considering the option to adopt. Second, the treatment of the widow hardly suggests that she held land or held it for very long. Third, married daughters were cut off from their natal family.

The Indian Constitution (1949) guarantees the equality of rights. Still, for more than half a century only sons inherited ancestral land.[6] Finally, under the 2005 amendment to the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, a daughter of a coparcener shall "by birth become a coparcener in her own right in the same manner as the son."[7]

There was also personal belongings which from the medieval times was generally treated as private property [Basham, 1959, page 158] and in contrast to ancestral property, it was generally handed down along gender lines. Women could hold such property, *stridhan* (literally woman's property), and the rules regarding what types of property was permissible varied. Women

[6] Articles 14,15, & 21.

[7] Section 6a.

owned *stridhan* outright and it passed mother-to-daughter or, absent daughters, mother-to-son [Gooroodass, 1879, page 352]. Absent issue, *stridhan* passed to her husband if married in one of the proper ways and to her gens if married according to one of the reprehensible ways [Sarkar, 1891, page 49], echoing the Roman practices of *cum manu* and *sine manu* marriage (see Chapter on the Romano-Christian family).

There was also dowry. Here we are unfortunately dealing with virtual tower of Babel. Outside of India, dowry refers to the property a woman brings to her marriage and even if she is placed under tutelage while marriage, she is the undisputed owner, and it being private property, she is free to pass it to her children, which is also how it typically devolves. That type of dowry would be close to *stridhan*.

In India, dowry was distinct from *stridhan* and may actually have been closer to a negative bride price. Dowry as negative bride price was a terminology employed by Becker [1981], but with the possible exception of India, negative bride price and dowry are not synonyms. For instance, wrote Goody [1973, page 6]:

> dowry, in the usual sense, does not go to her kin, but to the bride herself, sometimes to the husband (at least for safekeeping) or even to both spouses jointly. Bridewealth [bride price and bride service] and dowry then are very far from being mirror opposites. Indeed, the mirror opposite of bridewealth would be groomwealth; and of bride-service, groom-service. But there is little to be put in these two boxes by way of actual cases.

Whether an *in vivo* inheritance or the price of marriage (for daughters) obviously matters for the interpretation of dowry and its link, if any, to the status of women. For a further discussion of dowry as negative bride price, see Section 4.

The Widow

> The happiest death for a woman is that which overtakes her while she is still in a wedded state. Such a death is looked upon as the reward of goodness extending back for many generations; on the

> other hand, the greatest misfortune that can befall a wife is to survive her husband.
>
> Dubois [1906, page 350]

The widow in the patrilineal Tribal family occupies an awkward position. She is the mother of the next generation and thus linked to the lineage's future. At the same time, she is an outsider whose main connection to the lineage has passed.

One solution, natural to the tribe's corporate view of kinship, was to view her as married to her husband's lineage, with the husband having privileged rights of access. On his death, a brother or even son (by another wife), could step up. In "widow inheritance," the children born from this new union would belong to the deceased husband. By contrast, in Levirate marriage, the man who inherits the widow is also the father of her children, her husband in other words.

Widow inheritance (*niyoga*) was known to the sages, but mainly as a practice in an undated archaic past (discontinued in the Kali age). Levirate marriage also had its followers, notably in Punjab where Sikhism tempered brahmanical influences (since the 15th century CE [Rose, 1922, page 169]).

However scurrilous, widow inheritance or widow remarriage was preferred to the widow finding a partner or husband outside her husband's agnatic circle.

At some point, the brahmanical solution was found in treating the widow as a single use item, an attitude that spread. Hutton [1946, page 103] "Often a subcaste which wishes to raise itself in social status will place a ban on the remarriage of widows, while other subcastes of the same caste continue to allow it."

The widow was barred from remarriage and forced to live out her remaining life in penitence. On the news of her husband's death, she was stripped of her jewelry and clothing. She broke her wedding bangles, donned an unadorned white sari of coarse cloth, and renounced all earthly pleasures. An orthodox widow was expected to shave her head and to sleep on the ground. In the south, the widow may not even be allowed to wear a blouse under her sari.

The widow was forbidden from eating a long list of foods which invariably included high-value items such as meat, fish, eggs, and expensive spices. The

list of forbidden foods may also include vegetables such as onions, garlic and certain pulses which can "heat the blood," leaving very little left but rice for her once-a-day meal. A widow was also expected to fast several times a month.

Branded unlucky, she was barred from participating in auspicious ceremonies such as weddings. In some cases even her shadow was considered polluting or offensive to "cleaner" members of society.

The widow was sometimes called "pram" or creature, because it was only her husband's presence that had given her human status. In some Indian languages, a widow was referred to as "it" rather than "she;" in others, the word doubled as a term of abuse or was barely differentiated from the word for prostitute [Chen, 2000].

In fact many widows pushed out of their families had to turn to prostitution for survival. In 19th-century Bengal, a movement to move prostitutes off the streets revealed that many of the prostitutes were from better-caste families who had left them with no other means of support. The apparent embarrassment resulted in families of means shipping their widows to ashrams in Varanasi and Vrindavan, two holy cities [Ghosh, 2000]. Some received a small pension, but once depleted, prostitution and begging returned as the principal means of survival.

While the ostracism of widows has eased, Varanasi and Vrindivan remain a destination for widows driven out by their in-laws or, sometimes, their own sons (e.g., Bhattacharyya and Singh [2018] and references therein). While cautioning against generalizations Sen and Drèze [1999, page 175] noted that widows remain vulnerable to poverty and social marginalization and that "the notion that the joint family provides economic security to widows in rural India is little more than myth."

