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The Context of Love, Marriage and Feminism in Globalized India

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is such a union of life which is indispensable for entirety in life of man and woman. It fulfills the need of love and sex both which makes the world lively and beautiful. Marriage is based on love and faith of husband and wife and can be termed as a true bond of true minds of true souls. But in this modern globalized world, the social and cultural scenario has changed, and it is not the smooth and steadfast mind the basis of love and marriage but money. It may be “property, a profitable business, or a well-paid job”. The couple just marry each other without bothering to find out whether the person being selected as life partner will make a good lifelong companionship or not. At the time of marriage, the youth have their ‘sex urges to explosive dimensions’ and desire little besides the freedom to ‘discover and devour’ their partner’s body and so the first few months/years pass well but what, when the urges abate? The present paper is an attempt to explore why married couples seem eager to get rid of their better-halves and the quarrel between them become endemic.

Keywords: Feminism, Globalization, India, Love, Marriage.

Marriage is a bond of life which is essential for completeness in life of man and woman. It fulfills the need of love and sex both which keeps the world lively and beautiful. Marriage is a unit family of world which is based on love and faith of husband and wife. But in free India, the social and cultural scenario has changed the woman conscious which defines her place, identity and future in society. At present, women have salaries, remunerative occupations and dignified professions which contribute to the family with a handsome source of income. They deserve and desire a co-partnership with their husbands and expect a large measure of happiness in their married life. They demand personal gratification, psychological, social and economic status out of their marriage. It emphasized more of their privilege than of their obligations. It indicates a definite and vital change in their attitude towards marriage. But in reality, woman is not enjoying the same freedom like her male counterpart. If she selects her male-partner as a husband, she is labelled ‘a rebel’ not only by the family but also by the society.

Society thus attacks the freedom of woman regarding marriage where man enjoys the freedom of marriage while, on the other hand, woman is chained in the traditional bond of marriage that Shashi Deshpande calls as 'a trap' for woman. S.C. Dube in his book *Indian Village* considers,

According to the traditional norms of the society a husband is expected to be an authoritarian figure whose will should always dominate the domestic scene.... The wife should regard him as her 'master' and should 'serve him faithfully'.... The husband 'is superior', the wife is his subordinate (141).

M.N. Srinivas, while discussing traditional Hindu wife's role in context of Indian society thus writes:

The sacred and secular writings of Hindus have many more allusions to a wife's role was more definite and precise than that of the husband. Thus she had more to adhere to a set pattern laid down for her than the husband had to do (*MFM* 195).

Simone de Beauvoir, a French feminist, says that marriage is the destiny of women and has a different meaning for the women:

Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society. Marriage has always been very different thing for man and woman. Boys get married, they take a wife. They look in marriage for an enlargement, a confirmation of their existence, but not the mere right to exist; it is a charge they assume voluntarily.... In marrying, woman gets some shame in the world as her own; legal guarantees protect her against capricious action by man; but she becomes his vassal. He is the economic head of the joint enterprise and hence he represents it in the view of society. She takes his name; she belongs to his religion, his class, his circle; she joins his family, she becomes his "half" (*SS* 429).

Marriage is a union of two human beings who require '*roti, kapada and makan*' where marital foundations become indispensable and a woman has to play a double role as a wife and as a career woman. Women always suffer from the crisis of adjustment as they have to face two different kinds of demands, one at home and the other at workplace. They are confronted with this dual responsibilities and the duties they perform inside and outside the house. Thus a marriage of man and woman becomes complementary to each other, which exists on their mutual love and faith of partners. Nirad C. Chaudhary in light hearted vein, thus remarks about marriage that "marriage between a man and a woman is like the relationship between a shirt and tie—either a good contrast or matching."

Matrimony in the biological sense fulfils a demand of a permanent sexual relationship of male and female in society which is supported by reciprocal affections and cares of husband and wife till their old age. Though marriage is important for the wellbeing of human society but unfortunately marriages are not lasting for a long time and one of the main reasons for the disintegration of family is the excessive extramarital relationships. Shashi Deshpande, a feminist writer from India, has very meticulously analyzed such problems in her novels.

