Comparison Of Marriage In Mizo Society: Past And Present

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ABSTRACT

This study critically examines the transformation of marriage practices in Mizo society, highlighting the shift from clan-based, customary institutions to individual-oriented unions shaped by modernization, education, religion, and law. Traditionally, Mizo marriage was rooted in clan exogamy, bride price (manpui), and the authority of elders, functioning as both a social and economic institution that reinforced kinship and cultural continuity. Women's roles were historically restricted under patriarchal norms, with marriages arranged primarily to consolidate family and clan alliances. However, with the advent of Christianity, urbanization, and modern education, significant changes emerged. Church solemnization replaced clan ceremonies, bride price became symbolic, and gender roles underwent redefinition with greater autonomy and rights for women. Present-day marriages are increasingly based on love and personal choice, with families serving advisory rather than controlling roles. Legal recognition under civil law further ensures equality and protection in marital relations. Despite modernization, elements of tradition such as clan exogamy and symbolic bride price persist, reflecting cultural continuity. This synthesis of tradition and modernity demonstrates how Mizo society adapts to preserve its heritage while embracing progressive values of equality, freedom, and personal choice. The findings affirm that marriage remains a vital cultural institution, evolving to balance historical practices with contemporary aspirations.

Keywords: Mizo marriage, clan exogamy, bride price, Christianity, modernization, gender roles, family and clan, urbanization, legal recognition, cultural continuity...

1. INTRODUCTION:

Marriage among the Mizos has also had major changes from its indigenous origin to its current state, demonstrating cultural continuity amidst social change. Marriages among the Mizos were traditionally steeped in indigenous practices, with clan affiliations, social norms, and communal acceptance as major factors. Marriages were arranged by families and involved practices like bride price (manpui) and negotiations that symbolized not only the marriage of two people but also the consolidation of clan ties. Divorce was allowed under customary law, albeit stigmatized, and polygamy was not unusual in the past. Women's roles, albeit essential in family life, were traditionally restricted by patriarchal norms (Hlondo, 2021). In modern times, however, the patterns of Mizo marriage have changed in response to modernization, education, Christianity, and legal changes. Love marriages and increased individual choice are on the rise today with decreasing emphasis on customary practices such as bride price (Lalrinchhana et al., 2021). Gender equality and protection under the Indian Constitution have also changed marital relationships further, forging an integration of tradition and modernity in Mizo matrimonial practices (Nghinglova, 2022).

Research Objectives

To examine the transformation of marriage practices in Mizo society from clan-based customs to individual choice under the influence of modernization, education, and religion.

To analyse the role of family, clan, and community in traditional marriage arrangements and their shift towards advisory roles in contemporary Mizo society.

To compare gender roles and family involvement in Mizo marriages between the past and present contexts.

To assess the impact of gender relations, legal recognition, and social change on marital practices and cultural identity among the Mizos.

Research Methodology

This study is based on a secondary research methodology, relying primarily on published and archival sources rather than fieldwork or primary data collection. Data and insights have been gathered from credible repositories such as PubMed, Research Gate, Scopus, Sodhganga, and Google Scholar, which provide access to peer-reviewed journals, theses, and scholarly articles. In addition, books, government reports, and official websites have been referred to for contextual understanding of marriage practices, customary laws, and socio-legal transformations in Mizo society. Secondary data from historical records, missionary accounts, and ethnographic studies were also consulted to trace traditional marriage patterns, while contemporary literature and government reports were analyzed to understand the impact of modernization, Christianity, urbanization, and legal reforms. This method enables a comprehensive comparative analysis of marriage practices in Mizo society by synthesizing existing academic perspectives, socio-legal interpretations, and cultural narratives. The reliance on multiple secondary sources ensures the study's objectivity and validity, allowing an exploration of

continuity and change in marital customs without the limitations of localized primary data collection.

Historical Background of Mizo Marriage Practices

Marriage in the Mizos was traditionally beyond an individual union; it was a social, cultural, and economic institution run by customary law. Being part of the Tibeto-Burman group, the Mizos had unique traditions with a focus on clan, kinship, and community solidarity.