Sati. *Sati* means virtuous wife. A virtuous wife dies when her husband does – and failing that, steps on his funeral pyre. Faced with the choice between a life of deprivation, shame and penitence and a brief period of veneration and respect that the intention to step on the funeral pyre bestowed, some widowed may have "chosen" self immolation. Grooming from infancy extolling the virtuousness of the act, combined with a discounting of this life, may have helped. The sati was described as a sinless jewel among women

who not only secured a place in heaven, but her act also purified herself, her husband, and her parents [Ward, 1811, pages 544-545].

Parashara Smriti (IV:32) states: "If a woman follows her departed lord, by burning herself on the same funeral pile, she will dwell in heaven for as many years as there are hairs on the human frame, — which reach the number of three crores and a half." A crore is 10 million, so 35 million years in heaven awaits the sati.[8]

Still, many women went unwillingly. Tied to the putrefying body or beaten back by the crowd of onlookers, including her own sons, the widow was kept from escaping the mounting flames [Ward, 1811]. Satis may not have been typical, but it was common enough. Ward counted some 400 cases in 1803 and two to three hundred in 1804, all within a 30 mile radius of Calcutta. Accounts of widow burning galvanized British women to campaign against the practice [Midgley, 2000]. In 1829, it was criminalized.

The widow stepping on the funeral pyre is a logical extension of husband veneration. The first recorded case of a sati dates back to 510 CE [Thapar, 1966], but it could be an earlier practice. Men bringing an entourage to the next life is not unique to India. Men undertaking the final journey with company has been documented for many tribes, especially if the man was important and the female companion or low status, e.g., MacLeod [1928]. The Chinese terracotta army suggests a history of anterior (and sizable) human sacrifice and late as the Ming dynasty, emperors were buried with favourite concubines.

3.2 Non-Tribal Features

As seen above, the Hindu family shared many features with the patrilineal Tribal family, with some non tribal add-ons such as the *stridhan*, woman's property, and the sapinda marriage prohibitions. The Hindu family have additional distinctive features. It is monogamous, hypergamous, daughters are deselected and there is the issue of dowry payments. These features, I will argue, are closely tied to the caste system being designed by, and for, a small priestly class living off tribute.

[8]The number of hair follicles on the human body is estimated at a more modest 5 million.

3.2.1 Monogamy

The Hindu family is often classified as monogamous and this is a workable approximation. For women, monogamy was strict. A woman could only have one husband in her lifetime. The motivation was phrased in religious terms: A woman worships her husband and can only have one Lord.[9]

For men, the rules were more permissive. A widower could remarry, and was likely encouraged to, especially if he lacked a son. Furthermore, the paramount importance of male progeny meant that failure to produce a son allowed for an additional wife (with a preference for the sister of the first wife). Thus, while polygyny was not idealized, it was considered the lesser of two evils.

Typically, when polygyny is allowed, it is an elite practice and thus arguably favored by the elite. Why would a society designed by brahmins for brahmins deny themselves? The strict separation of the castes and caste endogamy could be one reason, as polygyny would create excess demand for brahmin brides. However, the hypergamy loophole (see below) was a large one.

A more plausible explanation may lie in the nature of the brahmin caste. As a priestly caste living off local tribute, "gifts" and services from those lower down, it may have had an interest in limiting its numbers. Monogamy serves that end.

3.2.2 Hypergamy

Patriliny implies a certain devaluation of women. At the same time, in the tribe, endogamy acted as a damper. Take a rudimentary tribe consisting of two patrilines exchanging women. While each line can cultivate the superiority of their sons over their daughters, men as a group are equals and each and every man is married to a sister of a peer.

Similar forces were at play in the Hindu family – caste endogamy implied a certain equality. However, the hierarchical rankings of castes, and the ability to marry women from a lower caste, hypergamy, allowed for the inferiority of "wife-givers" and a superiority of "wife-takers" to be assumed qualities of the parties.

[9]Ironic considering the polytheism implied by husband worship.

The tension between equality and inequality would come to a head in a marriage involving to similarly ranked lineages. In that case, the inferiority-superiority was maintained by applying it only to the families directly involved [Hershman, 1981, page 55], the giving of a daughter being inherently shameful.

The other solution was to do away with (or reinterpret) the endogamy requirement to allow for hypergamy. While the ideal marriage was within-caste, men could source women from lower castes without penalty; within limits, the children from a hypergamous marriage inherit their father's status.

By contrast, hypogamy, women's marrying down, is not allowed. A child from such a union would fall outside the four varnas. The worst combination was that of a shudra man and a brahmin woman. According to Book of Manu, such a mesalliance resulted in the child being a Chandala.[10]

As a result, at the top and at the bottom of the caste system, shortages may ensue. At the top, women are superfluous. Since women have no religion (purpose) unless married, the solution was found in kulinism, a type of polygynous marriage in which a brahmin man married several brahmin women just for the sake of it (and a payment). At the bottom, women would be wanting.

Hypergamy is not a Hindu preserve, in fact, it is common among mammals, typically driven by functional polygyny [Trivers and Willard, 1973]. In the case at hand, the amount of polygyny is low. Instead the driver is an ideological downgrading of women which made low- and high-caste women interchangeable.

The down grading took many forms but was ultimately linked to patriliny, notably: (i) an emphasis on agnatic relations; (ii) a minimization of the role of the mother; and (iii) the elevation of sons over daughters.

