Changing Gender Roles in Marriage: Negotiating Equality and Conflict in Indian Families

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ABSTRACT: The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teacher education is pivotal for preparing future educators to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving digital landscape. This paper explores the multifaceted role of ICT in empowering teacher educators by examining its benefits, addressing challenges, and proposing strategies for successful implementation. The benefits of ICT include personalized learning experiences, improved accessibility and flexibility, and enhanced collaboration and communication among educators. However, challenges such as the digital divide, insufficient training, and resistance to change must be addressed to fully leverage ICT's potential. To overcome these barriers, the paper suggests strategies such as comprehensive ICT training programs, supportive infrastructure, and fostering collaborative learning environments. Looking ahead, the continuous adoption of ICT is essential for transforming teacher education and enhancing educational practices. Educational institutions are encouraged to prioritize ICT integration, while educators are urged to embrace and lead the transition towards a digitally empowered future. This paper underscores the critical role of ICT in shaping the future of teacher education and highlights the need for sustained commitment to technology-enhanced learning.

Keywords: ICT, TPACK, Personalized Learning, Digital Divide, Professional Development, Blended Learning, Collaborative Learning, Digital Literacy.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage in India has long been viewed not merely as a union between two individuals but as a sacred institution, a social sacrament that is deeply woven into the fabric of family, community and tradition. For generations, the roles within this institution were clearly defined- men were considered to be the breadwinners, protectors and decision-makers, while women were expected to take care of the household, defined as caregivers, nurturers and custodians of culture. Yet, as the country strides into the twenty-first century, these boundaries have begun to blur. Education, economic independence, urbanization and technology have collectively resulted in an era of change that is redefining what marriage dynamics, relationships and equality mean in Indian society. This article explores the negotiation how Indian families are redefining gender roles within marriage and what impact they have on family life, what social and emotional conflicts emerge in the process of balancing traditional expectations with modern realities and to explore ways to promote equality and harmony in marital relationships. Drawing upon research, lived experiences and policy frameworks, it aims to examine the evolving nature of marital relationships in contemporary India where the home, the workplace and the heart all become the sites of change.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this review of literature many research paper and documents from Journal and news viz., Journal of Family Studies, Indian Journal of Social Psychology, The Times of India; from Government of India sources i.e. Economic Survey of India, Government of India Gazette, Unpaid Care Work and the Gender Gap in India, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER); from international institute viz., United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF),: ORF Policy Report, UNDP (United Nations Development Programme),International Labour Organization (ILO), , Pew Research Center Washington, DC 20004 USA, The World Economic Forum, source had been analyzed thoroughly was synthesized to get meaningful

conclusion and review regarding the topic "Changing Gender Roles In Marriage: Negotiating Equality And Conflict In Indian Families".

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

Traditionally, Indian society has been patriarchal in nature, where the man is viewed as the primary breadwinner and main decision-maker of the family, while the woman is seen as the caregiver, responsible for managing the home and looking after children and the elderly. In traditional Indian society, women were deprived from positions of power and influence. They were often denied opportunities such as receiving formal education, traveling independently, or participating freely in social and public life. Social practices like child marriage and Sati Pratha reflected the deep-rooted gender bias against women, who were often viewed merely as child-bearers and caretakers of the household. However, during the Vedic period, women enjoyed comparatively higher status and freedom. However, during the Vedic period, women enjoyed comparatively higher status and freedom, in early Vedic period, women held an esteemed status and were honoured when they actively participated in the socio-cultural activities of Indian civilization. They were permitted to pursue education in gurukuls, engage in martial training and even choose their husbands through Swayamvara. Historical and mythological examples highlight women's intellectual and physical strength such as Ubhaya Bharati, wife of Mandan Mishra defeated Adi Shankaracharya in a philosophical debate (Sethumadhavan, 2013) and Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi, who fought bravely against the British while carrying her child on her back.

