

Lancy Lobo and Kanchan Bharati (Eds) *MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE: CHANGING CONCEPTS AND PRACTICES*. New Delhi: Manohar, 2019, pp 327, Rs. 1595, ISBN 13: 9789388540001.

Family is part of most people's lives, and each one has some experience. Some of it is universal and much of it is varied. The variations are enormous in a diverse country like India, and difficult to capture. Still everyone has a strong opinion about how family life is changing based on their own experience and observations and view of realities. However, as part of academic discourse, we have little evidence-based knowledge to understand the phenomena.

At such a juncture, this book is an interesting volume and a much needed one for development of a holistic understanding about marriage and divorce in a contemporary context. The chapters in the volume make two important contributions.

First is to provide a clear understanding about the lens with which we need to view marriage and family as an academic field of study. The two stalwarts A.M. Shah and Tulsi Patel elaborate on the intricacies of understanding the nuances embedded in marriage and family as dynamic institutions in an excellent manner. Shah in his chapter on marriage and divorce in India: A framework for analysis provides a clear picture of the large canvas of diversity that needs attention. Prof. Shah clearly points out, how the notions about marriage varies based on class, caste, region...and tradition; he draws attention to the enormous errors we make in making generalizations and inferences, that arise from our own fixed notions and beliefs about India

as a predominately Hindu or patriarchal society. This raises an interesting question- "can we assume universality in the institution of marriage which is considered almost mandatory". Therefore, the emphasis is on understanding emerging realities from field studies that is an ongoing endeavor for social scientists, which this book addresses.

Similarly, the chapter on 'what do we know about divorce in India', provides the much-needed wide spectrum view of all aspects of divorce and its varied manifestations in India integrating sociological and anthropological research literature. The chapter begins by undoing some myths about the universality and sacramentality of marriage, contrasts the book view of marriage with field view, integrating feminist views. It helps to understand causes and consequences of divorce and outlines expectations in marriage and its connections to divorce and highlights the dynamics of divorce. Noteworthy is the part on camouflaging marital disruption. She brings many live examples of women's situations of divorce. This is also elaborated by Joshi and Kapadia in their chapter on women's experiences of divorce, with findings drawn from a qualitative study of women divorcees in Vadodara city. They highlight certain lesser known realities about divorce, such as women's feelings of liberation upon divorce, finding happiness in work and personal fulfilment despite a strong rootedness in social norm of marriage. The chapters on divorce among Catholics in Kheda district of Gujarat by Dr. Lobo, Kanchan Bharati and Jayesh Shah, point to the increasing acceptance of divorce by people and highlight the interference of natal family of bride and the working status of women as factors triggering divorce. Zakia Soman's paper focusses on the legal justice to Muslim Women. All these highlight the changing dynamics of divorce in present Indian society, also linking it to women's agency, as it is unfolding in a so-called patriarchal society, in which families are transforming and making accommodative shifts to meet individual needs.

This section also has interesting new perspectives on some themes that we already are debating with; for example -Does early age persist in India? R.B Bhagat writes on the changing age at marriage in Kerala and how demographic and social factors are playing out in today's market economy? He specially links age at marriage with the concept of 'marriage squeeze' (number of members of one sex being higher than the other in the actual ratio) exerts pressure for the early marriage of girls due to its interaction with cultural norms of age based hypergamy, education and economic status. Are we really broad minded when it comes to marriages beyond caste, region and religion? Dr. Vibhuti Patel presents interesting facts on the status

of mixed marriages and analyses its implications as it plays out in lives of those who adopt this practice. In a society that accepts individual rights and freedoms constitutional and legal norms, she highlights how community and social structures create barriers for individuals and therefore the need for action to support free spousal choice from a human rights perspective. The second section of the book is dedicated to the theme of emerging forms of love and sexual relationships. The chapter by Vaishali Arora delves into the world of 'live-in- relations 's as a new form of family life that has psychological acceptance due to its comfort, and fulfillment of individual needs, and recognized to some extent through the domestic violence act of 2005. Through an analysis of Judicial cases, she discusses the novel complexities that have surfaced in this contemporary family form and highlights the pressing demand for a legislative initiative to address the myriad issues a live-in embrace.

Aamir Qayoom, in his article on 'Love sex and relationship as consumerism: an inquiry into select Hindi films, highlights the new contours of relationships that are emerging out of the shackle of patriarchy. Simultaneously it indicates some changing notions in younger generations and how Bollywood uses screen as an important tool of de-mythification and de-schooling of patriarchal injections of femininity, masculinity, sexuality and marriage, though its stories and characters.

The article on Feminism and Marriage: A dichotomy or synthesis is a much-needed debate both at Individual and societal level to come to terms with a changing social order that ensures equality and independence to women which conflicts the with traditional notions of marital and family roles. Bringing this intra individual debate into the public sphere through this article is a bold and much needed step that Kriti Kanuja takes up.

Similarly, the article on compulsory heterosexuality, marriage and sexual discontent by Kanchan Kumari, throws up issues related to same sex relationships that we need to see with a new lens. Though we accept diversity and multiple forms of sexuality in theory, we tend to impose strong personal views on norms that guide both law and practice and this article is a reflection of the same.

Much is talked about how IPC 498A is misused. But very systemic documentation is done by Komal Vig in her article '498A: the other side of the coin'. It provides insights into how women protection laws are being misused by many and what we need to do to preserve the spirit in practice so it helps women but does not harm good men and their families.

The last chapter by Kanchan Bharati and Jayesh Shah, 'Emerging trends in selection of marital spouses: evidence from research' is a summary of researches and is a value addition to understanding the dynamics of a large spectrum of modern methods such as marriage bureaus, matrimonial advertisements and websites, melas and the like. It also presents a summary of articles on cross boundary marriages (inter-caste, inter-religious and interregional) that are emerging as a response to changing socio demographic situations. This on the one hand is a testimony to cultural adaptations, emerging individual freedom within a culture of familism, and on the other indicative of certain pathology in the institution of marriage in spousal selection becoming common in tribal communities with skewed sex ratios.

This book thus is a call for us is to move beyond making judgments on what is right and wrong based on our narrow world view of beliefs about marriage and family, based on either our experience or so-called dated notions that never existed in reality. Towards a more aware and informed view of existing practices of marriage and sexualities thus accepting emerging diversities and accommodating them harmoniously into the social fabric. It is a must in the reading list for all social science discipline scholars and students.

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