MARRIAGE AGE PATTERN IN INDIA—A CRITICISM

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JAIN in his paper published in *Artha Vijnana*, Vol. XI, No. 4, 1969 claims that Hajnal's method[1] of estimating the mean age at first marriage is reasonably good for populations where the decrease in the proportion of 'single' is gradual but may not be so in cases where early universal marriage prevails, and has cited the case of India. The reasons for the inapplicability of Hajnal's method in the case of India as pointed out by Jain are the sharp increase in the marriage rate in a short span of age and after touching the model age a sharp decrease in the rate. Because of these reasons, he states that the Hajnal's method underestimates the mean age at marriage.

Examination of the proportion of 'single' of different countries, both developed and developing, shows that the sharp increase and sharp decline in the marriage rate is not typical of only those societies where there is early universal marriage. For example, in the United States[2] in 1950 the percentage of 'single' among the rural farm white females in the age group 15-19 was 83.8 and in the age group 20-24 it was 25.7 This percentage further dropped to 9.2 in the are group 25-29. Thus, except for the change in the origin, the rural farm white females of the United States in 1950 and the Indian females in 1961 or in earlier censuses exhibited a similar trend with respect to a sharp rise and a sharp fall in marriage rates.

For estimating the area under the curve of proportion 'single', Hajnal says, "Consider a cohort of women passing through life, and suppose that at each age the proportion among them who are single is as given in table".[3] This assumption implies that the proportion 'single' observed in an age group corresponds to the mid-point of the

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[1] Hajnal, John, "Age at Marriage and Proportion Marrying", *Population Studies*, Vol. VII, No. 2, London, 1953, pp. 111-136.

[2] U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population*: 1950, Vol. II, *Characteristics of the Population*, Part I, U.S. Summary, Washington, D.C., 1953, pp. 1-188.

[3] Hajnal John, *op. cit.*, p. 130.