

Pre-marital Sex: Personal Choice or Moral Bound

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Abstract

The recent news and opinions regarding the protest against violence and crimes meted out to women in our society. Women are being victimized by their husbands, lovers, mother/daughters-in-law and by the society as a whole. A sheer number of young girls and women are being raped, tortured and even murdered. Sex related issues are privileged in our society. The examples of violence indicate that over restriction on pre-marital sex seems to have enabled the youths to involve in sexual violence because of their curiosity on it. On the other hand, there are social ethics that create taboos on such activities. One cannot indict any single aspect of the society like youths, parents, guardians, educational factors and others as the causative agent of the violence. Because of the changing attitudes and beliefs, people have both the concepts of freedom as well as morality. Therefore, the issue of 'pre-marital sex' is a debatable domain prevalent in the society. The main aspect of this research article is to analyse the concept of some strong feminists regarding the topic related issue and also to make such social issues familiar among the readers and to check the possible violence and crimes in the society.

Keywords: Arguments, Analytical study, debatable domain, pre-marital sex, violence

Introduction

"Rescued girl sold again", "1 sent to jail for attempted rape" are the headlines of the news articles published in The República Daily on 9 Jan. 2013. Since the past couple of weeks, newspapers are splattered with news and opinions regarding the protest against violence and crimes meted out to women. Women are being victimized by their husbands, lovers, mother/daughters-in-law and by the society as a whole. A sheer number of young girls

and women are being raped, tortured and even murdered. Sex related issues are privileged in our society. The examples of violence indicate that over restriction on pre-marital sex seems to have enabled the youths to involve in sexual violence because of their curiosity on it. On the other hand, there are social ethics that create taboos on such activities. Because of the changing attitudes and beliefs, people have both the concepts of freedom as well as morality. Therefore, the issue of 'pre-marital sex' is a debatable domain prevalent in the society. To analyse this controversial issue, I have chosen the views of three women from the monthly magazine *The Naree* published in the month of Aswin 2069 and from the national daily, *The Himalayan Times* published on 12 Aug. 2012. The women are Ragini Upadhyaya, Sanjeeta Sahi, and Sulochana Panta. The first two women argue in favour of pre-marital sex whereas Panta argues against it. So, the major purpose of my analytical study is to analyse how these women argue for or against the topic and how they support their arguments effectively.

Objectives

As the article is about the social issue regarding sex related violence and social crimes associated the issue of pre-marital sex. So, the main objectives of the study are:

- i. To analyse the opinions of the different notable women regarding the title related issues
- ii. To make the readers aware of such issues

Methodology

The research work I am going to carry out is qualitative research. So, the primary sources of data are mainly based on the opinions of the three feminists mentioned above. As a qualitative research work, characterization, description and narration are the major methodological tools adopted here. As the research article is the analytical based research, the contrastive opinions of some feminists in the Monthly Magazine named Naree are collected and analysed.

The issue of the Study

Sulochana Panta, a reader of the national daily, *The Himalayan Times*, trivializes the concept of pre-marital sex co-relating it with social, cultural and religious values and the forth-coming consequences after involving in pre-marital sex. Regarding the issue of pre-marital sex, Panta narrates her views as:

Talking about sex was a completely no-no earlier. The one talking about such topics was considered as bad person. But, due to globalisation, now in cities like Kathmandu, it is

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taken normally. Pre-marital sex is gradually entering here as well. It may be true that we may easily accept the fact but we should be very aware about its cons or dark side before readily practicing such a culture. Every youngster and teenager in relationships should know about sex and should be aware of safety measures as well. For this sex education should be included at the school level courses. It encounters problems like lots of moral questions, pre- mature pregnancies, and different diseases and feelings of guilt, et cetera. More than pleasure and fun, emotional affect after practising pre-marital sex like feeling of disgust, guilt, resentment, embarrassment, distrust, lack of respect and tension may cause mental problems or make a person suicidal as well. If we are not cautious, the chances of transmitting Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) are very high. So, it is best to abstain from such culture in order to avoid STDs, un- wed mothers, unwanted pregnancies and abortions. Nepal is still not ready for such practices. It will take many years for us to adapt to such change. We should do impact-analysis before doing anything. (The Himalayan Times, 22 July, 2012:p.7)

