Assessing the Cultural Advancement of Values in Mate Preferences: A Cross-Generational Analysis

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Abstract

T he 20th century has witnessed more radical changes in human values. Expansion of modern education brought greater access to economic resources and more exposure to mass media among men and women. These changes are topical observations from developing world and forced people to re-evaluate the assumptions about men and women of present generation. In context of these cultural changes, a core question for social psychology is: Have human values changed in present cultural changes and if yes, in what ways? Using cross-generational primary data, collected from urban Uttar Pradesh, present paper tries to assess the cultural advancement of values in human mating. Result indicates substantial changes in values across generations. Individuals of present generation increased the importance they attach to faithfulness and physical attractiveness in a mate. Mutual attraction and love also climbed in importance for both sexes. Despite of profound cultural changes over generations, considerable continuity remains same also.

1. Introduction

The 20th century has witnessed the changes more radical and irretrievable than any previous century in the history of human species. Car and computers became commonplace in the first and second half of the century respectively. Internet dating, virtual sex and the specter of AIDS altered the landscape of human mating and thus traditional values became somewhat weakened in the society[1]. Providing equal opportunity to women to get better education, and their increased involvement in outside household work with almost same wages has scaled up their place in the society. Female involvement in decision making, less sexual harassment, greater awareness about safe sex and many more have forced the people to rethink about the pre-scaled assumptions about men and women. Also, these are not the observations from developed world only, but these changes are also emerging in the developing world by crossing the several traditional and socio-cultural barriers.

These cultural changes are the response of expansion of modern education, involvement of women in outside household work and increasing awareness of their traditional constraints and helplessness[2,3] as suggested by various literatures. It brought their greater access to economic resources and more exposure to mass media. Hence, in the context of these cultural changes, it is important to investigate that: Have human values changed in present cultural changes and if yes, then, in what ways?

Values in human mating offer one area within which these questions can be posed, and several considerations suggest that it would be interesting to investigate whether the mate preference – the preferred characteristics of the prospective mate at the time of selection- had remained impervious of cultural changes or is there any emergence of new terms and conditions in it, because the choice of a marriage partner is one of the most serious decisions which people face. In contemporary Western societies, this decision usually follows a long learning period during which people engage in more informal and often polygamous relationships, i.e., dating[4]. Although these are the observations from some developed countries so these may not be universally valid and may largely depend on the socio-cultural setup of a particular society.

Mate selection: choosing whom we hope will be our life's companion, the person who will contribute half the parenting and half the genome for our children-our windows of opportunity on genetic immortality- is perhaps the most important choice we ever make[5]. Over the past three decades, large volume of psychological research has generated the heat with discussion on human mate selection. These researches were mostly conducted in developed countries. A preliminary review of these studies reveal the various unfold aspects of human mate selection that psychologists have investigated, such as selection strategies that humans have developed to evaluate potential mates[6,7,8], and the criteria that men and women prefer in potential mate[9,10]. Considering the later part, studies have suggested that the choosing the basic criteria while selecting a mate was prime responsibility of the parents and were mainly guided by the elements of race, ethnicity, religion, and socio-economic status of the partner's family[11,12]. But with the passage of time changes have been observed in selected criteria of preferred mate. For instance, similarity in personal characteristics[13], similarity in attitudes, equality in terms of looks, intelligence and education emerged as some of the most prominent criteria preferred by the individuals of recent cohort at the time of selecting a partner for them[14]. Also, the choices of individual are also being taken into account which was not the case few decades ago.

Other studies also clearly show that rather than giving more importance to the socio-economic status of the family, individuals of present generation, belonging to more developed nations, attach their preference with parent-child attachment styles of the partner,[15,16] physical attractiveness along with perceived similarity with the partner and sharing of attitudes, views and interests[17] at the time of developing their relationship. Todosijevic and others, in 2003, found that the women of higher status correlated their concern positively with mate's potential socio-economic status rather than their family status[18].

Studies pertaining to preferred characteristics in a mate in Indian scenario are very limited. Some of the studies which has been carried out during 1980's revealed that, family status and family reputation was given priority while selecting a partner[19]. Love was not an important aspect of mate selection[20,21,22]. However, researches in nineties, shows the glimpse of slightly different scenario, i.e. there was departure from traditional and family oriented values while choosing a mate. All individual characteristics being given importance during mate selection. Personal traits like, honesty, sincerity, character, talent and broad-mindness, being settled in a job were found as the top priorities[23]. The age gap between partners is also taken into account. In the recent decades, individual's preference and romantic orientations are gaining more importance and marriages are being modified to social class but not to social caste.