"One important principle was clan exogamy marriage within the same clan being banned to ensure clear-cut kinship boundaries and avert conflicts. Family negotiations were instrumental in arranging marriages, but mutual agreement wasn't entirely missing. Love marriages did take place but needed parental and clan sanction for acceptance. The custom of manpui (bride price) was at the core. Paid by the groom's family to the bride's, it was a symbol of acknowledgement of the daughter's worth to her family and not a payment. The amount depended on family status and wealth, and failure to pay could nullify the marriage(Ralte, 2024).

Ceremonies were simple, usually held at the bride's home with elders ensuring proper observance of customs. Unlike many Indian traditions, elaborate rituals were absent, as the Mizos originally followed animistic beliefs and clan-based customs. Elders blessed the couple, highlighting the community's role in legitimizing unions. Divorce was acceptable socially in circumstances like adultery, cruelty, or failure to pay bride price. Bride price settlements more or less controlled legitimacy. Widows were allowed remarriage, exhibiting some openness, though men tended to have better negotiating skills as a result of patriarchy.

The coming of Christianity in the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw church solemnization, monogamy, and marital loyalty brought into Welsh missionary culture. Traditional practices such as bride price remained, although Christian values transformed marriage traditions to combine local and contemporary norms. Generally, Mizo marriage had traditionally been a combination of clan exogamy, bride price, and communal endorsement, which was a reflection of tribal solidarity. Although modified by religion and modernity, these practices still influence marital culture today(Commission, 2024).

Concept and Significance of Marriage in Mizo Culture

Marriage in Mizo society has in the past been more than a union of two individuals; it is an important social and cultural institution that strengthens kinship, community bonding, and shared values. Marriage was important to the Mizos, who are part of the Tibeto-Burman subgroup, because it was seen as an integral part of social integration and clan continuity. Previously, it was considered both a social agreement and economic venture, governed by tradition and customary laws. Marriage was not a private concern between two people but a community-esteemed union that united families and clans, bringing harmony, solidarity, and social cohesion (MALSAWMDAWNGLIANA, 2012).

Marriage in Mizo society had at its core the institution of clan exogamy, in which marriage was prohibited within one's own clan to avert inbreeding and consolidate inter-clan kinship. Marriage negotiations and ceremonies underscored respect for community values and parental prerogatives. Customs like bride price (manpui) represented not a bride purchase but payment to the bride's family for her upbringing and recognition of the new union. Divorce, while being allowed under specific conditions, was generally discouraged, depicting the cultural priority of marriage stability(Toppo, 2022).

The marriage significance translated to the social and economic spheres. It helped to redistribute wealth, consolidate alliances, and provide for the care of individuals within the social fabric of society. Marriage also had spiritual and moral significance, as it conformed to Mizo notions of duty, responsibility, and continuation of lineage. Through time, though certain practices have been influenced by modernity and Christianity, the fundamental meaning of marriage as a pillar of family, kinship, and cultural identity has not been lost. Therefore, marriage in Mizo culture remains to mean not only a coming together of two people, but the uniting of families, customs, and social values(HLAWNDO, 2011).

Traditional Forms of Marriage in Mizo Society

Marriage among the Mizos was not only a personal union but a socio-cultural institution subject to customary laws. Various types of marriage were practiced among traditional Mizo society, expressing the values, clan identity, and social organization of the community.

Marriage by Negotiation (Hmuichhung I Tel) - This was the most prevalent and socially sanctioned type of marriage. The groom's family first initiated formal negotiations with the bride's family using middlemen. Bride price (manpui) was paid, which guaranteed acceptance of the union. This kind of marriage represented stability, respect, and continuity of tradition (Khiangte, 2008).

Marriage by Elopement (Thian) - In instances where the families did not sanction, couples would elope. The bride was taken home by the groom, then there were negotiations to legalize the marriage. Although initially disapproved of, it came to be legalized if bride price was settled (Naz, A., Sheikh, I., Khan, W., & Saeed, 2015).

Marriage by Capture (Hmar Kawi) - A less common but established type, marriage by capture entailed abduction of the bride, occasionally in the course of communal celebrations. While melodramatic, the marriage was consummated through negotiations and bride price.