I have extracted this long quote of Panta to analyse how she establishes her ideas effectively in a coherent way. Regarding concept of people towards pre-marital sex, she talks about the past and gradually comes to the present. Panta lionizes her points simply and unemotionally. She links the relationship of pre-marital sex with cultural values. According to Panta, pre-marital sex is a social, cultural and religious taboo prevalent in our society. She accepts the cultural change as a result of globalization but defences her logic by emphasizing on the probable consequences of adopting pre-marital sex. She further verifies her arguments that even the developed cities like Kathmandu in Nepal are not still in the position to completely minimize the probable consequences of pre-marital sex. Here, she means to say that the people in the western countries are aware of the probable effects of pre-marital sex. Such practice of pre-marital sex cannot be adopted in the context of Nepali society because people are not aware of the probable consequences of it which Panta presents as: feeling of disgust, embarrassment, disturb, guilt, resentment, lack of respect, tension, diseases, unwanted pregnancy etc. By reading this list of consequences, general readers can imagine the risks of adopting pre-marital sex. Such a long list of negative consequences of pre-marital sex is a powerful tool for Panta to persuade the readers to agree on her argument.

Panta further emphasizes on sex education to make the readers aware about the effects of adopting premarital sex. According to her, sex education makes youngsters and teenagers to know about sex and safety measures. It makes them aware about the effects like STDs, unwanted pregnancies etc. Linguistically, by using the forceful phrases like "should be

very aware," "should be included," "should be aware" and "should do", Panta creates a rational tone to minimize the effects and also to make the readers feel indisputable on her arguments against adopting pre-marital sex.

Panta presents her ideas in a unified and coherent way. After relating sex with culture, she presents the consequences of adopting pre-marital sex. Then she concentrates on

‘impact-analysis’ of the works we involve. According to Panta, we should think about the results before doing anything. She further emphasizes her points mentioning that Nepal is not alert enough to practice pre-marital sex. Here, she means to say that pre-marital sex is a western practice where people are conscious about the outcomes of it. She also claims that it will take many years for the Nepali people to be fully attentive about the probable consequences of pre-marital sex and adapt it positively. She concludes her ideas limiting the freedom of premarital sex with conditional circumstances. Panta, by raising such issues, means to say that people in Nepal are not aware enough to adopt pre-marital sex and face the challenges. She further connects the issue with the family and society. She establishes the point that the family and society are not strong enough to accept and digest the challenges and consequences brought by pre-marital sex.

On the other hand, Ragini Upadhyaya, a notable modern artist, argues in favour of pre-marital sex. She takes sex as a biological need. Comparing sex with hunger, Upadhyaya argues in favour of pre-marital sex as:

'Pre-marital sex is like hunger for a person. As a hungry person needs food, a matured person needs sex. The more we keep pre-marital sex behind the curtain, the more curiosity it increases. So, pre-marital sex should be made educational. It should be naturalized before marriage' [Translated, The Naree, p. 24, Aswin 2069].

Upadhyaya puts her arguments in favour of pre-marital sex. Using similes, she compares sex with hunger and food and expresses her arguments effectively. Taking sex as a biological need, Upadhyaya creates an emotional tone among the readers regarding pre-marital sex. The unmarried young readers can be emotionally excited by reading her attitudes on pre-marital sex. She familiarizes the concept of the pre-marital sex taking it as a way of survival. Food, clothes and shelter are the socially accepted basic needs of human beings. It is the privileged ideology in our society. Upadhyaya takes sex as the fourth basic need for human being. Her arguments are emphasized on the basis of Nepali social perspectives on sex. She has interestingly contextualized the taboo against pre-marital sex. Her logic is pointed to the reality that the taboo intensifies the curiosity of the young generation towards sex if it is hidden behind the curtain. She argues to

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make pre-marital sex a familiar concept among the young generation by providing them sex education in high school level when they become curious towards sex. She argues that sex education makes them take sex as a natural phenomenon. Consequently, it helps them slow down the curiosity on sex and also checks the social crimes related to sex: unwanted pregnancies, abortion etc. So, the overall purpose of the writer is to persuade the readers to take sex normally.

