

## Socio Cultural Dynamics of Marriage: A Critical Discourse in the Spouse

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*Spouse unfolds the socio cultural perspective of the most dominant Indian institution Marriage. Shobha De broadly discusses the emotive implicatures of marriage in the rational as well as the modern context. Spouse reflects the neoliberal approach of Shobha De whereby she [ours forth the role and functions of couples by providing promising mantras for successful married life. The durability or no durability of marriage is directly proportional to the family life. The changing social scenario and selfhood of the couples stand as a natural therat adversely affecting the sanctity of this institution Accordingly Spouse comes out with a detail discourse on the matter concerned. In this way Spouse pours forth a post feministic voice of Shobha De with a new and purposive of marital norms and clauses.*

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The socio cultural aspect of marriage has an infinite role to play for it not only serves as a base for present bond but also joins two family and finally continues the line of descent. In Indian perspective marriage is the most powerful social institution and so its importance can very well be ascertained. Not only the couples but the two families meet and get tied with a harmonious knot. The socio cultural aspect of marriage is something pre-ordained; the cultural trait develops through series of moderation and is finally authorized. Therefore the marital bond is sensitive as well as very dominating role to play in coloring the life pattern of the couples. According to Manu (IX-26)

To be the mothers were women created and to be fathers men, the Veda ordain

that Dharma must be practiced by man together with his wife. *The Institution of Hindu Marriage* (106)

The Institution of marriage serves as a base for various other institutions on social level, most important of them is family. Family grows and exists only through marriage. The line of descent continues through marriage and maintains the identity of any family in question. Thus the social implicative of marriage has far role to play and necessitates every member of society to understand its core meaning. It is not a simple licensed privilege to enjoy rather marriage demands some important roles and function to carry on devotedly Then only the purpose of the institution gets served. Generally, marriage is taken very lightly and thus it bad conse

quences surface very fast with the couples taking divorce and shifting to individual corners. This adversely affects the social paradigm; marriage is not an autonomous institution it is solely bonded and one has to abide by in every socio-cultural perspective. Spouse stands as a standard piece of nonfiction echoing the social aspect of marriage when Shobhaa De reasonably evaluates its each and every aspect as an intellectual Indian woman.

Right from the Vedic Phase to the present era marriage has been a powerful institution but has undergone various alterations. The most surprising aspect seems the continuity of the sacred bond inherent in this institution. Primarily it binds two persons and gradually they become one. It is a long term process which is experienced by the couples personally and its colour is reflected. Every couple has the personal way of interpreting their conjugal bond but one thing important in every case is its permanence and continuity.

Spouse thus evaluates and enumerates each and every facet of the marital bond; how it begins, works and finally cultivates into the most promising colour. However, as a Post feminist Shobhaa- De(2005) echoes her broadness and rationality but as an Indian woman keeps stressing the cultural value of marriage and its holiness.

The chapter wise summary in one way lets us know each and every aspect of marriage : what it means to marry and enter that institution. At the same time we also get to learn much aspect of its social role and function. The structural pattern of society is deeply embedded with the institution of family and it is directly proportional to the soundness of marriage as an institution.

Primarily the institution of marriage relates to the personal bond between the couples who become one through a ritualistic ceremony. This personal bond has several things to connote whereby the equation of an inter-personal term starts developing therefore the new couples undergo various experiences that sound very strange but keep on learning through it. Hence the ideal version of marriage remains only a dream;

Marriage is an idea. A malleable idea. Marriage is what you make of it. Marriage is maddening, as anybody who has experienced it will tell you. There is no formula for a happy marriage. And nobody has all the answers. *Spouse (1)* One the personal level the degree of attraction and devotion very much depends upon the physical affinity. It has to be cordially accepted because its denial mars the strengths of the personal bond. Although the cultural norms stresses the holiness but the biological urge has an equal demand and ought to be satisfactory; “We have to first break through the inhibitory wall that stops us from reaching out physically— “ *Spouse Touch and go (5)*

