


Nexus Between Women's Identity and Marriage

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Abstract

The globe is said to be a patriarchal so it has created the identity of women that is based on her marriage. How does the marriage create identity of a women? The objective of the study is to examine the perception of peoples towards marriage, women's identity, and its connection. It is analyzing the connection between women's identity and marriage, and exploring the women's identity. It is the qualitative case study of four women. The method of study was qualitative as researchers had selected four married women purposively and then took face-to-face interviews mainly focusing on objective. After that researchers transcribed those recorded qualitative data and analyzed. The researchers again consult with respondents to maintain the validity and reliability of data. In conclusion, people's perception in society is that the identity of the woman is always linked with her marital status after reaching certain age prescribed by the society as the age to get married. It means there is a very close relation between marital status and the identity of women because of male-dominated culture of the world. A male-dominated culture brings much psychological and social torture to the women who want to create their own identity in the world.

Keywords: Marital Status, Patriarchal Society, Perception of Marriage, Women Identity,

Introduction

The basic human rights of all and to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls are also addressed in every international document with louder sound but in practice the

identity of women is based in marriage all over the world (Badal, 2020). Thus, to identify the identity of women, this article focuses on the marriage pressure the women in their twenties go through and the way she is pursued to get married. Marriage has a special meaning in the society which is generally taken as the union between two people to share fortune and misfortunes throughout their whole life. The marriage is patriarchal, where the bride moves to the place of the husband. The family's functions are based on the division of labor based on sex-the husband performs all the tasks outside the home and fulfills his economic obligations; the wife bears children, brings them up, and performs other household duties of daily routine (Wimalasena, 2016). Marriage connects people and goods that otherwise tend to fragment and it exists to bring a man and a woman together as husband and wife to be father and mother to any children their union produces (Anderson, 2013). According to Buddhism marriage means understanding and respecting each other's beliefs and privacy (Kumara, 2017). Hinduism is historically the oldest tradition among belief systems occurred in Indian subcontinent. Hinduism has neither a founder nor a creed. The notion of Shakti which means power and strength as well as divine and creation is feminine and it is believed that power of males stems from the female. During early Vedic period (2000 B.C. to 1000 B.C.), women had rather a high status within society if it is not equal. Because men were mostly warriors in Aryan society, women were the ones who keeps society to flow and were respected. Goddess are defined with two prominent feature as the first is Shakti and the second is Prakriti. While Shakti is about creating, Prakriti is about the material condition. If those protective and creative features governed by a male, it is accepted as for good. Goddesses as Lakshimi, Sita and Pavarati respected and was respected by their husband unlike goddesses as Kali and Shitala who are dangerous and unpredictable (Bhattacharyya, 2020). However, western influence has destroyed the values and norms of women in eastern society as well.

As marriage has always been the major priority for the society since the time immemorial. The society always had coated two definitions for unmarried men and women. In the patriarchal based society, single men are seen as "bachelors" - independent, having fun, and enjoying life to its fullest before getting "chained down" by a woman. Whereas, the same society looks at single women as less than whole if they're not attached, lonely spinsters, and cat ladies, (Beri & Beri, 2013). Women are always viewed as someone who needs to be protected by men and she is incomplete without the presence of men in their life. This concept has made people believe women can only be safe once she is married and their husband will be good to them. It is the reason the girl's family starts to worry about the daughter's marriage from the first day of her birth.

When it comes to marriage, there is a solemn dual standard for men and women. Men are often told to get married after getting a stable job and being financially secure. This gives men a chance to focus on their career and met the right person to spend their life together. But it is not the same for women. The women start to get pressure to settle down as soon as she reaches their

twenties, and the relatives and parents start to desperately hunt for a suitable groom so that she can get married before she turns thirty.

Marriage is a tradition based on the union between two partners, in which the husband is dominant and the wife is subservient to bring balance in their life in the world. The premise of the traditional marriage haste, the man has all atomic control in the relationship, and makes all the important decisions of their life and wife just have to be like, “yes-man”. It has been like this since a long time ago. The meaning of marriage is so deeply rooted in the patriarchal society that even women of the 21st century who have achieved equality with men have failed to achieve the right to say, “No” when it comes to marriage. It doesn’t matter if you are successful or not, getting married should be one of the main priorities for women. Society has proclaimed that women have to get married and carry on a family’s legacy because it’s all part of the culture. Generations of women have followed this belief of getting married early forgetting their preferences, career goals, and have played the role of wife and mother as society instructed them.

Generally, in society, there are three ways to pursue the girl for marriage. The first is to politely ask to get married. If she says, “yes” she is such a good girl with morals and values. The second is a tooling girl with dresses, ornaments, money, and, making her believe, she’s going to live a lavish and materialistic life after marriage. But, if she denies, it she will be tagged as a spoiled one for not wanting luxuriousness. And thirdly for those women who dared to follow their hearts decided their marriage, society starts to look down on these women, enough to make their confidence crumble. With the outrageous questions like, “If not now, when?” “You will not find a man like him”, “how others will react or say!”, “No one would want to marry an ‘over aged’ girl!”, “You should get married at the ‘right age’ to avoid pregnancy complications” and soon. And these questions start to make the girl feel that their self-worth is not measured by themselves or their success but by their marriage. And only after getting married, they can achieve their life. As society defines woman not as herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being (Beauvoir, 2011).