The emphasis on agnatic relations implies a downplaying of cognatic or affinal relations. A man's family are those on his father's side. Relatives through his mother or wife (in-laws) are of little significance. As a manifestation of this ideology, women are supposed to sever all links to her natal family. Again, the extent to which this was practiced varied and as a rule it was more strictly adhered to among higher castes.

As is not unusual, the married woman's child follows the status of the

[10] An untouchable charged with the most polluting of activities: the disposal of corpses.

father, not the mother. However, the role of the mother was minimized. An oft-used analogy was that of the man providing the seed and the woman the dirt (cf. Book of Manu 9:33). While both are necessary for the plant's existence, it is the seed that determines the species. Socially, the low position of the mother can be seen in the treatment of widows. As discussed above, even widows with able-bodied sons could be left to beg for their subsistence.

The ideological elevation of sons left little space for daughters at the top. Given the willingness to substitute low- for high-caste daughters-in-law, a ready supply of low-caste brides, and little intrinsic value of daughters, why bother with daughters at all?

3.2.3 Female infanticide

> One of the most striking aspects of the history of female infanticide in India is the lack of reticence on the part of indians to admit to the murdering of their female offspring – that is, before the British outlawed infanticide in 1870 and began to take steps to enforce the law.
>
> Miller [1981, page 49]

> The father's right over the life of his child is nowhere explicitly admitted, but the Arthashastra looks on the killing of a son as among the most heinous forms of murder.
>
> Basham [1959, page 157]

In 1789, the first British report of widespread female infanticide among the Rajkumar Rajputs appeared [Vishwanath, 2004]. Higher prevalence among dominant castes was corroborated by further investigations, e.g., [Moor, 1811]. The censuses under the British (1872-1931) provided further evidence.

Since independence in 1947, the Indian censuses do not collect information on caste (except for the lowest category, so called scheduled castes and tribes), but the pattern of the better off, as measured by landholdings [Das Gupta, 1987] or education [Jha et al., 2006], discriminating against daughters has continued.

It takes little to kill a newborn. Nonetheless, methods developed. One such involved feeding the newborn girl paddy rice with the husk attached (believed to slit the throat when swallowed). The girl could also be fed milk laced with poisonous saps or herbs, or simply shaken until the spinal cord snapped. Drowning in a jar of milk was another option.

Girls with an older sister were particularly vulnerable, wrote Hershman [1981, 156]: "In the past it was customary in Punjabi families to keep only the first girl child and subsequent female children were killed at birth." It might be tempting to chalk up this practice to poverty, but that squares poorly with the fact that it has been found to be more prevalent among the better off.

Since the 1980s, sex selection no longer requires infanticide, as sex can be determined prenatally. Better-off groups having more sons has been explained by their better access to more advanced prenatal care, but as just discussed, the tendency predates the arrival of ultrasound-B machines.

How can high castes get away with not having daughters? Superficially, the answer lies in hypergamy – women are provided by castes lower down. But this is a mechanical explanation that raises the question why higher castes accept lower caste women as the mothers of the next generation?

The answer resides in the intersection of: (i) patriliny with its emphasis on the father-son chain and the implied demotion of the mother to a necessary but otherwise passive component; and (ii) the position of brahmins at the apex of the caste pyramid. The devaluation of women is common to patriliny, but typically, daughters are spared as they help in the acquisition of daughters-in-law. But the elevated position in the caste system liberates brahmins from this constraint. As lower-caste fathers vie to have their daughters marrying up (contradicting the patrilineal mantra that links through women do not matter), upper castes have no trouble finding daughters-in-law. In fact, the daughters-in-law may even come with money – groom price.

4 A toy model of hypergamy, dowry, and female infanticide

> One result of hypergamy is to put a price on bridegrooms instead of on brides, and it is significant that while a high price for bridegrooms is paid where hypergamy prevails, hypogamy, on the other hand, is associated with a bride-price.
>
> Hutton [1946, page 54]

> Sons are earnestly longed for, while daughters are not wanted. This feeling exists everywhere, but it varies greatly in intensity. It is strongest amongst communities, such as the higher Rajput clans, where large sums have to be paid to obtain a husband of suitable status and the cost of the marriage ceremony is excessive, and those like the Pathans, who despise women and hold in derision the father of daughters. Sometimes the prejudice against daughters is so strong that abortion is resorted to when the midwife predicts the birth of a girl. Formerly female infants were frequently killed as soon as they were born, and even now they are very commonly neglected to a greater or less extent.
>
> Natarajan [1972, page 71]

From the nature of reproduction and the rights men obtain over their wives, we would expect men to pay for marriage. This is also typically the case. Further, when unmarried women are controlled by their fathers, the marriage payments flow from the groom's family to that of the bride. This was also the general pattern in India. Describing about late 18th/early 19th century "Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies," Abbé Dubois [1906, page 214] wrote regarding marriage payments:

> The parents of the girl insist not only on the youth's parents bearing all the expenses of the wedding and of the jewels, but they also exact payment of a sum of money in return for their daughter, the amount of which is laid down by caste custom. This method is the commonest of all; for to marry and to buy a

> wife are synonymous expressions in India. Most parents make a regular traffic of their daughters.

However, at the top of the caste pyramid, the power of status can be strong enough to reverse the payment flows, resulting in high-caste grooms receiving not only brides, but brides with dowry. The possibility of dowry clearly reinforces the superiority of sons to the brahmin (and other high status castes). Why have a daughter when lower caste men are willing to offer their daughters for free and throw in a payment to boot?