Spelling it out and Talk Time discusses at lengths on the importance of the ‘Quality talk’ between the couples. When the whole life has to spend with each other good communication serves as the only medium for really getting to know as guaranteed. There zare various misunderstanding that crops up and reaches its climax in a distorted way. The sacramental aspect of marriage remains functional only when the partners are good speakers, expressing their personal thought freely anywhere and anytime. Therefore the importance of ‘Quality talk’ is stressed by the narrator;

Both partners need to listen keenly and then point out where the confusion really lies. But to get to that stage you have to fine-tune your 'take-time' and add some quality to it — it is a process that evolves over the years — if it evolves at all, *Spouse: Talk time – 24*

The level and degree of personal communication decides the nature of marital bond which the couples celebrate or face. If it is well carried the partners develop a good chemistry or turn foes otherwise. The ritualistic bond always aim for cultivating an in depth tuning so that finally every couple starts living and enjoying the personal empathy. But there are few personality traits that need to be developed for attaining that stage otherwise the opposite side turns more dominating. Two different person from different background share one roof after marriage. So the social purpose is served only when the 'differences' are cordially accepted; "when two human beings share the same space, conflict is a natural corollary. How you resolve fights is the more important issue" *Spouse: Fight or spite 34.*

Therefore in the old days the in-laws always served as a promising mediator for resolving personal conflict. However in the modern phase, individuality sounds more powerful. Although the identity icon of the either couple sounds even today, yet these are some commitments which, need to be fulfilled. Then only the marriage can be lead happily or it becomes a severe punishment. So one has to accept that "Emotional management in a marriage involves a lot of investment". Therefore the couples must develop the habit of discarding the negatives and concentrating more on their positives.

One need to face and adjust on personal

level. The personal understanding is the key factor. For a long survival commitment is essential or the disintegration sets in. Since the traditional slot of marriage always remains functional on social level, difference and separation has to be coped up on personal level. Therefore thousands of couples go on tolerating each others oddities standing at corner. However reconciliation has always been a promising healer, " why give up it there's even a five percent chance of reconciliation ?" *Spouse: Marriage must foul 70*

There are various condition that should be compulsorily fulfilled to maintain the sacramental aspect in the marital bond. If the couples fail in this regard then disintegration sets in. However in the present era divorce is not an uncommon or surprising facet; it is conveniently resorted by the couples. However, its ill-effects pinches not only the separated partners but the children as well. The frequent cases of legal separation poses a serious threat towards the serenity of ' marriage' as a social institution; "Divorce has become commonplace, atleast in our critics, where its being viewed as a sad but inevitable part of a larger social change." *Spouse: Divorce and be Damned (75)*

This is the worst situation if someone is bracketed in such slot:

Slot of separation and becoming a post-divorcees.

If we minutely interpret the major cause for such suffering its main cause surfaces easily; lack of commitment and of course flexibility. The institution works smoothly if the couples strike a balance and maintain personal rhythm. Patience and devotion are the two most im

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portant traits for its success otherwise the relation suffers many illnesses.

The cultural perspective in the matrimonial relation is equally dominating. Only those partners respect each other who are culturally sound and are emotionally very mature. Marriage connotes a complete dissolution of a personal ego and mingling of the two beings on physical mental as well as social level. In case the couple fail in this context, then their existential pangs becomes very obvious,

“the worst power game in marriage involves the ego- an egotistical partner is an unpleasant partner – no two ways about it.” *Spouse: Games people play*(120)

Thus intelligent couples should create bridges, not lay landmines.

In the same vein a ritualistic bond is emphasized as a safety valve. There are few very successful marriages that set an example for the others:

Rituals play a major role in some marriage. Repetition

is reassuring since the ‘rules’ are familiar. Rituals then

become a kind of security blanket for couples who rely

on habits to provide coherence and sense of continuity

in their lives.