Apart from these studies, some of the studies paid their attention on gender differences in mate selection, either in terms of preferred characteristics or in terms of dating, and the factors which causes such kind of

sexual differences in mate preference. For example, research on sexual dimorphism in mate selection criteria has resulted in the broad generalization that women are more concerned about the potential control over social and economic resources and with (his) readiness to share them, while men pay relatively more attention to physical attractiveness[24,25,26]. On analyzing the predictors of such sex differences in mate selection, it was observed that these differences were the outcome of class and gender inequalities, sexual power relations, and patriarchal ideologies[27].

2. Rationale

The decision about whom to marry refers to the selection of suitable marriage partner. The matching of bride's and groom's social characteristics is largely regulated by rules of endogamy and exogamy. The qualities in prospective mate, which people believe, are important in selecting a marriage partner and afford one domain for accessing human values[28]. With the changing meaning of marriage and recognition of women as individuals with their own needs and expectations, there is a definite change in defining an ideal marriage partner. The only research design that can address the issue of changes in the different values at the time of mate selection is the cross-generational design, where the same measures of values could be administered to sample of different generations. Although, some studies have been conducted in this context but they were based on the information of one generation and, therefore, do not give the clear picture of advancement of human mating over the generations. This study is particularly important in the absence of adequate information in this context from the developing countries as well as it involves the two generation population to get more clear insight into the changing perspective of preferred characteristics at the time of mate selection.

This study focuses on analyzing the: a) changing pattern of preferred characteristics in a mate, across two generations, b) sex differences in preferred characteristics, c) specific differentials in mate preferences within same generation that reflect differing degrees of cultural shifts, and d) identifying the values which have remained constant, impervious to other changes in society?

3. Data and methods

3.1 Study area and survey

The present paper is based on data collected during the Winter of 2007 from urban area of Varanasi district of Uttar Pradesh, as a part of doctoral work. The main objective of this doctoral work was to analyze the recent changes in mate selection process and marriage age in such a setup which is traditional in nature and at the same time is exposed to present level of modernization. Out of 28 states of India, Uttar Pradesh was selected purposively as it is known as the rainbow land where multi-hued Indian culture has blossomed from times immemorial. Blessed with variety of geographical land and various cultural diversities, Uttar Pradesh has been the area of activity of historical heroes. Rich and tranquil expanses of meadows, perennial rivers, dense forestland, and fertile soil of Uttar Pradesh have contributed several golden chapters to the annals of Indian history. Dotted with various holy shrines and pilgrim places, full of joyous festivals, it plays an important role in the politics, education, culture, industry, agriculture and tourism of India.

At the next step, out of 70 districts of Uttar Pradesh, Varanasi was selected purposively because Varanasi is widely known as cultural capital of India. The city is of great antiquity with extraordinary tradition of

religious sanctity, learning art and culture has been able to maintain its ancient celebrity and distinction uninterruptedly. It has been acknowledged as a holy place even before Aryan invasion, if there was any. Traditionally interpreted, Varanasi first existed on the bank of the holy river *Ganga* and rest of the world then formed around it[29]. On the other hand the district is also in the wave of present modernization. The increasing trend of urban population, rising literacy rate, and increased level of female work participation are contemporary changes in this traditional society. In 2001 census, the district is declared as one of the mega city of Uttar Pradesh (UP). Since one of the aims of this study was to assess the changes in preferred characteristics in assertive mate at the time of selection, it was thought that it will be appropriate to address such issues in this area due to its rigid traditional base as well as the emerging socio-cultural changes.

3.2 Participants

Information was obtained from 544 males and females (264 males aged 21-34 years and 280 female aged 18-29 years) out of 600 targeted individuals (300 males and 300 females). The sample included both married and unmarried respondents. Information was also gathered from the parents of these respondents, except married female, to know about the selection process at the time of their marriage. A total 72 parents were interviewed in this study. A multi-stage stratified random sampling was used for collection of data. At first stage, six wards were selected according to the level of female literacy. In the second stage two census enumeration blocks (CEBs) was selected randomly from each ward. One CEB was, thereafter, assigned for male interview while another for female. Finally there were 12 CEBs from which data was collected. The house listing was prepared to identify those household where at least one eligible respondent was available. The household with at least one eligible respondent was selected systematically from the house listing. In case, if more than one respondent of same category was available in the same household, KISH table was used to select any one of them.