Below follows a sketch of a model of sex selection and transfer payments in a caste system with son preference and hypergamy.

Consider a caste pyramid consisting of three castes, A, B, and C, A being the highest. Further, A is smaller than B, and B is smaller than C. Let $POP_A < POP_B < POP_C$ denote the number of fathers in each respective caste.

Fathers are assumed the decision makers and in keeping with the arranged nature of marriage, the children (even if adults) are referred to as boys and girls.

To fathers, a married son is better than a married daughter by $S > 0$, and better than an unmarried son by $s \in (0, S)$. Further, let fathers of girls place value on the status of the son-in-law, parameterized by $\Delta_{AB}, \Delta_{BC} > 0$, the difference in the value of a son-in-law A(B) instead of B(C). In keeping with the spirit of hypergamy, the valuation of daughters-in-law is assumed to vary less with their status at birth, and for simplicity it is set to zero (with ties breaking in favor of the higher caste).

Let bride price BD_{ij} be a payment from the groom side i to the bride side j, and dowry D a payment from the bride side to the groom side (since in equilibrium dowry is only paid in the marriage between A boys and B girls, indexing is superfluous). Further, let us assume that each father has one child and decide whether it is a son or a daughter, absent decision, a son or daughter will be allocated with a 50/50 chance.

The father decides (i) whether to have a son or a daughter; and (ii) the child's marriage.

4.1 Upshot

For a sufficiently high valuation of marrying a daughter to caste A, the following strategies (illustrated in Figure 1), I conjecture, constitute an equilibrium:

Caste A: Choose only sons, no daughters born.

Sons marry girls from B. The B girls come with a dowry $D > 0$.

Caste B: Choose the number of daughters as there are A boys, the rest sons.

Thus the ratio of boys to girls is

$$\frac{POP_B - POP_A}{POP_A},$$

which for a $POP_B/POP_A > 2$ implies more boys than girls. In other words, if caste B is more than twice as large as caste A, which seems plausible, caste B will have male biased sex ratios.

Daughters marry A boys and pay dowry $D > 0$.

Sons marry C girls and pay bride price $BP_{BC} > 0$

Caste C: Make no sex selection.

All daughters marry, some marry B boys, others C boys.

Some boys marry C girls against bride price $BP_{CC} > 0$; others do not marry.

While simplified, above equilibrium conforms with the stylized facts regarding dowry and bride price; sex selection of children; as well as marriage patterns. There is dowry at the top and bride price at the bottom. The middle caste B pays both dowry and bride price, whereas the top is a recipient of dowry and the bottom a recipient of bride price. Castes A and B sex select in favor of boys for a total surplus of boys (the caste B result assumes that $POP_B/POP_A > 2$). The absence of girls in the top caste may seem extreme, but a near complete lack of girl births in a community has been known to be worn with pride, e.g., Moor [1811], Natarajan [1972].

Lastly, the system is hypergamous, women marry up.

Sketch of proof: The actual prices in this system can be anchored by the fact that at the bottom, not all boys will marry, which sets the minimum price for marriage to C girls who will all marry. Some marry C boys against a bride price BP_{CC}, others marry B boys against $BP_{BC} \in (0, BP_{CC})$.

Assuming that C boys pay their full valuation of marriage (they chose between marrying C girls or not marrying at all), we know that $BP_{CC} = s > 0$. Since C girls can marry either B or C boys, it must be that $BP_{BC} + \Delta_{BC} = BP_{CC}$, where $\Delta_{BC} > 0$ (the value of a B instead of a C son-in-law).

Turning to caste B, we note that B girls cannot marry B boys, because the utility from having a boy and girl must equalize, and if B boys and girls married, we would have $S_P B_{BB} = PB_{BB}$ which obviously cannot hold. Therefore, B boys marry C girls, paying

$BP_{BC} = BP_{CC} - \Delta_{BC}$.

For caste B to also have daughters, it must be that daughters who marry up give the same utility as sons who marry down, i.e., $S - BP_{BC} = \Delta_{AB} - D$, or rearranged

$$D = \Delta_{AB} - (S - BP_{BC}).$$

Clearly, for a high enough valuation of marrying up, Δ_{AB} (relative to the surplus from a son $S - BP_{BC}$), dowry D is positive.

With positive dowry, obviously caste A should choose only sons, since sons can marry and collect a dowry (as in groom price). But it is important to note that dowry is a sufficient but not necessary condition for caste A to chose only sons. Specifically, a married son is valued at S over a married daughter and a brideprice lower than that would still be consistent with choosing only sons. That is, the all-maleness of caste A can occur with dowry or bride price.

A scenario that could result in bride price being demanded of caste A is that caste B discounts the value of marrying up. Obviously, were caste B to demand a sufficiently high bride price, caste A might abandon its all-son strategy and daughters would appear among its ranks. That would occur if $BP_{AB} \geq S$.

4.2 Modifications

The reader might ask what keeps caste C from outbidding caste B for marriage to caste A sons? So far we have made no assumptions about income, but caste B having income higher or equal to caste C would be sufficient to preclude such competition as caste B has an edge status wise (however small). Alternatively, it can be noted that marriage to girls of the lowest caste (shudras) is described at noticeably worse (e.g., Book of Manu 3:13-19).

Another modification might be to allow for heterogeneity within each caste. Specifically, caste B might consist of hierarchically ordered sub groups, the higher the status, the more male the sex ratio, I conjecture. There could also be a bottom group who have only daughters, no sons. These modifications would make for a more realistic gradation of the sex selection, but would not change the qualitative predictions.