Linguistically, Upadhyaya uses simple sentences to present her views on pre-marital sex. She simply presents her attitudes like the simple sentences she uses. She takes sex education as the solution to the probable risks of adopting pre-marital sex.

Similarly, Sanjeeta Shahi, an inhabitant of Kathmandu and a reader of the national daily *The Himalayan Times* ridicules the concept against pre-marital sex and argues in favour of the topic. Taking pre-marital sex as an important and influencing factor of life and also as the solution to the sex related crimes in the society, she establishes her ideas as:

I don't think pre-marital sex should be taken negatively. It is part of our life. So, there's no point of taking it as a taboo. Early marriage system in the past has influenced this view in our society. But now that the time has changed and the negative concept for pre-marital sex should also be changed. The more we try to deny this matter, the more chances there are for this to spread everywhere in the society. Due to the false view, most of the people take it as a social evil. And when some people (especially teenagers) become the victim of pre-marital sex, then they cannot dare to share it with their elders, and also they aren't ready to face the upcoming situations for which they are compelled to elope or commit suicide. This way, the false view somehow helps in increasing the crime rate. We can see that, developed countries like the USA, the UK et cetera take this fact normally, and these countries have better controlled birth and population compared to our country. If we are also able to take this fact positively, and are willing to accept it with awareness, then only our social fabric can turn better. (The Himalayan Times, 22 July, 2012)

To analyse the arguments effectively given by Shahi, I need to quote this long extract. Here, Shahi establishes her arguments in favour of pre-marital sex. According to her, pre-marital sex is an important factor in the life of unmarried young generations. She argues that we cannot avoid pre-marital sex because the more we try to deny it, the more strongly it affects the society. She claims that pre-marital sex has been taken as a social taboo and it has minimized the freedom and desires of the teenagers and youngsters towards sex which increases their curiosity towards sex. Taking pre-marital sex as the result of early marriage in the past, Shahi suggests the readers to change the existing

negative attitudes towards sex according to the change in time. She has taken all the sex related crimes as the result of taking pre-marital sex negatively. So, the adoption of pre-marital sex can be taken as the solution to the sex related problems that may appear before marriage.

Shahi reasonably argues that the espousal of sex can minimize the sex-related crimes like eloping in early age, committing suicide, rape cases, unwanted pregnancies etc because the youngsters and teenagers can talk and share their problems with the elders. So taking premarital sex negatively makes them inexpressible and victims of pre and post sex-related problems. Shahi further puts forward her arguments by comparing Nepal with the UK and the USA where both birth- rate and population growth-rate are checked as they take pre marital sex normally. So, according to her, taking pre-marital sex normally, Nepal can get rid of the problems of population growth, sex related crimes etc and can make the social structure better.

Conclusion

In this way, the three women put forward their arguments either to take pre-marital sex as a personal choice or to take it as a moral bound. Their contrastive views are also the results of the changing social and religious concepts prevalent in our society. Their views lead us to the conclusion that we can neither fully stay away from the social and moral boundary of the society nor we can fully advocate in favour of adopting pre-marital sex. We should rather make the young unmarried generation conscious about the probable consequences of adopting pre-marital sex. The major causes of sex related problems are related to illiteracy. So, illiteracy should be eradicated. The superstitious beliefs of the people should be changed. Imparting sex education in high school level can minimize sex related crimes and sexual transmitted diseases (STDs). So our country needs to wait for some decades to adopt pre-marital sex.

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