3.3 *Instruments*

The mate selection criteria schedule developed by Hill (1945)[30] was used with some modifications for interview. In the survey first question was asked that to parents and their children that, *"whether they had any preferred characteristics about their partner at the time of selection?"*. Those who said yes, they were further asked to rate the importance of 16 mate characteristics. These characteristics were: physical attractiveness, good financial prospect, pleasing nature, same liking, socially popular, similar educational background, similar job/earning, emotionally even and stable, ambitious, mutual attraction and love, domestic still, good health, intelligent, faithful/ dependable character, same caste, and same religion. Each of the 16 characteristics are rated on following 4 point scale: 3 = indispensible, 2 = important, 1 = desirable and 0 = unimportant.

To identify mean differences between two generations, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) is conducted on each of 16 preference means by respondents' marital status, for men and women separately. To identify within sex and between–marital status differences for younger generation respondents, same method has been applied. Significant main effects were followed by possible post hoc comparisons. A Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on mean values for 16 mate preferences by participant's sex and marital status is used to assess overall effect of these independent variables on preferred means.

4. Results

4.1 Sample profile

Sample profile of the selected respondents and their parents is given in table 1. Result shows that respondents of younger generation were of relatively young age. Married male were oldest while unmarried female were youngest one. The average age of younger generation respondents was about 22 years to 29 years. Majority of respondents were Hindu, belonging to general caste and were from nuclear families. Table further shows that majority of respondents were from middle class families followed by those families whose economic wellbeing was higher and lower respectively. About 37 percent married female were from low socio-economic strata while majority of unmarried female (43 percent) were belonging to high economic profile households.

Finding suggests that there were no remarkable differences in the educational attainment of the respondents. Almost all the respondents of younger generation were well educated irrespective of their sex and marital status. On an average, the respondents of younger generation had 15 years of schooling. As expected, as compared to female, male respondents were more involved in income generating activities. It is also evident that the unmarried respondents of younger generation initiate the work at relatively earlier age than their married counterparts.

Table 1. Selected socio-economic information for the younger and older generation samples.
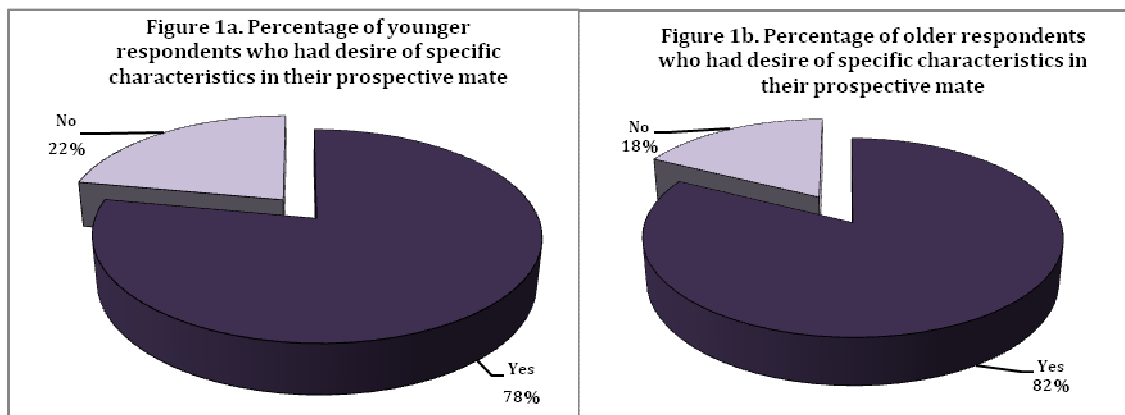
Socio-economic characteristic	Younger generation (Children)				Older generation (Parents)
	MM (21-34)	UM (21-34)	MF (18-29)	UF (18-29)	
Mean age at the time of survey (in years)	29.1	24.1	26.1	21.5	49.9
Religion					
Hindu	92.4	92.4	94.3	95.7	93.8
Non-Hindu	7.5	7.6	5.7	4.3	6.3
Caste					
Scheduled caste	16.8	14.5	4.3	2.2	9.2
Other backward class	32.8	25.5	20.7	16.5	23.6
Other	50.4	60.0	75.0	81.3	67.2
Household structure[1]					
Non-nuclear	49.6	35.9	33.6	22.1	34.7
Nuclear	50.4	64.1	66.4	77.9	65.3
Household Economic Standard Index[1]					
Low	34.5	31.7	37.1	28.6	32.9
Middle	36.1	36.5	35.0	28.6	34.0
High	29.4	31.7	27.9	42.8	33.1
Mean years of schooling[2]	14.6 (2.6)	14.6 (2.3)	14.5 (2.7)	14.7 (2.1)	12.4 (3.9)
Percentage working in last 12 months	60.5	54.5	16.4	22.8	46.6
Type of work[3]					
Only paid	92.8	76.5	100	100	na
Only unpaid	7.2	22.1	0.0	0.0	na
Both paid and unpaid	0.0	1.5	0.0	0.0	na
Mean age at first paid job	22.8	21.1	22.9	21.6	na
Sample	119	145	140	140	72