Marriage by Service (Hringlang) - In this type, the bridegroom served the bride's family for a span of time, demonstrating his ability and devotion. Upon completion of the agreed service period, marriage was ratified. This practice emphasized work, patience, and duty as desirable marital virtues.

Marriages of Widows and Divorcees - Marriage with widows or divorcees was also recognized by traditional norms. Such marriages provided social security to women and maintained clan unity. Bride price was paid differently based on circumstances(Brown, S. L., & Lin, 2016).

Customary Laws and Rituals in Traditional Mizo Marriages

Traditional Marriage Laws - In Mizo traditional society, marriage was controlled by traditional laws referred to as Tlawmngaihna that prioritized community well-being, honor, and shared responsibility. The clan system was an important aspect, as it was forbidden to marry within the same clan (Sâkhua) in order to prevent incest and ensure social cohesion. For a man to wed, he had to pay bride price (Manpui), which was the gesture of respect for the bride's family as well as economic obligation. In addition to this, traditional compensations like Thuam (payment for the milk of the mother) and Zam (payment for upbringing) were part of the package, expressing profound recognition of the parents' inputs. These legal conventions made marriage not just an individual decision but a group agreement involving families and clans(Kipgen, 2018).

Negotiations and Formalities - Marriage negotiations were done through go-betweens who were referred to as Palai. They spoke on behalf of the groom's family and opened the doors for negotiations on the conditions of marriage, such as the bride price and traditional obligations. Agreement by both families, especially the elders, was essential because marriage was considered a merger between the clan and not individuals. After successful negotiations, the marriage plans were sealed, which signified recognition in society.

Rituals and Ceremonies - The wedding ritual entailed a few symbolic practices embedded in Mizo society. The groom's family presented rice beer, meat, and presents to the bride's family, representing goodwill and prosperity. The bride was escorted formally to the groom's home, sometimes with singing and feasting involved. Ritual blessings were invoked to guarantee fertility, harmony, and lineage continuation. Feasting and communal involvement indicated the end of marriage, strengthening kinship relations and solidarity.

Social and Cultural Relevance - Marriage in the traditional Mizo context was more than a private relationship; it was a socio-economic institution that provided clan perpetuity, mutual sustenance, and cultural preservation. The strict adherence to traditional law and custom emphasized the significance of respect, reciprocity, and communal welfare among the Mizo people (Zohmangaihi, 2023).

Role of Family and Clan in Marriage Arrangements (Past vs. Present)

Marriage in Mizo society has always been more than a domestic matter for two individuals; it was firmly rooted in family, clan, and community structures. Gradually, though, the involvement of family and clan in arranging and sanctioning marriage has undergone significant change, mirroring the broader social and cultural change in Mizo society. The juxtaposition of past and present trends reveals both change and continuity (K.M.Chandrakantha, 2014).

Family and Clan in the Past

Collective Responsibility and Decision-Making - Marriages in past Mizo society were not the focus of the bride and groom alone. The whole clan was involved in deciding on compatibility, suitability, and social acceptability of the marriage. Families judged marriages against the yardsticks of clan identity, alliances, and economic stability. Decisions were made in consensus form, with the elders and clan leaders having the final say.

Clan Identity and Exogamy - One of the most binding conventions in the past was clan exogamy same-clan marriages were forbidden. This practice ensured that clan interrelations increased, hence enhancing social solidarity and preventing intra-clan competitions. Intra-clan elders maintained stern vigilance to ensure adherence to this norm, hence maintaining the sanctity of genealogy(GANGTE, 2010).

Negotiations and Bride Price - Marriage arrangements further entailed family negotiations, especially regarding the bride price (manpui). The bride price represented the groom's capability to provide for his wife and rewarded the bride's family for nurturing her. Clan elders served as negotiators, mediators, and sureties in the transactions to guarantee equity and conformity with tradition.

Role in Conflict Resolution - Families and clans also had a crucial role in settling marital disputes, be it bride price disputes, accusations of infidelity, or disputes arising after the marriage. Clan authority ensured stability and reduced the intervention of outside legal processes (Wan, 2023).

Family and Clan in the Present

Shift to Individual Choice - Today in Mizo society, although families do exert influence, individual choice is significantly greater. Young women and men increasingly choose their own mates, not just on the basis of clan matches, but because of love, education, and personal compatibility. Parents can counsel, but the ultimate decision falls more on the couple.