In Indian traditions, marriage is regarded as a sacred and lifelong union between two people. It is considered as a divine bond between the bride and the groom, sharing journey of love, duty and spiritual evolution throughout their lifetime. Religious texts, folklore and even rituals emphasized a woman's obedience, sacrifice and devotion to her husband as virtues. Chaudhuri (2021), observed that, Indian culture placed greater value on duty and obedience than on equality within marriage. This belief system perpetuated male dominance as a natural order one rarely questioned, even by the women who bore its weight.

Between the era of 1950s and 1970s, also termed as "The Era of Traditional Roles," the decades following India's independence were marked by optimism and nation-building, but gender roles within families remained largely unchanged. Women were expected to be homemakers, devoted mothers and moral anchors of the household. Even educated women often withdrew from professional life after marriage to fulfill domestic roles of the family. Marriage during this era was less about companionship and more about social obligation. The idea of a "good wife" was tied to her ability to maintain family honor and harmony, often at the cost of her own aspirations. Between the 1980s to 1990s, slow shifts emerged. The winds of change began to blow during the late 20th century. The 1980s and 1990s saw gradual social transformation as education and media exposure grew. The feminist movements of the 1970s had started to echo through Indian society, encouraging women to question unequal structures. More women began to pursue higher education and professional careers, though balancing work and home continued to be seen as a woman's responsibility. Television, advertising and cinema also began to mirror and mold these subtle changes portraying women as both homemakers and professionals. Yet, the expectation of self-sacrifice persisted. Men, while supportive of their wives' education, rarely shared the household load. The change was visible, but slow more a whisper than a roar. Research in Canada suggests that Anglophones favour more traditional family roles, while Francophones are more egalitarian and place greater emphasis on having children (Wu & Baer 1996).

CONTEMPORARY SHIFTS

The picture of marriage and family life in modern India is not immutable rather, evolving steadily especially in urban areas where education, technology and economic pressures are reshaping daily life. A quiet but profound transformation is unfolding in homes across cities, where both partners are redefining what it means to be a husband, a wife and a parent in the twenty-first century. These changes are neither uniform nor instantaneous, but they reflect a slow, ongoing negotiation between traditional expectations and contemporary realities. The urban household has become a site where cultural norms, economic demands and personal aspirations intersect, creating new patterns of family life that challenge long-standing assumptions about gender roles.

In the 2000's era, also known as "The Era of Dual Roles", globalization, technology and urbanization transformed Indian family life. These changes redefined the marriage and household structure, giving rise in the number of nuclear families and dual-income households because of financial necessity in urban areas. Women began excelling as engineers, entrepreneurs and executives while contributing to shoulder domestic responsibilities. Millennials and Gen Z couples consider the period after 2020 as a phase of redefining marriage. These younger generations increasingly view marriage as a partnership grounded in emotional intimacy, shared decision-making and mutual respect. Yet, the transition remains complex, as deep-rooted cultural norms and patriarchal expectations continue to shape gender roles within families. Chaudhuri (2021), emphasized that women's duties and obedience have historically been prioritized over their autonomy an attitude that still subtly influences modern relationships. The Economic Survey of India (2025), reported that women's workforce participation nearly doubled between 2017–18 and 2023–24, indicating growing financial independence. Indian women spend nearly eight times more time than men on unpaid domestic and care work, a figure higher than in most other countries (Kumar, 2025). Kumar and Bhatnagar (2024), observed that egalitarian beliefs enhance marital harmony, while traditional expectations perpetuate conflict. Furthermore, the Evans

et al. (2022), found that although most Indians favour shared childcare and joint financial decisions, 87 percent still believe wives should obey their husbands.