Note: For married respondents (MM, MF, and Parents) all the information refers to their situation at the time of marriage. [1] For married female information is gathered about their parental family, [2] Figure in parenthesis refers to standard deviation, [2] Among those who worked in last 12 months. na: Not Available, MM: Married Male, UM: Unmarried Male, MF: Married Female, UF: Unmarried Female.

Table also revels the characteristic of parents. It was evident that, on an average, parents of the eligible respondents were 50 years old. The average schooling of the parents was 12 years and almost half of them were working at the time of marriage of their children.

4.2 Magnitude of desire about specific preferences across two generations

Figure 1a and figure 1b reflects the differences in extent of desire about specific characteristics in the prospective mate across the two generations. It can be seen from these two figures that more respondents of older generation (82 percent) compared to 78 percent respondents of younger generation reported that they had some specific preferences their mind about their partner at the time of selection, however, it is a different matter that out of these how many of them were able to conveyed about their preferences to their

Figure 1a. Percentage of younger respondents who had desire of specific characteristics in their prospective mate

Figure 1b. Percentage of older respondents who had desire of specific characteristics in their prospective mate

parents because most of the times their parents were one who used to fix their marriage. Analysis also found that (not shown) love marriage has emerged as one of the important factor due to which the extent of desired preferences among the younger generation population was relatively lower compared to older generation population.

4.3 Differences in specific preferences

The aggregate level differences as well as the sex differential in specific mate preferences across two generations are assessed in this section. This section also deals with the differences in specific mate characteristics among the population of younger generation across their sex and marital status. The last part of this section deals with analyzing that despite of the inter-generational differences in the mate preferences which are the characteristics remained unchanged.

4.3.1 Cross-generational differences

Table 2 shows that, overall, the respondents of younger generation, more than the respondents of older generation, valued a potential partner's character (faithful/ dependable character), their physical attractiveness, intelligence, and good health as reflected by higher mean values. Additionally, the respondents of younger generation reported greater preference to similar educational background, mutual attraction and love, as well as good health of the prospective mate. Contrary to that, the older generation respondent, gave much priority to cultural continuity (same caste, same religion) while selecting a mate. Respondent of older generation also attached their greater preference to good financial prospect and the social popularity of the prospective mate, though the mean values of these preferences were not statistically significantly across the two generations.

Table2. Descriptive statistics for preferences of younger and older generation population.

Characteristic	Younger generation			Older generation		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
Physical attractiveness	2.54*	0.72	2	1.98*	1.07	7
Good financial prospect	2.23	0.97	9	2.12	1.07	4
Pleasing nature	2.26*	0.86	8	1.85*	1.04	8
Same liking	2.01*	0.96	11	1.61*	1.09	9
Socially popular	1.55	1.15	15	1.25	1.16	12
Similar educational background	1.83*	1.06	12	1.03*	0.94	15
Similar job/earnings	0.89	1.01	16	0.65	0.93	16
Economically even and stable	1.81*	0.90	13	1.22*	0.95	13
Ambitious	1.60*	1.04	14	1.04*	0.96	14
Mutual attraction and love	2.32*	0.80	7	1.59*	1.00	10
Domestic skills	2.17*	1.01	10	1.49*	1.25	11
Good health	2.39*	0.75	5	2.07*	0.97	5
Intelligent	2.50*	0.75	3	2.03*	1.04	6
Faithful/ dependable character	2.67*	0.66	1	2.42*	0.83	3
Same caste	2.38*	0.98	6	2.80*	0.66	2
Same religion	2.50*	0.87	3	2.86*	0.54	1

Note: An asterisk indicates between sample differences detected by one-way analysis of variance and are significant at 1% level of significance. Degree of freedom for these tests is equal to 1 less than the sum of total number of participants in the two samples.