Relaxation of Clan Power - Even if clan exogamy is practiced, the rigid enforcement by clan leaders has lost its strength. As society is influenced by modernization, urbanization, and Christian values, clan-based prohibitions have lessened, granting persons greater freedom.

Transforming Role of Bride Price - Bride price, which was once a binding tradition, has also changed. It is now symbolic in many families, rather than a major economic exchange. Christian wedding customs, with their accent on equality and values rooted in religion, have diminished the primacy of bride price negotiations and consequently curtailed the intermediary role of clan elders (Nghinglova, L., & Lalthlamuani, 2022).

Family Participation in Ceremonies - Families continue to have a central role in wedding rituals, although their role is more advisory than controlling. Parents help to arrange weddings but choices regarding rituals, costs, and who to invite are increasingly determined by the couple. Attention has moved from clan identity to individual choices of the bride and groom.

Modern Challenges and Adaptations - Global exposure, university education, and interactions among communities have also brought about inter-cultural or inter-regional marriages. Families are adjusting to these

changed realities, with younger generations struggling to balance the need for continuity and tradition with the demands of the modern world. While clan identity continues to be a source of pride, it no longer confers as fixed a choice in partners as it once did.

The position of family and clan in Mizo marriage practices has changed from being a determining authority to becoming a counselling and supportive influence. Historically, marriages were tools of clan union, mediated by elders and dictated by strict norms like exogamy and bride price. Nowadays, marriages have come to express individual preference, personal complementarity, and emerging social values, but families continue to play significant roles in maintaining cultural stability. This shift illustrates the broader transformation of Mizo society, where traditional structures coexist with modern aspirations, allowing both continuity and change in the institution of marriage.

Marriage and Gender Relations in the Past

Marriage as an institution has always been an integral part of human society, with goals extending far beyond personal companionship. Previously, marriage was intricately related to culture, economic systems, and patriarchal ideology. Marriage not only created a family unit but also a system of governing gender relations. The historical context of marriage illustrates how it served to reinforce social order, assign roles for men and women, and organize kinship and inheritance systems.

Marriage as Social Contract - In previous cultures, marriage was never seen as a romantic union or personal choice. Rather, it was a family or clan social contract. The contract tended to prioritize community survival, political unity, and economic security over personal preference. Considerations of land ownership, dowry, property exchange, or tribal kinship network strengthening informed marriage arrangements. Love or companionship followed these social commitments.

Male Dominance and Patriarchal Authority - Marriage gender relations were organized by patriarchal norms. Men usually controlled the home, property, decision-making, and the work of wives and children. The women were treated as dependents, who were shifted from their father's control to that of their husbands. This power structure not only consolidated male control but also fixed women's roles narrowly in the domestic and reproductive domains.

Women's Role in Marriage - Traditionally, the roles of women in marriage have focused on childbirth, domesticity, and the preservation of lineage. Their existence was strongly connected to their families and husbands, restricting autonomy and self-expression. Dowry, bride price, and arranged marriages in most cultures further emphasized women as bargained commodities within patriarchal systems. Women's education, freedom of movement, and control over property were curtailed, mirroring the general subordinating of their social status (Zhang, 2019).

Marriage and Economic Factors - Marriage too was an economic one. For agrarian and tribal societies, alliances provided access to resources, labor, and security.

Women's work added a lot in the form of agricultural labor, craft, and domestic labor, yet it was devalued and regarded as a necessity or obligation rather than an economic input. Inheritance laws and property rights tended to exclude women, so that wealth and property stayed within the male line.

Traditional Practices and Women's Control - Traditional practices around marriage amplified gender hierarchies. Polygamy, child marriage, and practices such as arranged marriages generally limited women's agency. Widowhood, in most cultures, was associated with stigma and restrictions, with widows either social exclusion or coercion into practices such as sati in some areas. Marital traditions tended to value family honor over the freedom of women, imposing chastity, obedience, and loyalty expectations disproportionately on wives.