*Spouse: Repeat value*(139)

The above quoted lines reflects the power of customary bond and its consciousness on the part of the narrator. Shobhaa – De attempts her level best to illustrate the matrimonial relationship within the gamut of social structure and its cultural perspective. As a women she very well enumerates the social role of every women

is conditionally expected to switch on rightly in her new role.

If on the personal level she has to correspond evenly before her husband, the role becomes more challenging before the in laws. Her personal image directly affects the degree of affinity and pleasantness she provides in her part. The basic norms has to be followed heartily, specially the role as a giver. If the bride is self-centered and an egoist she is emotionally rejected by the family measure. Her cultural set up plays the main part in this context.

Matrimonial relations are also affected by the kind and nature of family structure. It becomes more challenging if the bride becomes a part of joint family. However the Nuclair Family posses and equal challenge either of the family types has its own norms and set in conditions to be fulfilled cautiously. The present life phase permeates more the nuclear structure but there are number of joint family folks which also becomes a pleasant shelter for the brides who become familiar with its demanding norms. The narrator comments:

Joint families do have their advantages if you know how to negotiate your way through landmines. I know a few young girls who married into large, extended families and seem to be perfectly well adjusted an happy.

*Spouse: All in the family* (223)

There are thousand of excuses for any new bride who is herself incapable of coping with the conditional norms of a new environmental change. All she needs ardently is a soothing adaptability and not a forced commitment. In that way she looses the actual charm which nourishes automatically if she has commitment and devotion.

The social structure is traditionally more influential. At the same time the pace of technical development has altered the life style of the Indians. We are all the victims of cultural lag. The choice between love or arranged marriage doesn't sound so simple or easy. Love marriage still remains a foreign concept since marriage in India denotes a traditional bound ritual fixed and arranged by the guardians. Arranged marriage carries a family censure whereas love marriage is mostly individualistic. However the personal equation between the partners actually serve as an exact scale for measuring their success or failure. To our surprise there are few successful love marriage that withstood all the oddities while many arranged marriage have collapsed in its half way due to lack of corresponding equation. Thus the narrator comments:

“Arranged’ has worked for centuries in India; ‘love’ is only fifty years old. And both can fail !” *Spouse: Love Vs Arranged (Pg.63)*

Since love marriage remains a personal choice one needs to be cautious for it. Thus the advice sounds very apt;

“if you opt for love, assume full responsibility for you decision. Take whatever comes with the terrain;” *Spouse: Love Vs Arranged (Pg.62)*

Love alone is no guarantee, commitment is more essential for permanence. Thus it is a balanced arithmetical equation that stands as a promising factor for maintaining a smooth long matrimonial relationship. Commitment favours an encouraging mode where the partners positively explore each other and are heartily one. The strangers becoming one through marriage sounds very unusual but culturally bonded rituals train every individual to gradually fit in this

slot and enjoy the personal term. Indeed the matrimonial relationship is the deepest and most complex bond and thus its exploration equally challenging.

The family structure is yet another conditional factor to decide the relation between the spouses. Thus a renounced sociologist Dr. G. Das aptly comments:

The joint family system refers to the cohesive group of family members where members are bound together by their blood relations further strengthen by their mutual obligations. The joint family is based on the relations among adult males rather than on conjugal bonds between spouses. *Dr. G. Das : Indian Joint family system.(Pg.93)*

The spouses lack personal space and so can exit only if they have a mental make up for leading their life in such family type However the modern complexities has certain favourable options in this joint family structure. There are few modern brides who have heartily appreciated the positive sides of joint family. One such bride or bahu commented:

“the joint family works best in times of crisis – death, emergencies births, travel. Everybody comes together at such time. people can be so gratefully helpful when you most need help.” *Spouse: All in the Family (223)*

However the ratio of such devoted ‘bahus’ remain relatively low as compared to the individualistic brides out and favouring the nuclear family structure; they love freedom and desire a physical as well as an emotional space. The other half is equally challenging. The new couple are probably in risky zone since there is no guardian for resolving their personal dispute and so the chances of divorce becomes more

prominent. It is at this point where by the joint family structure acts as a promising safety valve.