Perhaps the most visible marker of this change is the increasing number of dual-earner households. Urban families today often rely on two incomes to maintain their lifestyle, support children's education and meet rising living costs. Yet, this trend reflects more than just economic necessity it signifies a deeper social shift in how women's contributions are valued. Women's work is now increasingly recognized as vital to both financial and emotional stability within the household, rather than being viewed as supplementary. This shift is visible not only in the growing number of women pursuing higher education and professional degrees but also in the rising acceptance of women as equal partners in financial and domestic decision-making. Education and professional advancement have empowered women with greater autonomy, enabling them to negotiate roles, responsibilities and expectations within marriage with more confidence. Parallel to this change, men's roles within families are also evolving, though at a slower and sometimes uneven pace. Traditionally, masculinity was associated with authority and financial provision. Today, many urban men are beginning to embrace a more inclusive identity that values care, empathy and active participation in domestic life. Tasks once viewed as unconventional such as cooking, cleaning, attending school meetings, or caring for children are gradually becoming part of everyday family life. This redefinition of masculinity reflects an ongoing cultural shift where caregiving is increasingly recognized as an expression of strength and partnership rather than weakness.

The rise of shared parenting among younger, urban couples marks another significant step toward gender equality in the home. This practice extends beyond dividing chores it involves both parents sharing emotional responsibilities and investing equally in their children's growth. In urban areas, about 41 percent of fathers are actively engaged in childcare, a significant rise from less than 20 percent a decade ago, indicating a remarkable transformation in the perception and practice of modern fatherhood.

CHALLENGES AND CONFLICTS

Despite significant progress in women's education, employment and autonomy, Indian marriages continue to face complex challenges rooted in the clash between traditional gender expectations and modern aspirations for equality. In today's globalized world, even as we step firmly into the 21st century, the position of women in India continues to be shaped by a deeply patriarchal society.

1. Work-Life Balance Stress
Working women today juggle professional ambitions with domestic responsibilities, creating a "double burden." Pandit (2024), found that married working women perform nearly six times more unpaid care work than employed men. This imbalance often results in fatigue, emotional strain and time poverty, negatively affecting marital harmony. The lack of institutional support such as flexible work hours and childcare facilities further compounds the problem.

2. Resistance from Older Generations
Even as younger couples adopt egalitarian values, older family members often uphold patriarchal traditions. Rahi and Sinha (2022), observed that intergenerational conflicts arise when employed women assert independence or expect shared domestic duties. In joint families, daughters-in-law are frequently expected to prioritize home over career, creating tension and emotional distress for couples navigating between modern ideals and conservative expectations.

3. Persistent Gender Pay Gap
Economic inequality continues to undermine equality within marriage (The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, 2023) indicates that Indian women earn about 21 percent less than men for similar work. This pays disparity restricts women's financial decision-making power, reinforces dependency and perpetuates traditional household hierarchies. It can also trigger emotional conflict ranging from resentment to insecurity affecting relationship stability.

4. Mental Health Strain and Role Overload
The pressure to balance multiple roles takes a toll on women's psychological well-being Apurva & Sharma (2024), found a rise in unpaid caregiving work from 21.2 percent to 25.6 percent in rural areas and 19.5 percent to 24.5 percent in urban regions. Persistent workload imbalance contributes to anxiety, burnout and marital tension. Social stigma surrounding mental health further discourages women from seeking help, leading many to internalize guilt and emotional exhaustion.

5. Shifting Social Norms and Hope for Change
Despite these challenges, gradual progress is evident (The UNDP Gender Social Norms Index, 2023) shows an 8 percent decline in gender bias in India since 2014, indicating shifting attitudes toward equality. Younger generations are increasingly embracing shared domestic roles, mental health awareness and emotional partnership. This evolution reflects a hopeful transition where equality is seen not as a disruption to tradition but as a foundation for healthier, more fulfilling marriages.

Coping Strategies and Positive Changes
There are still challenges in achieving gender balance in marriage, but in the past decade, many positive changes have taken place. People, families, workplaces and institutions are learning to adapt. Coping methods are no longer limited to just managing things at home they now include collective efforts and government policies that promote equality, well-being and shared responsibility. Supportive work policies, better education and skills, changing family roles, men

helping more in caregiving and media support are all signs of real progress toward fairer and more peaceful relationships.