Yet further realism could be added by making sex choice costly, an addition that could dull the predictions (e.g., caste A would have some daughters), but not change their qualitative nature.

The reader will have notice that population growth is negative and caste A grows relative to the lower castes. This feature follows from the simplistic assumptions about fertility does not vary with caste.

Dowry Inflation? The proposed toy model is in the spirit of dowry as negative bride price arising in a monogamous and stratified society and can be tweaked to explain dowry inflation – the notion that dowry have increased at a higher rate than the general cost of living or the economic growth rate. An increase in caste B income, for instance, would raise the willingness to pay for a caste A son-in-law (Δ_{AB}). It is not unusual for items in fixed supply or non-tradeables to experience inflation in times of growth, high-status grooms being perhaps an example.

If, instead, we consider dowry as a form of pre-mortem inheritance (to the bride and groom as a couple), then economic growth is likely to raise dowry as there is more wealth to be transferred, or parents perhaps forego selling their daughters (as part of caste elevation [Srinivas, 1952] or for altruistic reasons). In fact, Chiplunkar and Weaver [2023] documented that while dowries increased both in their value and prevalence, as a share of household

earnings, they actually *decreased* between 1965 and 1990.

Dowry as pre-mortem inheritance is obviously very different from one in which it prompts the killing of daughters.

Dowry the reason for "daughter avoidance"? The perceived obligation to pay a dowry in order to marry a daughter has been an oft-cited reason for why parents deselect daughters.

In terms of our toy model, we can see that the driver of female deselection is not dowry but social stratification; a devaluation of women's natal status; and an overall preference for sons. While the top caste A choose sons and receive daughters-in-law with dowry, (within limits) they would choose sons even in they had to pay bride price.

As for caste B, they also choose sons over daughters and in an equilibrium with dowry, they are on the paying end. Could the case be made that dowry makes them shun daughters? The argument is even weaker here as they could marry their daughters to boys in B (or C) and obtain a bride price, but they choose not to.

The lowest caste, C, does not pay dowry and does not deselect daughters, again seemingly adding to the picture linking dowry to infanticide, but the correlation is spurious. In this caste, not all sons marry, as daughters are lost to caste B. The conjectured equilibrium has balanced sex ratios, but a surplus of daughters is also a possibility. Active deselection of sons is rarely discussed, but it is possible that out-marrying low status groups run a surplus of girls, e.g., Cronk [1989].

That said, how does the model's predictions square with the finding of Bhalotra et al. [2020] who found that plausibly exogenous variation in gold prices affected parents willingness to have or care for daughters – higher gold prices raising the cost of dowries and negatively impacting the health outcomes of girls. A short answer might be that several models of behaviours may hold. Bhalotra et al. [2020]'s findings suggest a certain mental accounting on the part of parents [Thaler, 1990]. One possibility is that parents set a mental budget for a daughter, and when the projected cost exceeds the bounds, they disinvest. Generally speaking, consumers have been found to react more negatively to price hikes deemed as unjustified, e.g., Rotem-

berg [2005], fluctuations in dowry payments perhaps falling in that category. However, this is a short term response.

In the longer term, the mental budget or other margins, such as the assumption that dowry has to encompass a fixed amount of gold, might be expected to adjust along the lines of this paper's proposed model.

Finally, the literature has focuses on the cost of daughters, not sons. I have yet to see a paper linking the birth of sons to prices that may reasonably be expected to influence the cost of raising them. That the lives of daughters is subject to commodity-price fluctuations speaks volumes about the extent to which women and girls have been dehumanized.

5 Discussion

This chapter has argued that the Hindu family was essentially a Tribal family. This classification was based on the locus of power, with the "endogamous" group, the jati, but we have also seen the high degree of overlap with features associated with the Tribal family. However, many of them are also shared with the Patriarchal family, making power locus an important point of distinction.

If observationally equivalent, is the distinction even worth making, one might wonder. I would argue that it speaks to the manner and degree of which "tradition" is socially enforced as well as the depth of the subjugation of women, more complete in the patrilineal Tribal family than in the Patriarchal family. In the latter, individual fathers are free to let go of control over their daughters, can allow them the right to decide their own marriage, and may appoint them as heirs, whereas this is not possible in the former.

We have also pointed to how the caste system's tolerance of hypergamy made daughters redundant in the upper castes, removing a political ally and paving the way for women to be grouped with vaishas and shudras as *papa-yonih*, i.e., born of sinful wombs [Thapar, 2014, page 260].

The establishment of the Republic of India in 1947 abolished the caste system and lent legal support to the Nuclear family. Three generations removed, two things stand out: (i) the level of violence against women; and (ii) the continued presence of the traditional family.

5.1 Violence

To start with violence, the 2012 Delhi rape and murder of a 23-year old physiotherapy student drew the world's attention to something long known to Indian women: assault and harassment is a clear and present danger. The consequences extend beyond those immediately victimized as the threat has a confining effect, thus limiting women's ability to participate in activities outside the home (for an effect on school choice, see Borker [2021]).

For a country not at war, the brazen brutality and lawlessness stood out. The assailants only attempt to cover their tracks was to throw the still breathing bodies out of the moving van. The case provoked national outrage and soul searching. While some blamed the "girl" (as unmarried women are often referred to in India), to many her ordeal epitomized the everyday struggle of women trying to go about their lives without harassment or assault in an atmosphere described by one journalist as a "dark hole" [Dubey, 2019].