The social change has been directly proportional to decide the existing stamina of the joint family system. Thus the nuclear family set up became more favourable. The futurity of the children in any family totally depends upon the degree of compatibility among the spouses. Irrespective of the family structure, their personal term decides the level of socialization that a child finally becomes a part of. The personality make up of any child reflects the parents configuration and this challenges the personal equation of the spouses anywhere and anytime. If the spouses maintain a good rapport and are open minded, the offspring's develop the same vitality and are fully confident everywhere. On the other hand, kids of single parent are half way on social graph. They lack confidence and become introvert. Thus Shobhaa De aptly comments:

I strongly feel that communicative families nurture communicative kids. If children are encouraged to talk and express themselves at an early age, if their views and opinions are listened to with attention and respect they grow into adulthood knowing how to make most of both time and words. *Spouse: Talk Time (26)*

Divorce breaks the family and the ultimate suffering victims are the selfless children without any fault. This pinches any conscious man since it affects the whole life of such children. The problem is highly sensitive and so it is obvious to question:

Which child the world does not want to grow up in a stable, loving home with both parents

sharing the responsibility of rearing and caring. *Spouse: Divorce and be Damned (80)*

In case of any strained phase, there are certain moral responsibility on the part of the spouse. The noticeable hint in this regard is very well articulated; "kids should never be used as bargaining chips or a courier service between warring adults." Spouse(84).

Therefore the relation and its variance directly affects the whole life pattern of children. They have their birth right of leading a happy life with a gifted childhood. Incase they suffer they merely victimized by their parents disintegrated phase. The modern life style in a way is full of uncertainty and so even the legal separation today provides various provision for a normal life pattern of the children. but still the best option lies in reconciliation. It not only heals up the wounded spouses but also saves life graph of children.

Spouse in this way provides an in depth analysis of various aspects related to the matrimonial relationship especially the social perspective. Marriage and family are the two most dominating social institutions that decides the stability of social structure. The spouse have certain roles to perform on personal level and at the same time remains functional on social level. The modern phase of life has altered various social norms thus affecting the functional mode of marriage, today many spouse lack that emotive empathy which carries the essence of martial bliss. Lack of commitment seems the only drawback lending such bond temporary tenure. Therefore Shobhaa De interprets the actual message that a ceremonial marriage conveys. In an Indian women she is well aware about the sacramental union. The Indian ver-

sion of marriage is still working due to its deep rooted cultural mode. Despite various alterations, the ceremonial marriage still remains the first option to the Indian folks. The matured youths still today rely on the traditional and customary marriage because it carries a social censure.

After pouring forth her best, Shobhaa De finally confess her most personal experience as a wife of very promising husband marriage to her is sacred and becomes worth celebrating through an emotional empathy. The concluding lines are worth inspiring:

Marriage is no temporary contract to serve the momentary physical demand or to enjoy good company for sometime and then to lapse at the slightest inconvenience . It is a permanent union which stands various vicissitudes life only to grow stronger and more stable. *Spouse* (283)

The sociological perspective takes into its stock all the features

In context of structural pattern of a given society. Indian social value is time tested and therefore its continuity inspires everybody Marriage was holy in the Vedic age and gradually altered with the passage of time. Despite such alterations, the Indian version of marriage still remains a ritualistic ceremonial bond. It binds two strangers through ritual and they abide by its social aspect. Although the western touch can't be overlooked but is challenging mode seems risky because it lacks social censure. The ceremonial marriage on the other hand is out a guaranteed anchor that carries the life of Spouses smoothly.

The personal tuning matures only through mutual understanding and perseverance and once it is attained. Marriage turns into a heavenly bliss. It is this place which every spouse dreams and desire for and Shobhaa De managed to crystallize it through her fantastic and most promising books entitles spouse. We admire her for this accomplished work.

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