4.3.2 Differences across generation by sex

In order to identify the significant differences in the 16 preferred characteristics over the generation for same sex population an independent t-test was used. Further, in order to have the combined effect of sex and generation on these preferences MANOVA test has been applied. The results are shown in table 3. Significant generational differences within each sex are shown by asterisk appended to the relevant preference mean. The multivariate analysis of variance on mean values for 16 preferences by participants generation and sex revealed overall effects of both independent variables, $F(1,16) = 34.13$ and $F(1,16) = 13.42$ respectively (both ps< 0.001). Within-sex between generations differences in preferred characteristics suggest that, compared to older generation men, men of younger generation attached their more preference to domestic skill of wife, faithful/ dependable character, physical attractiveness, and good health. Men of younger generation preferred to have wife of pleasing nature, and intelligent, while men of older generation again seem to attach their more preference with same religion and same caste women.

The preferences valued by females were different from males. These preferences were quite associated with individuals own characteristics rather than their parental/ household level characteristics. Result reveals that, women of younger generation valued good financial prospect, faithful/ dependable character and intelligence in their potential spouse as compared to women of older generation. Similar to male, females also preferred to have spouse of same religion. Physical attractiveness of the spouse was also given much more importance by the females of present generation compared to their older generation counterparts.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for preferences of younger and older generation population, by sex.

| | Male | | | | | | Female | | | | | |
| | Younger generation | | | Older generation | | | Younger generation | | | Older generation | | |
Characteristic	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
Physical attractiveness	2.54	0.74	3	2.53	0.83	4	2.56*	0.70	5	1.78*	1.08	9
Good financial prospect	1.69*	0.99	13	1.00*	0.85	11	2.75**	0.59	1	2.50**	0.85	3
Pleasing nature	2.18*	0.95	9	1.50*	1.02	10	2.35**	0.73	8	1.97**	1.03	6
Same liking	1.77*	1.00	11	1.00*	1.07	12	2.32*	0.82	9	1.85*	1.01	8
Socially popular	1.09	1.11	15	0.71	1.20	14	2.17*	0.87	11	1.46*	1.10	10
Similar educational background	1.85	1.05	10	1.57	1.16	9	1.80*	1.09	14	0.85*	0.78	15
Similar job/earnings	0.76	0.98	16	0.36	0.74	16	1.08	1.03	16	0.76	0.97	16
Economically even and stable	1.69*	0.95	12	0.92*	1.04	13	2.00*	0.78	12	1.32*	0.91	12
Ambitious	1.38*	1.11	14	0.38*	0.77	15	1.93*	0.83	13	1.28*	0.91	13
Mutual attraction and love	2.35	0.75	6	2.08	0.95	7	2.26*	0.86	10	1.42*	0.97	11
Domestic skills	2.67	0.62	1	2.94	0.25	3	1.50*	1.05	15	0.90*	0.97	14
Good health	2.39	0.70	4	2.44	0.81	6	2.39*	0.80	7	1.92*	1.00	7
Intelligent	2.29*	0.83	7	1.67*	1.29	8	2.70*	0.59	3	2.16*	0.92	5
Faithful/ dependable character	2.57	0.76	2	2.47	0.64	5	2.77*	0.53	2	2.41*	0.90	4
Same caste	2.27*	1.09	8	3.00*	0.00	1	2.49	0.85	6	2.73	0.76	2
Same religion	2.37	0.98	5	3.00*	0.00	1	2.62	0.73	4	2.81	0.63	1

Note: An asterisk indicates within sex sample differences across two generation detected by one-way analysis of variance and are significant at 1% level of significance and 5% level of significance (double asterisk). Degree of freedom for these tests are equal to 1 less than the sum of total number of participants in the two samples.