Social Order and Gender Relations - Marriage in the past also served to ensure social order and stratification. Rules of endogamy and exogamy governed caste, clan, or community boundaries, limiting choice and reiterating hierarchies. Gender roles were firmly established: men as providers, protectors, and decision-makers; women as caregivers, nurturers, and subservient partners. This separation reinforced unequal power relations, which were sanctified through religion, tradition, or custom.

Marriage and gender relations in history exhibit a system rooted in patriarchy, economic survival, and community needs. Women's roles were secondary to the authority of males, with little autonomy and agency. While these systems provided social stability and continuity, they also reinforced disparities and limited the emergence of individual rights, especially for women. Knowing these historical dynamics is important in order to value the changes marriage and gender relations have experienced during modernity (Sahoo, Harihar, 2016).

Gender Roles and Expectations in Marriage

Marriage has traditionally been influenced by cultural, religious, economic, and social norms that influence the roles and work of men and women. The gender roles that determine how marital partners share work, care for households, bring up children, and even bargain power are influenced by these roles. Although over time the roles have changed, expectations remain strong in influencing marital dynamics.

Traditional Gender Roles in Marriage

Male as Provider: Men have been traditionally viewed as the main breadwinners who will earn money for the family. Their work is associated with work away from home and securing resources for the family.

Female as Caregiver: Women were typically supposed to be homemakers, tending to the rearing of children, household tasks, and upholding family traditions.

Power Imbalance: This structure tended to grant men power over decision-making, as women were relegated to the domestic sphere with minimal autonomy (Lewis, 2001).

Cultural and Religious Influences

Cultural Norms: Various societies have their own expectations sets for instance, patriarchal societies support male domination, whereas matrilineal societies provide women with more control.

Religious Doctrines: Most religious teachings have long supported complementary roles man as breadwinner and woman as homemaker, but interpretations are shifting in contemporary settings.

Evolving Dynamics in Contemporary Marriages

Role Reversal for Women: Increased access to education and employment is making women more contributors to family income, disrupting the classic "male breadwinner" arrangement.

Shared Responsibilities: Many couples in contemporary times prefer shared household and financial responsibility, which translates to more egalitarian relationships.

Deferred Marriage and Independence: People are marrying later, and there is a greater focus on individual choice and compatibility over meeting gendered expectations.

Social Expectations and Pressures

Masculinity and Achieving Success: Men remain under pressure to be able to prove strength, stability, and economic potential, and not being able to do this can affect their identity within marriage.

Femininity and Care: Women are frequently expected to juggle career ambitions with caregiving duties, resulting in the "double burden" of work and family.

Social Judgment: Couples that break with traditional norms e.g., stay-at-home dads or ambitious mothers tend to receive criticism(Goswami, 2024).

Gender Roles and Conflict in Marriage

Role Overload: Women juggling professional and household tasks might suffer from stress and burnout.

Power Conflicts: When roles are not negotiated, disagreements erupt over decision-making, housework, or finances.

Unrealistic Expectations: Idealized gender roles can result in unhappiness when partners are unable to live up to societal ideals (Desai & Andrist, 2010).

Moving toward Equality and Partnership

Negotiated Roles: Contemporary marriages increasingly center on communication and joint decision-making instead of strictly defined roles.

Gender-Neutral Parenting: Couples are embracing more flexible styles of child-rearing, in which both partners are equally engaged.

Legal and Social Support: Progressive legislation, policies at work (such as parental leave), and feminist activism have facilitated a challenge to traditional assumptions.

Gender expectations and roles within marriage are still strong, but they are changing dramatically. Whereas earlier models prioritized male authority and female nurturing, contemporary marriages increasingly opt for equality, negotiation, and partnership. The change is symptomatic of wider social shifts increased female workforce participation, shifting cultural norms, and increased focus on individual rights. Still, there are challenges since societal pressures and cultural expectations persist as factors shaping marital life. Eventually, redefining gender roles within marriage takes honest communication, compromise, and respect to form balanced and satisfying relationships (William, 2024).

Changes in Marriage Practices in Contemporary Mizo Society

Marriage has remained a core institution in Mizo society, previously guided by customary laws, kinship values, and communal norms. Nevertheless, with modernization, education, urbanization, and Christian influence, modern Mizo marriage patterns have undergone drastic alterations. These developments represent a trend away from traditional practices towards a fusion of modernity, individual choice, and cultural adjustment.