Shashi Deshpande, a master artist who has dealt with such heroines in her novels who probe their own 'selves' to find the solutions of their problems and feel stupid and silly martyrs they had been by becoming rebels and have suffered a lot in male-oriented society. Having lived long in tension, they discover that

hatred, jealousy or antagonism lead one nowhere. It is love that makes life worth-living because love is the foundation of life which can blossom like spring in life. Another cause of their suffering as the economic freedom that makes a marriage miserable by increasing the divorce rate. Shobha De in her novel *Socialite Evenings* presents a glimpse of married life in the Indian society. The family is breaking up and there is a need to redefine the institution of marriage. There should be complete sexual freedom sans marital fidelity with no economic security for the wife. Marriage appears to be an arrangement devoid of zealous living, and emotional warmth, which breaks down, leading to divorce and breaking of the family ties.

Shashi Deshpande paints a beautiful picture to portray the married life of Jaya in the novel *That Long Silence*.

A pair of bullocks yoked together... a clever phrase, but can it substitute for the reality?
(Deshpande 8).

The picture of pairing the bullocks provides a world of meaning of sharing the burden between themselves but love is missing in their relationship. The image of the beasts gives a message of performing their duty mechanically like the husband-wife relationship in a family and society.

Such attitudes sometimes rebel against the society. It creates a kind of imbalance between the traditional values and expectations and that of woman's sexual demands. But in the process, she suffers, questions and looks for answers. The most Indian woman novelists, however, we can find no answers to such questions.

Marriage is indeed "a tragedy that even in the modern age, Indian girls echo the same sentiment where it was marriage that mattered not the man" (R&S 4). Marriage is a sacrifice demanding ceremony in the life of woman which traps her from the day she is married and continues till the end of her life.

Marriage makes a girl dependent on others and the fear to remain a spinster makes her constantly humiliated. Hence, she remains choice less and finally yields to get married.

Marriage, which is considered as a union of two souls, is down to nothing except a ritual which involves two persons with no responsibility and no sharing and understanding of the two minds. Thus, the society projects woman with a burden of marriage and snatches her freedom and desire and leaves her as a choice less individual.

Marriage leads a woman to subjugation and slavery. Women pay for their happiness at the cost of their freedom.

One of the paths such people could take was indicated long ago when sage Yajnavalkya told his wife, "Maitreyi, verily I am about to go forth from this state (of householder)"—as told in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. Such going forth has nothing to do with the wife, her beauty, her youth, or any similar quality of her wifeness. It also has nothing to do with Vishwas, trust (or the lack of it) that a husband/wife has in each other. The need springs from the inside, from recognizing the effervescence of the world around oneself. According to the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Maitreyi on hearing that declaration of her husband, discussed with him the reason for his going away, and argued with him whether that path was also not less hers to take. The Maitreyi of *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* was free to renounce the world, and to go on a spiritual quest of her own.

In a male-oriented society, marriage turns out to be dissatisfying both physically and spiritually for the female sex. The female sex always remains in a dilemma whether to accept the path of submission or rejection. But one thing which always remains visible is the discontentment. The couple just marry each other without bothering to find out whether the person being selected as life partner will make a good lifelong companionship or not. At the time of marriage the youth have their 'sex urges to explosive dimensions' and desire little besides the freedom to 'discover and devour' their partner's body. As a result, marriage becomes meaningless and sex alone seems to sustain the man-woman relationship. Indrani Jaising, an eminent lawyer for women, writes:

It is assumed that by marrying a man, a woman has given her consent to sexual intercourse with her husband at anytime. Thus, even if he forces himself on her, he is not committing an offence [of rape] as her consent is assumed. In this respect, the women's movement has consistently demanded that the law of rape be changed. A recent judgement of court in England indicated that rape within marriage can be an offence. Several states in the U.S. have specially amended their original law to make it an offence (65)

In India, however, woman is still suffering from this enforced act of man upon her. Sex as a 'male feeling' has been the prominent theme in literature for a long time but the suffering, the desperation of woman because of sex has not been projected.

Man and woman can be compared with the two wheels of a chariot, if any of the wheels stop working, it will be difficult for the chariot to move forward. In the same way a proper co-ordination, a reasonable mutual understanding between husband and wife is essential for a happy married life. A happy married life is a harmonious union of husband and wife like two bodies with one soul. But in reality, woman is a suffering species in the context of love, marriage, and sex.

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