Women are the subject of violence at the hands of men the world over. India has no monopoly on the genre. But the specifics stand out. For instance, rape comes in many varieties, date rape, gang rape, marital rape, etc. The Indian list of qualifiers includes "custodial" (by the police) [Gangoli, 2007], "political" (by political opponents); "revenge" (by spurned suitors); "corrective" (punishment for caste-related infractions).

The rape of young girls is particularly shocking. Social science cannot not deal in single tragedies, however cruel and wanton. Still, the steady drip of newspaper reports of child rapes, the victims hanging on to dear life in the Intensive Care Unit or their eviscerated and mangled bodies tossed by the roadside or found in landfills, merit at least a mention.[11]

[11]The cases are too numerous to detail, but as an example, a Google search on "rape India girl" on March 14, 2024 turned up the following newspaper articles, all pertaining to rape and murder of minors in the past three weeks:

"Seven-year-old raped, axed and strangled to death in Madhya Pradhesh;"

"9-Year-Old Girl's Rape, Murder Sparks Protests In Puducherry"

"Kanpur shocker: Two minor girls found hanging from tree, families allege rape"

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/108287451.cms

https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/9-year-old-girls-rape-murder-sparks-protests-in-puducherry-2-

https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/kanpur-shocker-two-minor-girls-found-hanging-from-t
html

In the victim's savage treatment it is hard not to see the fingerprints of the caste system, the weight of which comes down particularly hard on lower-caste girls, treated as if for the taking.

The remnants of the caste system can also be seen in what is considered punishable behaviour. To marry outside of the caste or within the gotra can be a capital offence, ordered and carried out by family members, or if need be, the caste-based Khap panchayats [Raj, 2012, Vesvikar and Agarwal, 2016]. Milder punishment can include the rape of female "transgressors."

The assailants often do little to hide their crime, suggesting a certain confidence. And maybe they calculate correctly. Community condemnation follows those who speak up, e.g., Dubey [2019]. The local police may refuse to file a report, or be in on the crime. In Uttar Pradesh, a policeman was caught on a hidden camera advising the father of a woman who had married against his wishes to kill her [Raj, 2012]. And even if a report is filed, the famously slow judicial system may be counted on [Uma, 2024].

The violence faced by girls and women is not how a tribe treats its own, it is how it treats a subordinate tribe.

Endogamy is routinely included in the definition of caste. But if marriages were truly endogamous in caste, then for each son married, the caste would have to produce one daughter. In this case, mothers, wives, and daughters-in-law, would all be daughters of fellow caste members, not that of despised "wife givers," (e.g., Natarajan [1972]). This "in-group" status would offer protection against abuse if only because in each man could expect to have a daughter who was someone else's daughter-in-law or wife.

By contrast, when marriage are hypergamous, the daughters-in-law, wives, and mothers are inferior outsiders, like gastarbeiters on a work permit. The doors are closed to the in-laws. Their culture is not that of the family. Women are reduced to servants to be instructed. The status gap is particularly visible in the pitiful case of the widow who short of killing herself was supposed to live out her remaining days in penitence and penury, sometimes evicted by her own son.

As we have seen, between the distaste for daughters and the taste for caste endogamy, the former won. Through sex choice, and hypergamy, the dominant caste can create a society in which women are little more than bought wombs. For the lower castes this is not possible. They produce their

own women or do not marry at all. But the example is set from the top.

5.2 Persistence of Tradition

We now come to the inevitable question of why so many of the traditional rules surrounding marriage, and by implication, family, have remained? If the Hindu family were integral to the caste system, why is it still around almost 80 years after the caste system's formal abolition?

There are several responses to this question.

- First it can be noted that some of the more egregious features of the Hindu family have changed. While not stamped out, the marriage of 5-year olds is now a rarity. And although the social stigma of the widow remains, the last known case of Sati was in 1987, an act that drew public outrage and forced a national discussion.

- The family today may be characterized as Patriarchal. Although there are exceptions, for the most part, adult children in India have as much freedom as their fathers (and sometimes mothers) allow them. As a result, individual freedom exists in pockets of society; while on the main, marriages continue to be arranged in accordance with tradition [Thapar, 2014, page 49] – tradition providing a convenient justification for parental power.

- Decision making having been moved to parents, away from the jati, is a conjecture. For a test, we might look to the (ir)relevance of caste panchayats – or put plainly, do inter-caste unions result in lynchings, or not.

  Granted, the panchayats have more sway away from the cities. But India remains predominantly rural. With 70 percent of the population classified as living in rural areas, the village is not an abberation.

- The slow pace of change may be linked to India as a "soft" state. Laws and regulations in India have long had a quality of optionality [Myrdal, 1968, Weiner, 1990]. Writing in the late 1960s, two decades after the official abolition of the caste system, Myrdal noted a tacit acceptance of its continued influence by the ruling elite.