Trend towards Individual Choice over Clan-based - Mizo marriages have traditionally been arranged with the clan having the final say. Elders saw to it that unions were in accordance with rules of kinship and social order. Today, in modern society, however, individual preference prevails. Men and women now get married for love, less out of elderly consent. Although parents' approbation is preferred, no longer is it the exclusive basis(Chhetri, 2022).

Fall in Bride Price (Manpui) - Previously, bride price was a vital component of Mizo marriage, representing respect to the family of the bride as well as social agreement between clans. Nowadays, the practice has reduced significantly, thanks to Christian influence that frowns upon commoditization of marriage. The bride price is symbolic today and not obligatory, and in most instances, it is not even required.

Religious Influence and Church Weddings - Christianity, which spread pervasively among the Mizos during the 20th century, has transformed marriage practices. Church weddings are now the sought-after and socially accepted type of union, supplanting time-honored community-based rituals. The Church is now responsible for solemnizing marriages with a focus on monogamy, loyalty, and long-term companionship(Jayakumar, 2025).

Simplification of Rituals - Traditional Mizo weddings involved negotiations, gift exchanging, and various ceremonial steps like "Hlamzuih" (engagement rites). Modern marriages, on the other hand, are less formal. Engagements might still happen, but formal traditional negotiations are a rarity. The emphasis now is on religious ceremonies and contemporary celebrations.

Legalization and Documentation - Previously, marriage was legalised chiefly through public recognition and observance of traditional norms. In modern society, registration under civil law has become widespread. This guarantees official recognition, legal rights, and protection for the spouses, particularly in the event of inheritance or divorce.

Role of Women - Women traditionally played little role in mate selection, and divorce laws were not in their favor. With improved access to education and work, Mizo women today exercise control in mate selection and bargaining over marital roles. The trends toward gender equality in marriage conduct follow from larger societal changes (Haghani et al., 2025).

Urbanization and Inter-community Marriages - Urbanization and exposure to external cultures have raised inter-community and even inter-ethnic marriages. Although the previous marriages outside the Mizo society were the exception rather than the norm and were disapproved of, modern society is increasingly approving but with some conservative pockets still refusing.

Celebratory Elements - Although old-fashioned marriages were simple, new Mizo marriages are subject to worldwide influences. Music, banquets, photographs, and fancy receptions are now much more prevalent, which mirror urban ways of life and consumptionist values.

Marriage in modern Mizo society indicates a shift from strict customary tradition towards more liberal, individualistic decisions. Christianity, education, and urbanization have transformed the institution, equating it towards being more egalitarian and contemporary yet still preserving cultural undertones. The collapse of bride price, greater significance of Church weddings, and increased agency among women illustrate such changes. Modernization notwithstanding, Mizos still appreciate marriage as an important social institution, reconciling tradition and changing social realities (Kaur & Singh, 2013).

Impact of Modern Education, Religion, and Urbanization on Marriage

Marriage, as a social institution, has undergone significant changes under the influence of modern education, religion, and urbanization. These factors have reshaped marital practices, expectations, and family structures in both rural and urban contexts.

Impact of Modern Education

Changing Attitudes toward Marriage: Education has broadened individual perspectives, allowing people to view marriage not merely as a customary obligation but as a partnership based on equality and personal choice.

Women's Empowerment: With increased access to higher education, women have gained economic independence, greater awareness of rights, and the ability to negotiate within marital relationships. This has reduced dependence on traditional patriarchal structures.

Delayed Marriages: Higher education and career goals often lead to delayed marriages, particularly in urban areas, as individuals prioritize professional growth before settling down.

Reduced Tolerance for Inequality: Educated individuals are less willing to accept rigid gender roles, dowry practices, or oppressive marital customs (Vikram, 2023).

Impact of Religion

Preservation of Traditions: Religion continues to play a crucial role in marriage rituals, ceremonies, and norms. For many communities, religious approval remains essential for marital legitimacy.

Interfaith Marriages: With increased interaction in diverse societies, interfaith marriages are more common, challenging orthodox religious boundaries and sometimes leading to social resistance.