4.3.3 Differences within younger generation population by sex and marital status

This section is primarily incorporated to give the answer that- is there any area or marital status specific differential within the same generation that might reflect differing degrees of cultural shifts?. We have analyzed the significant mean differences in each of the 16 preferences using one-way analysis of variance followed by post-hoc comparisons using Tukey Test to identify mean values of which group differ significantly from each other. The significant differences are shown by superscripts ([a, b, c, d, e]). Result is shown in table 4.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for preferences of younger generation population, by sex and marital status.

Characteristic	Married male			Unmarried male			Married female			Unmarried female		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
Physical attractiveness	2.63	0.65	5	2.47	0.79	3	2.48	0.73	7	2.64	0.68	3
Good financial prospect [a]	1.70	0.93	15	1.68	1.04	12	2.74	0.61	3	2.75	0.56	1
Pleasing nature	2.16	0.93	9	2.20	0.96	7	2.24	0.81	10	2.45	0.63	6
Same liking [b]	1.88	0.98	10	1.70	1.00	11	2.47	0.69	8	2.18	0.91	11
Socially popular [a]	1.10	1.05	16	1.08	1.15	15	2.11	0.82	11	2.23	0.92	9
Similar educational background	1.84	1.08	11	1.87	1.03	10	1.65	1.09	14	1.91	1.09	14
Similar job/earnings [b]	0.83	1.02	12	0.72	0.97	16	0.98	0.95	16	1.16	1.08	16
Economically even and stable	1.73	0.94	13	1.66	0.97	13	2.04	0.75	12	1.97	0.81	12
Ambitious [a]	1.38	1.10	15	1.38	1.13	14	1.89	0.79	13	1.97	0.86	13
Mutual attraction and love	2.38	0.69	6	2.34	0.80	6	2.35	0.82	9	2.20	0.89	10
Domestic skills [a]	2.76	0.57	2	2.60	0.64	1	1.45	1.13	15	1.54	1.00	15
Good health	2.37	0.80	7	2.41	0.63	4	2.52	0.77	6	2.26	0.81	8
Intelligent [a]	2.26	0.83	8	2.32	0.83	5	2.77	0.52	2	2.63	0.66	4
Faithful/ dependable character [d]	2.68	0.60	4	2.50	0.84	2	2.81	0.45	1	2.72	0.61	2
Same caste [e]	2.81	0.54	1	1.90	1.21	9	2.62	0.74	5	2.35	0.93	7
Same religion [e, c]	2.75	0.58	3	2.12	1.10	8	2.73	0.58	4	2.50	0.86	5

[a.] Mean for married male sample is significantly different from mean of married female and unmarried female sample and vis-à-vis. Mean of married female sample is significantly different than mean of unmarried male and vis-à-vis. Mean of unmarried male sample is significantly different than the mean of unmarried female and vis-à-vis. Mean of unmarried female sample is significantly different than the mean of married male and unmarried male. [b] Mean for married male sample is significantly different than mean of married female sample and vis-à-vis. Mean for married female sample is significantly different than mean of unmarried female sample and vis-à-vis. [c] Mean for unmarried male sample is significantly different than the mean of unmarried female sample and vis-à-vis. [d] Mean for married female sample is significantly different than the mean of unmarried male sample and vis-à-vis. [e] Mean for married male and married female sample is significantly different than the mean of unmarried male sample and vis-à-vis.

Finding broadly depicts that there were some preferences which were rated at almost same values by the respondents irrespective of their sex and marital status, while there were few such preferences also which differed a lot by respondent's sex and marital status. For example, physical attractiveness, same liking, similar job/earnings, economic stability and ambitiousness in the potential spouse were valued at almost similar rate across the respondents of different sex and marital status. On the other hand, there was a great divergence in the values attached with financial prosperity of spouse, mutual attraction and love, domestic skills, intelligence, faithful/ dependable character, same caste, and same religion across the different type of respondents.

Unmarried and married female mostly preferred that their spouse should have good financial prospect, while there were no such preferences of males from their spouse. Males preferred the spouse with good domestic skills, which has no meaning for females. Further, compared to married male, other respondents (especially married female) valued intelligence of their spouse at most. Within sex differences can also be seen by the respondents of different marital status such as, for married male, it was most important that the spouse should be of same caste but presently unmarried male posses very less value for that.