1. Supportive Workforce Policies

Modern organizations increasingly recognize that employee well-being and productivity are interconnected. Gender-sensitive workplace reforms such as maternity and paternity leave, flexible hours, remote or hybrid work and on-site childcare facilities help working parents manage both professional and family duties. Central Civil Services (Leave) Rule 551(A) of 1972 allows the male to take paternity leave of 15 days within six months after the child's birth (Nagodra, 2025). The inclusion of paternity leave encourages men's participation in early childcare, while flexible work options enable women to stay in the workforce without compromising family life. These policies, when genuinely implemented, reduce gender bias and create workplaces grounded in empathy and equality.

2. Education and Skill Training

Education remains the most powerful instrument for dismantling gender barriers. Access to higher education, vocational training and digital literacy empowers women with financial independence and self-confidence. Education also transforms societal attitudes by fostering awareness of gender equality, legal rights and shared responsibility. When men and women alike receive gender-sensitive education, they develop a mindset of collaboration rather than competition laying the foundation for equitable marriages and inclusive communities.

3. Changing Family Dynamics

The transition from joint to nuclear family systems especially in urban India has enabled couples to redefine marital roles with greater autonomy. Couples now make decisions together and divide responsibilities based on practicality rather than tradition. While this gives women more independence, it also increases the pressure on couples to manage home and work without extended family support.

4. Men's Involvement in Caregiving

One of the most positive changes in recent years is the growing participation of men in caregiving and household work. Fathers are increasingly involved in childcare, cooking and home management breaking stereotypes of masculinity. According to UNICEF (2022), 41 percent of urban fathers are now actively involved in childcare, up from less than 20 percent a decade ago. Such engagement not only strengthens family bonds but also normalizes caregiving as a shared duty, promoting healthier emotional environments and gender balance within families. Kulik (2002) in his study on Marital equality and the quality of long-term marriage in later life on Israel couples revealed that shared family roles result in reduced burn-out in both husbands and wives.

5. Media and Awareness Campaigns

Media plays a big role in shaping how society thinks. Various social media campaigns like #ShareTheLoad and #HeForShe challenge traditional gender norms and promote shared domestic roles. Television, cinema and social media now portray women as decision-makers and men as nurturers, helping reshape public perceptions. Online platforms also provide spaces for women to share experiences, build communities and advocate for mental health and marital equality.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

The growing discourse on gender equality in marriage, family and the workplace underscores the urgent need for policies that not only safeguard women's rights but also promote shared responsibility between men and women. While individual and societal transformations play a vital role, sustainable progress depends on robust institutional frameworks and legislative enforcement. Policies function as both catalysts and safeguards bridging the gap between evolving social values and actual practice.

India has made notable advances through progressive laws and gender-inclusive programs; yet implementation gaps, workplace biases and deep-rooted patriarchal norms continue to limit their effectiveness. The path forward lies in strengthening legal protections, promoting inclusive and flexible policies, enhancing economic empowerment and fostering a cultural environment that normalizes equality at every level of society.

1. Policy Support and Legal Framework

A strong legal foundation is the cornerstone of gender equality. Strengthening and expanding laws that ensure workplace fairness including equal pay for equal work, protection from harassment and gender-neutral hiring and promotion practices remains crucial. The Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Act-2013 has been instrumental in establishing safer workplaces. Its mandate for Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) in institutions enhances women's confidence and encourages workforce participation. Similarly, the Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act-2017, granting 26 weeks of paid maternity leave, is a significant step forward. However, limited paternity leave (only 15 days for government employees) perpetuates the idea that caregiving is primarily a woman's duty.