Shifting Authority of Religious Institutions: While religious leaders once had unquestioned authority in marital matters, modern laws and constitutional rights increasingly mediate religious practices, balancing faith with individual freedoms.

Moral and Ethical Framework: Religion still provides moral guidance and shapes expectations of fidelity, family responsibilities, and values within marriage (Pallathadka et al., 2022).

Impact of Urbanization

Exposure to Diverse Lifestyles: Urban centers bring people from different backgrounds together, creating space for intercultural and inter-caste marriages.

Nuclear Family System: Urban living has popularized the nuclear family over traditional joint families, altering marital dynamics and responsibilities.

Changing Role of Economy: Rising costs of living and urban employment patterns influence marital decisions, with couples increasingly sharing financial responsibilities.

Weakened Role of Community Pressure: Unlike rural areas, where community norms strongly dictate marriage choices, urbanization provides greater freedom for individuals to exercise personal choice in partner selection.

\Modern education, religion, and urbanization collectively shape the institution of marriage by redefining roles, values, and practices. While education and urbanization encourage equality, personal freedom, and change, religion continues to anchor marriage in tradition and cultural identity. The interplay of these factors reflects the balance between continuity and transformation in contemporary marital life (Megha et al., 2024).

Current Trends: Love Marriage, Inter-Caste/Inter-Community Marriage, and Legal Recognition

Indian marriage has come a long way since its traditional arranged union, with more independent decisions based on shifting social values and greater freedom for the individuals involved. Three significant trends are prominent today: love marriages, inter-caste/inter-community marriages, and state recognition.

Love Marriage

Transition from Arranged to Choice-Based: Historically, marriages were arranged within the family, caste, community, and kinship networks. Urbanization, education, and exposure to world cultures, however, have given rise to love marriages.

Role of Education and Media: Increased levels of education, workplace contacts, and social media enable

individuals to create personal relationships that are no longer within the control of the family.

Revolutionizing Attitudes: Love marriage is no longer taboo in most urban and semi-urban locations. Generational attitudes consider it a projection of personal freedom and emotional choice(Medora, 2003).

Inter-Caste and Inter-Community Marriages

Shattering Social Barriers: Inter-caste and inter-community marriages reflect an emerging challenge to strict hierarchies. These unions tend to be a sign of pursuing equality and personal decision as opposed to inherited divisions.

Government Support: The Indian Government encourages inter-caste marriages between Scheduled Caste and upper-caste partners through schemes of financial support and incentives.

Social Issues: Despite advances, such marriages continue to be opposed, mainly in rural India. Family disapproval, social boycott, and even "honour killings" are some of the issues that reflect the prevalence of caste and community biases.

Urban vs. Rural Divide: Whereas urban populations exhibit more openness, rural communities mostly oppose such weddings, reflecting the lopsided rate of social change (Kumar et al., 2024).

Legal Recognition

Special Marriage Act, 1954: This Act establishes a legal mechanism for marriages regardless of caste, community, or religion, facilitating inter-faith and inter-caste marriages without involving religious rituals.

Supreme Court Position: The courts have repeatedly reaffirmed the right of adults to marry by choice as a basic right under Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty).

Protection Mechanisms: Courts and state agencies have brought in protection mechanisms to safeguard couples threatened by their families or communities. Orders against honour-based violence and setting up of safe houses are significant steps.

Equality and Autonomy: Legal acknowledgment upholds the belief that marriage is a question of personal freedom, outside of community control."

Today's trends in marriage practices show India's shift away from tradition-based structures towards more individual-oriented decisions. Love marriage and inter-caste/community marriages are expressions of equality, freedom, and modernity. Although legal systems are firmly supportive of these transformations, societal resistance is deeply entrenched. The future of marriage in India lies in reconciling cultural traditions with constitutional ideals of liberty and equality (Kathi, 2016).

Comparative Analysis: Past vs. Present Marriage Practices in Mizo Society

Marriage among the Mizos has traditionally been both a social and personal institution, bonding families and solidifying community relationships. Traditionally, marriage rites were governed mainly by customary law and tradition, expressing clan identity, community survival, and chieftain authority. This contrasts sharply with present-day Mizo marriages, which are influenced by modernization, education, Christianization, and India's legal system, representing a major departure from the past.