4.4 Generational stability and change in mate selection criteria

Earlier section set the impression that the generational shifts in mate preferences are taking place in traditional societies. These shifts varied largely by the sex, marital status of the respondents. Although, there were some preferences to which people valued more but at the same time there were few preferences which were invariable in due course of time across different type of respondents. This section deals with the same part with some different approach. Here only married respondents are selected and are divided into four marriage cohorts according to their year of marriage. Now analysis is carried out to analyze the changes in rank ordering of each preference across four marriage cohorts by respondent's sex.

Table 5. Rank ordering of mate preferences across different marriage cohorts by respondent's sex.

	Male					Female			
Characteristic	≤1999	2000-2002	2003-2005	≥2006	Characteristic	≤1999	2000-2002	2003-2005	≥2006
Domestic skills	1-----	3-----	2-----	3	Faithful/ dependable character	1	1	2	1
Same caste	2-----	1-----	1-----	4	Good financial prospect	2	3	1	2
Same religion	3	5	3	2	Same caste	3-----	6-----	6-----	7
Physical attractiveness	4-----	4-----	4-----	6	Same religion	4	5	3	5
Faithful/ dependable character	5-----	2-----	5-----	1	Intelligent	5-----	2-----	4-----	3
Good health	6-----	6-----	7-----	9	Same liking	6-----	4-----	10-----	10
Mutual attraction and love	7-----	7-----	6-----	5	Physical attractiveness	7	8	5	6
Pleasing nature	8	9	9	7	Good health	8-----	7-----	8-----	4
Intelligent	9	8	8	8	Pleasing nature	9	9	11	9
Same liking	10	12	10	10	Mutual attraction and love	10	10	7	11
Good financial prospect	11	14	13	12	Economically even and stable	11-----	11-----	13-----	13
Similar educational background	12	11	11	11	Ambitious	12-----	13-----	12-----	14
Economically even and stable	13	10	12	13	Socially popular	13-----	12-----	9-----	8
Ambitious	14	13	14	14	Similar educational background	14-----	15-----	14-----	12
Socially popular	15	16	15	15	Domestic skills	15	14	15	15
Similar job/earnings	16	15	16	16	Similar job/earnings	16	16	16	16

Note: Table refers to the married respondents of only younger generation. Rank connected by dashed lines highlight a preference change of at least two ranks from the first to last marriage cohorts.

4.4.1 Generational shifts in mate selection criteria

For both male and female, there appear to be a general decrease in the valuation of caste (table 5). In contrast, a general decrease in the valuation of good health for male is seen while for females it climbed up, i.e. over the four marriage cohorts, male gave relatively less importance to health of the spouse compared to their other characteristics. In addition to the changes that occurred for both sexes, several shifts were unique to each of the sexes. For male, there was an overall increase in the valuation of faithful/ dependable character and mutual attraction and love while overall decrease in valuation of domestic skills and physical attractiveness. For female, there was an overall increase in the valuation of intelligence, good health, social popularity and similar educational background while an overall decrease in valuation of same liking, economically even and stable, and ambitiousness.

4.4.2 Generational continuities in mate selection criteria

Despite of several generational shifts, some of the characteristics appeared to attain same level of continuity in the valuation across four marriage cohorts. The continuity in preferred characteristics was more among male than the females. It shows that in the recent course of time females are also becoming

choosing while selecting their partner. Some of the characteristics like, economic stability, ambitious, social popularity and similar job/earning were not given value by those males who got married almost ten years before the survey. The same thing remained to be continued as there characteristics were also not preferred by the respondents who got married just two or three years before the survey.

In addition to these continuities over the four different marriage cohorts, some of the characteristics retained maximum importance throughout the all assessment period. For example, across all the assessment periods, female placed a higher premium on faithfulness/ dependable character of the spouse, their financial prospect, and intelligence. In contrast, male were not so much static but even though they attached their preference to domestic skill of spouse, their caste, physical attractiveness and their faithful/ dependable character.

The cross-generational continuity in relative valuation of the 16 characteristics is assessed by the Spearman correlations calculated among the four marriage cohorts of mate preferences. The average correlation among the male sample was 0.95, ranging from 0.93 to 0.98; the average correlation among female samples was 0.91, ranging from 0.86 to 0.96 across all the four assessment periods. The magnitudes of these correlations suggested substantial continuity in relative valuation of the 16 characteristics, for both male and female, in the study population for the four assessment periods.