But as one lawmaker noted:

> [W]e are not living in an age when India had no contact with the outer world. We are living in an age when ideas have a knack of crossing the borders of countries. We are living in an age when certain theories of liberty and certain theories of freedom have crept into the minds of men and women, especially young men and women and, if we do not allow scope for the working of those ideas it is my fear that Hindus society as we know it today shall not long be able to maintain its existence.
>
> Shri B. K. P. Sinha, September 17, 1951,
> Parliamentary Debate of the Hindu Code Bill
> From Ambedkar [2013, pages 1007-1008]

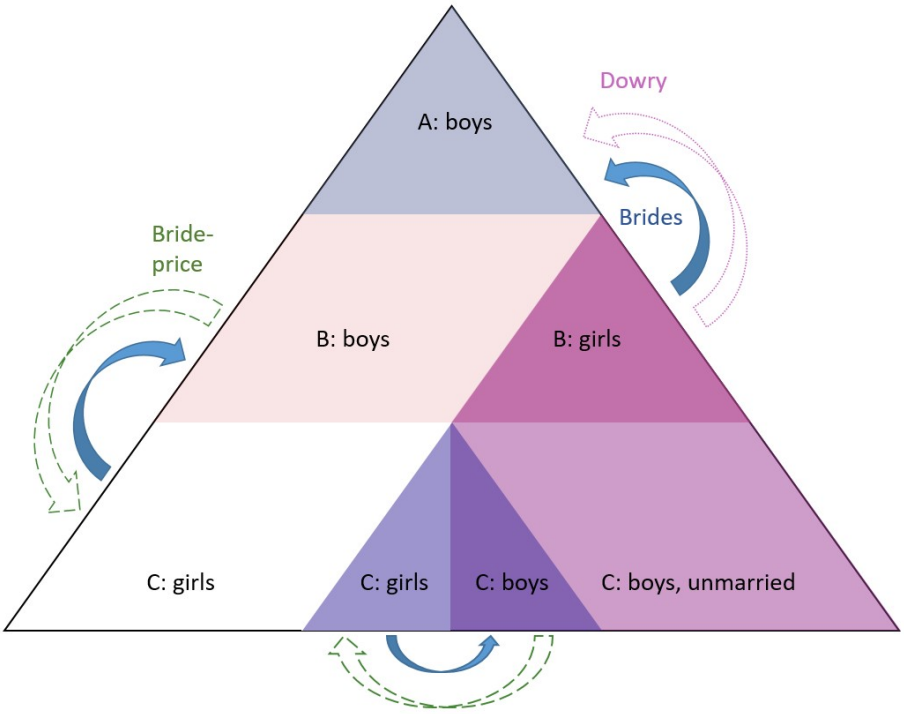


Figure 1: Hypergamy – Sex Choice – Dowry and Bride Price

References

Janaki Abraham. Contingent caste endogamy and patriarchy: Lessons for our understanding of caste. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49(2):56–65, 2014.

Bina Agarwal. *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994.

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar. *Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar : Writings and Speeches*, volume 14, part 2 (Section IV). Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, reprinted 2013 edition, 2013. URL `https://www.mea.gov.in/Images/attach/amb/Volume_14_02.pdf`. 1st edition 1995.

Arthur L. Basham. *The Wonder that was India: A Survey of the Culture of the Indian Sub-Continent Before the Coming of the Muslims*. Random House, 1959. First published 1954.

Anustup Basu. *Hindutva as Political Monotheism*. Duke University Press, 2020.

Gary Becker. *A Treatise on the Family*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1981.

Sonia Bhalotra, Abhishek Chakravarty, and Selim Gulesci. The price of gold: Dowry and death in india. *Journal of Development Economics*, 143, 2020.

Rituparna Bhattacharyya and Suman Singh. Exclusion (and seclusion): geographies of disowned widows of india. *GeoJournal*, 83(4):757–774, 2018.

Girija Borker. Safety first: Perceived risk of street harassment and educational choices of women. Policy Research Paper 9731, The World Bank, 2021.

Célestin Bouglé. *Essays on the Caste System*. Cambridge University Press, 1971. Trans. David F. Pocock, original work published in 1908.

John Brough. *The Early Brahmanical system of Gotra and Pravara*. Cambridge University Press, 1953.

Martha Chen. *Perpetual Mourning: Widowhood in Rural India*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Steven N.S. Cheung. The enforcement of property rights in children, and the marriage contract. *Economic Journal*, 82(326):641–657, 1972.

Gaurav Chiplunkar and Jeffrey Weaver. Marriage markets and the rise of dowry in India. *Journal of Development Economics*, 164:103–115, 2023.

Randall Collins. *The Sociology of Philosophies: a Global Theory of Intellectual Change*. Harvard University Press, 1998.

Lee Cronk. Low socioeconomic status and female-biased parental investment: the Mukogodo example. *American Anthropologist*, 91:414–429, 1989.

Monica Das Gupta. Selective discrimination against female children in rural Punjab, India. *Population and Development Review*, 13:77–100, March 1987.

Donald R. Davis. A realist view of Hindu law. *Ratio Jurist*, 19(3):287–313, 2006.

Fred M. Donner. *The Early Islamic Conquest*. Princeton University Press, 1981.

Priyanka Dubey. *No Nation for Women*. Simon & Schuster India, 2019.

Abbe J. A. Dubois. *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*. Clarendon Press, Oxford, 3rd edition, 1906.

Louis Dumont. *Homo Hierarchicus: the Caste System and Its Implications*. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1970.

Geraldine H. Forbes. Women and modernity: The issue of child marriage in India. *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 2(4):407–419, 1979.

Lina Fruzzetti. *The gift of a Virgin: Women, Marriage, and Ritual in a Bengali Society*. Rutgers University Press, 1982.

Geetanjali Gangoli. *Indian Feminisms: Law, Patriarchies and Violence in India*. Routledge, 2007.

Swati Ghosh. Bengali widows of varanasi. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(14):1151–1153, 2000.

Jack Goody. Bridewealth and dowry in Africa and Eurasia. In Jack R. Goody and Stanley J. Tambiah, editors, *Bridewealth and Dowry*, number 7 in Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973.