2. Accessible and Affordable Childcare Facilities

One of the most consistent barriers to women's sustained workforce participation is the absence of reliable childcare support. Affordable, accessible childcare centers at workplaces, educational institutions and community hubs can significantly alleviate this burden. Government incentives to employers providing on-site daycare facilities, or public–private partnerships for childcare infrastructure, can help women maintain employment continuity. Integrating childcare with community welfare and early childhood education programs can also extend these benefits to rural and semi-urban regions, ensuring inclusivity and equitable access.

3. Encouraging Male Involvement in Caregiving

True gender equality demands the active inclusion of men in caregiving roles. Policy measures such as extended paternity leave, tax incentives and recognition of caregiving in performance evaluations can encourage men's participation. Countries like Sweden and Norway illustrate how gender-neutral parental leave reshapes social attitudes. Similarly, educational and corporate awareness programs should redefine caregiving as a shared duty of strength and compassion, not a gendered obligation. By recognizing and rewarding men's caregiving roles, policies can accelerate cultural transformation.

4. Digital and Economic Inclusion

Economic independence remains the foundation of women's empowerment. Digital access and entrepreneurship open vast opportunities for women to participate in economic life on equitable terms. Programs under Digital India and Startup India can be made more gender-responsive by incorporating digital literacy, mentorship schemes and financial inclusion initiatives for women. Microfinance and cooperative models can bridge urban–rural gaps and support women-led enterprises.

5. Monitoring, Research and Sustainable Progress

Policy effectiveness depends on continuous monitoring and data-driven evaluation. Regular national and regional surveys on gender equality, unpaid labor and workforce participation can identify bottlenecks and guide improvements. According to the ILO Global Report (2023), equalizing labor participation could increase global GDP by up to 26 percent by 2025 demonstrating that gender equity is not only a moral goal but an economic necessity.

6. Promoting Work–Life Balance and Flexibility

Policies that promote work–life balance benefit both men and women, improving productivity and overall well-being. Flexible arrangements remote work, compressed workweeks, job sharing, or hybrid models allow individuals to meet personal and professional responsibilities more effectively. Such policies must, however, extend beyond elite corporate spaces to all sectors, including low-income and informal workers. Public awareness campaigns can help destigmatize flexibility, portraying it not as a "favor" to women but as a human-centered work ethic that values well-being and family harmony.

CONCLUSIONS

The World and India are growing at a faster rate due to urbanization, digitalization and industrialization. This transformation leads to transformation of gender roles in Indian marriage. It reflects a gradual yet meaningful shift from rigid patriarchy to emerging equality in relationship. Urbanization, economic participation of women, and changing family structures have accelerated this shift, empowering both partners to contribute meaningfully to household, professional, and emotional spheres. Despite persisting challenges such as gender pay gaps, unequal domestic workloads, and traditional mindsets, the overall trajectory is positive. Policy reforms, educational opportunities, and media advocacy are collectively fostering a culture of gender sensitivity and cooperation. The growing acceptance of men's involvement in caregiving and women's leadership in professional spaces symbolizes a new balance between tradition and modernity. Thus, the changing face of marriage in India reflects a society in transition one that is learning to harmonize cultural heritage with contemporary values of equality and mutual respect. The future of Indian marriage lies not in preserving old hierarchies, but in nurturing partnerships that value emotional connection, fairness, and shared growth between men and women.

FUTURE SCOPE OF STUDY

The evolving landscape of gender roles in Indian marriages opens several promising avenues for future progress. Continued expansion of women's education and employment opportunities is likely to accelerate economic independence and promote more egalitarian partnerships. Policies supporting paternity leave, flexible work arrangements, and affordable childcare can further encourage men's participation in caregiving. Greater societal awareness—supported by schools, media, and community programs—can help dismantle stereotypes and normalize shared responsibilities. More longitudinal research on dual-earner couples, mental health outcomes, and shifting family dynamics will deepen understanding and guide policy reforms. Overall, the future holds potential for marriages that are more collaborative, emotionally supportive, and equitable—provided systemic barriers and traditional biases continue to be addressed.

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