5. Discussion and conclusion

It has been well established that the cultural differences between several developed and developing countries account for wide disparity on sexual attitudes and mate selection practices. These differences are either in selection process, in seeking the consent of individual in marriage related decision, or in characteristics preferred in the potential spouse. These factors were found to affect the marriage age of individuals. Studies has also found that the influence of parental authority in the development of romantic/sexual attitudes and mate selection as an important factors in both the cultures[31].

The mate selection criterion is an important domain to assess the cultural changes and especially when there are certain changes in the preferred characteristics of the partner due to modernization all over the globe. Therefore, it is worthy to know the emerging changes in mate preferences over the generation. Even within the same generation what kind of differences are persistent across different population subgroups. Prior works on marriage, which has been conducted in India, were based on the final match, but those theories and empirics were not suited to study of how these matches are actually formed. In this paper using a cross-generation data it was tried to observe the cultural evolution of values in mate preferences across the two generations. The discussion, in this section, is being made according to the research questions that were raised earlier.

Result clearly shows that the "traditional" societies are now accepting the norms of "modernized" society. In present days, rather than the family status (same caste, same religion), individuals of present generation prefer to look into the potentiality of prospective mate itself. Value is given to the dependable character, physical attractiveness, and intelligence of the prospective mate rather than their caste and religion. These differences were found to be statistically significant. The studies conducted in developed countries do support the notion that physical attractiveness have climbed up in recent decades. The cosmetics, diet and

cosmetic surgery industries, for example, have gained a maximum in these days, and increasing number of men and women are apparently partaking of these appearance enhancement efforts[31].

The analysis further reveals that there are some specific characteristics which have been commonly preferred by either male or female. But of course, within the sex there were substantial differences in the preferences attached with a particular characteristic between the two generations. For example, male of younger generation gave more value to the domestic skill, faithful/ dependable character and physical attractiveness of their potential spouse which was not the case of male respondents of older generation. In contrast to male, female of younger generation rated more to financial prosperity, their character, and intelligence, while the older generation female were more interested in same caste and same religion marriage. These findings show that along with the intergenerational changes in preferred characteristics within sex, there exist remarkable sex differences in the valuation of different characteristics.

The respondents of same generation showed substantial variation in the preferred characteristics indicating the different degree of shifts their preferences. For example, unmarried male preferred the dependable/ faithful character of the mate than the same caste which was preferred by married male. Similarly, unmarried females attached their preference more with good financial prospect of the spouse than the married female. This shows the marital status of the respondents also lead to change in the valuation of their preferences. Looking into the extent of adoption of liberal western views on love and sex, romantic notions of love and marriage, and the place of chastity in the courtship, unmarried individuals preferred their partners should be dependable/ faithful. Despite of increasing work participation and self dependency of unmarried females, their attachment with financial prosperity of prospective mate is questionable. But here this result may be valid because in the traditional societies female were still not involved in full fledged outside household work and every time they have suspicion about the guarantee of getting a job after the education. In that sense they prefer to secure their future financial need by having such a partner whose financial background is strong or who is having good future financial prospects.

With the strong degree of cultural shifts, some of the values have remained constant, impervious to other changes in society. These characteristics were either most preferable for a particular sex (e.g. domestic skill and same caste for male and faithful/ dependable character and good financial prospect for female) for all assessment period or were assessed as moderately desirable, or even neutral. The overall Spearman rank correlation (0.89) for two generation population, and 0.88 for male and 0.91 for female suggest considerable continuity in values.

The analyses clearly found emerging shifts in preferred values in mate selection over the generation in the traditional society. Now individual, especially females are crossing the barrier of religion and caste and are willing to adopt the new cultures and customs of different religion and caste. Moreover, the individuals of present generation are paying more attention on the individual characteristics of prospective mate which was not much evident among the older respondents. On one hand males tend to attach relatively greater importance to domestic skill of potential mates, whereas females perceive strong traits referring to a mate's material wealth either directly in terms of good financial prospect or in directly via their intelligence. Both sexes seem to strive for maximization along dimensions of faithfulness and physical traits[32]. Apart from these sexual differences in preferred characteristics, there is also convergence between the two sexes on some of the characteristics like same liking, pleasing nature, and mutual

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attraction and love. Overall, it can be said that some changes are emerging in the mate preferences across the generations, even in the traditional societies.

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