Jack Goody. *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1983.

Banerjee Gooroodass. *The Hindu Law of Marriage and Stridhan*. Thacker, Spink, and Co., Calcutta, 1879.

Irfan Habib. *Post-Mauryan India, 200 BCE - AD 300: A political and Economic History*, volume 6 of *A People's History of India*. Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2012.

Paul Hershman. *Punjabi kinship and marriage*. Hindustan Pub Corp, Delhi, 1981.

J. H. Hutton. *Caste in India: Its Nature, Function, and Origins*. Oxford University Press, 1946.

James Jaffe. *Ironies of Colonial Governance: Law, Custom and Justice in Colonial India*. Cambridge Studies in Law and Society. Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Prabhat Jha, Rajexh Kumar, Priya Vasa, Neeraj Dhingra, Deva Thiruchelvam, and Rahim Moineddin. High male-to-female sex ratio of children born in India: national survey of 1.1 million households. *The Lancet*, (January 21):211–218, 2006.

Mary E. John. *Child Marriage in an International Frame: A Feminist Review from India*. Routledge India, 2021.

K. M. Kapadia. *Marriage and Family in India*. Oxford University Press, 3rd edition, 1966.

D. D. Kosambi. The basis of ancient Indian history (i). *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 75(1):35–45, 1955.

D. D. Kosambi. *Ancient India: A History of its Culture and Civilization*. Pantheon Books, 1965.

William Christie MacLeod. The suttee in north america : its antecedents and origin. *Journal de la société des américanistes*, 20(1):107–120, 1928.

Michael Mann. *The Sources of Social Power*. Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Clare Midgley. Female emancipation in an imperial frame: English women and the campaign against sati (widow-burning) in india, 1813-30. *Women's History Review*, 9(1):95–121, 2000.

Barbara D. Miller. *The Endangered Sex: Neglect of Female Children in Rural North India*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1981.

Murray Milner. *Status and sacredness: a general theory of status relations and an analysis of Indian culture*. Oxford University Press, 1994.

Edward Moor. *Hindu Infanticide: An Account of the Measures Asopted for Suppressing the Practice of the Systematic Murder by Their Parents of Female Infants*. J. Johnson and Co., 1811.

Gunnar Myrdal. *Asian Drama: an Inquiry Into the Poverty of Nations*. Random House, 1968.

Dandapani Natarajan. The changes in the sex ratio. Census Centenary Monograph 6, Census of India, 1972.

Patrick Olivelle. *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kautilya's Arthasastra*. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Suhasini Raj. Loving and living in 21st century india. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 23 June 2012.

H. A. Rose. 96. legitimisation and adoption in hindu law. *Man*, 22:166–169, 1922.

Julio J. Rotemberg. Customer anger at price increases, changes in the frequency of price adjustment and monetary policy. *Journal of Monetary Economics*, 52(4):829–852, 2005.

Arundhati Roy. *The Doctor and the Saint*. Haymarket Books, 2017.

Sastri Golapchandra Sarkar. *The Hindu Law of Adoption*. Thacker, Spink and Co.: Publishers to the Calcutta University, Calcutta, 1891.

Amartya Sen and Jean Drèze. *The Amartya Sen and Jean Dr 'eze omnibus : comprising poverty and famines, hunger and public action, India: economic development and social opportunity*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

Emile Senart. *Caste in India: The Facts and the System*. Revivals. Routledge, 1930. Trans. E. Denison Ross, original work published in 1896.

Somini Sengupta. *The End of Karma: Hope and Fury Among India's Young*. Norton, 2016.

Elman R. Service. *Origins of the State and Civilization: The Process of Cultural Evolution*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1975.

Ram Sharan Sharma. *Indian feudalism: c. 300-1200*. University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1965.

Ram Sharan Sharma. How feudal was Indian feudalism? *Social Scientist*, 12(3):16–41, February 1984.

Ram Sharan Sharma. *India's ancient past*. Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2007.

Mysore Narasimhashar Srinivas. *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*. Clarendon Press, London, 1952.

Vijay Kumar Thakur. *Urbanization in Ancient India*. Abhinav Publications, New Delhi, 1981.

Richard H. Thaler. Anomalies: Saving, fungibility, and mental accounts. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 4(1):193–205, March 1990.

Romila Thapar. *A History of India*, volume 1. Penguine books, 1966.

Romila Thapar. The first millennium B.C in Northern India. In Romila Thapar, editor, *Recent Perspectives of Early Indian History*, pages 80–141. Sangam Books, 1995.

Romila Thapar. *The Past as Present: Forging Contemporary Indentities through history*. Aleph, kindle edition, 2014.

Robert L. Trivers and Dan E. Willard. Natural selection of parental ability to vary the sex-ratio of offspring. *Science*, 179:90–92, January 5 1973.

Saumya Uma. *Violence, Gender and the State: 'Not Just' A Legal Analysis*. Routledge, 2024.

Meghna Vesvikar and Malivka Agarwal. Honor killings in India. *Perspectives in Social Work*, (1):48–62, April 2016.

L. S. Vishwanath. Female infanticide: The colonial experience. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(22):2313–2318, 2004.

William Ward. *Account of the writings, religion, and manners, of the Hindoos : including translations from their principal works*, volume 2. Mission Press, Serampor, 1811.

Myron Weiner. *The Child and the State in India: Child Labor and Education Policy in Comparative Perspective*. Princeton University Press, 1990.

K. P. Yadav. *Child Marriage in India*. Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2006.