Past Marriage Practices in Mizo Society - In the **past**, marriages were deeply clan-based. Endogamy within one's own clan was strictly forbidden, and exogamy was observed to maintain social balance. Bride price or "manpui" was a central component, symbolizing respect and social agreement between families. Negotiations were conducted by middlemen, and parental authority was decisive in approving unions. Divorce, though permissible, often carried social stigma, and women's rights were comparatively limited. Polygyny existed, though not widely practiced, and widow remarriage was accepted but subject to clan approval (Tombing, 2021).

Present Marriage Practices in Mizo Society - Today, however, love marriages predominate. The authority of parental control and clan limitation has declined, although clan exogamy continues to be widely observed. Bride price is either a vestige or a symbolic payment, as both modernization and Christian teaching emphasize equality and dignity in marriage. Gender roles have changed profoundly, with women having greater rights in selecting mates, suing for divorce, and obtaining legal redress under civil laws.

Christianity, which spread extensively in Mizoram during colonial times, has revolutionized wedding rituals. The church wedding replaced clan ceremonies and traditional feasts, focusing on vows before God instead of before clan elders. Divorce, though possible, is frowned upon by the church, underscoring the stability of marriage. Education and urbanization have also impacted the selection of partners for marriage, with people focusing on individual compatibility, career needs, and shared ethics instead of clan duties.

As such, marriage among the Mizos has become less of a community-controlled, clan-based institution and is instead an individualistic and legally sanctioned one. The shift is indicative of larger social changes, yoking tradition and modernity together, and preserving cultural uniqueness in sync with values of the time(Still, 2017).

Table- 1: Comparative table Past vs. Present Marriage Practices in Mizo Society

Aspect	Past Practices	Present Practices
Basis of Marriage	Clan-based, arranged by families	Love-based, personal choice with family support

Clan Rules	Strict exogamy; no marriage within clan	Still respected but less rigid
Bride Price (Manpui)	Essential and significant	Reduced to symbolic or abandoned
Role of Parents	Decisive in marriage negotiations	Advisory, but individual choice prevails
Middlemen (Negotiators)	Important for alliance arrangements	Rarely used, direct communication common
Ceremony	Clan customs, feasts, rituals	Church weddings, modern legal registration
Gender Roles	Male-dominated, women had limited say	Greater equality, women exercise more autonomy
Divorce	Permissible but stigmatized	Legally recognized, socially acceptable
Widow Remarriage	Accepted with clan approval	Accepted without restrictions
Polygyny	Occasionally practiced	Abolished by Christian influence
Community Role	Strong; clan elders decisive	Limited; church and law play larger roles
Influence	Tradition, customary law, chieftain system	Christianity, education, modernization

2. CONCLUSION

In conclusion the research traced the transformation of marriage practices from a clan-based, customary institution to a more individual-oriented and legally recognized arrangement under the influence of modernization, Christianity, education, and urbanization. It has been shown that while traditional practices such as clan exogamy and symbolic bride price continue to hold cultural value, their rigidity has weakened, allowing personal choice and emotional compatibility to dominate present-day unions. The role of family and clan, once decisive in marital negotiations, has shifted to an advisory function, proving the transition of authority from communal structures to individual autonomy. Similarly, gender roles have undergone significant redefinition, with women today enjoying greater equality, rights, and agency in marital decisions compared to their historically limited position under patriarchal norms. The study further highlighted the impact of religion and law, where Christian values, church weddings, and legal recognition under civil law have replaced earlier animistic rituals and customary legitimations, ensuring both cultural continuity and legal protection. Moreover, urbanization and education have broadened perspectives, giving rise to inter-community marriages and fostering egalitarian relationships. Thus, by analysing the evolution of marriage through historical, cultural, social, and legal lenses, the research objectives examining transformation, comparing gender roles, assessing family and clan influence, and evaluating socio-legal changes have been fully established. The findings confirm that Mizo marriage practices today represent a synthesis of tradition and modernity, where continuity of cultural identity coexists with progressive values of equality, freedom, and personal choice. This proves that the objectives set forth were not only met but also revealed the dynamic adaptability of Mizo society in preserving its heritage while embracing change.

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