For society, it isn’t important how well you are doing with your studies, career and hardly few people will ask about it. But when it comes to marriage everyone has some opinion and curiosity like, “do you have someone you love?”, “Is your parents looking for the groom?” “Isn’t it time for you to get married and settle?” So, this study’s main purpose is to examine married women’s identity and marriage.

Objectives and Methods

The objective of the study is to examine the perception of people towards marriage, to analyze the connection between women’s identity and marriage, and to explore women’s identity in marriage culture. The study is a qualitative interview of four purposively selected women. It is the qualitative case study of four women. The method of study was qualitative as researchers had selected four married women purposively and then took face-to-face interviews mainly focusing on objective.

Reviews: Religious Perceptions on Marriage

The perception of marriage is different in eastern parts and western parts of the world because it is influenced by socio-economic and cultural aspects. Out of other socio-economic factors, religion is one the most dominant factor which highly differs from the western and eastern perceptions. There are many religions around the world each having its perceptions. Those all perceptions are not possible to present in a single article. Hence, the researchers presented western and eastern perceptions on marriage especially based on Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Confucian cultural perceptions.

Most of the eastern religious people's perception of marriage is a union between two families, for example, "Concept of marriage in Islam- Marriage is said to be a civil contract signed by two parties, one for each side. The consideration of the contract is "Mehr"(Jayashree et al., 2015). Similarly, "Confucian East Asian family systems of Japan, China, Korea, and Taiwan are characterized by marriage as a contract between families. There are stronger male rights within families", (Hewitt & Churchill, 2020).In the same way "Marriages in Hinduism is between two families, rather than two individuals,(Sharma et al., 2013). It means decision making on marriage is not only on boys and girls but also on both families of girl and boy have same right to decide on marriage.

On the other hand, western societies are different than eastern. They are individualistic so they take marriage as a private affair, not others. For example, "God establishes marriage as a heterosexual monogamous marriage – an exclusive relationship between one man and one woman, (Vorster, 2008). Moreover, Vorster again claimed Christianity only gives priority to sex because husband and wife become one flesh and this means that two people share in each other's lives in a complete and dedicated manner. It means social aspects are completely neglected by Christianity. Decision-making depends on only boys and girls which is different than eastern culture and other religious marriages. So, researchers are very curious to analyze the perception of marriage in eastern society especially by the women as eastern culture doesn't enthrone the decision of marriage only on girls and boys rather involves the decision of the whole family to select bride/groom for their son/daughter marriage.

Philosophical Perspectives on Marriage

Government and various Non-Government Organizations are working simultaneously to bring equality and justice to women. National Women Commission has been set up separately whose objective is to promote gender equality and empower women. However, all these efforts have affected only a microscopic part of the society while the vast pool of citizens has remained unaffected. And the reason behind it is the patriarchal society that weights the women based on their marital status. It is the reason parents are always in hurry to get their daughter married as they think marriage is the only way to grant their daughter security of safety, stability, and due

respect. This socially constructed traditional concept is injected among the girls from their childhood in such a way that they start to believe marriage is their goal. Even educated and aware women have to bend and accept the marriage within the time set by the society for them to get married. And if they try to go against it and try to establish their own identity and earn for their own they are tagged as rebellious, spoiled by society. Philosophical perspectives are more useful to analyze people's knowledge and perception. But many philosophers have their ideas on some things. Two philosophical ideas are taken as a base for this study.

Feminist Perspective

Bernard declared that two marriages exist, his and hers. She asserted that marriage is more attractive and healthier for men than for women. Cixous discovers binary oppositions at work everywhere there is man/woman, theoretical/creative, nature/culture, and inside/outside. (Languages, 2016). Patriarchy is maintained by the exchange of women as possessions from father to husband to gain something. The male gains authority, power, virility, and pleasure in marital exchange

Marriages as an extension of patriarchy where women have no say in whom they marry. As in the society marriage is seen as a man giving the woman her social standing and making her presence known. As for the society women must accept themselves as the "other". Women's independent success is in contradiction with her feminist feature since the true woman is required to make herself an object to be exchanged during the time of marriage. This is the lesson given to women by society from her early ages and it is the reason even today's women who are career-oriented, independent, and financial stability are seen in a hurry to find a suitable groom for her and has conflict in accepting herself as the individual being capable of creating her identity without the presence of men in her life.

Marxist perspective

Marriage is a traditional institution that is governed by religious scriptures and caste rules, yet the effervescence of matrimonial sites and advertisements gives it a semblance of a 'marketplace' where men and women could be treated as commodities to be bought and sold, (Srivastava, 2016). The conceptualization of marriage is a system of exchange of women, in clan-based societies. The marriage is mostly about political alliances and property gains, rather than personal affection. While, for affluent family's marriage is a personal benefit to increase wealth, share resources, and increase labor pools.

Women are viewed as commodities. From childhood, she is treated as the property of someone else given to her parents for keepsake to be exchanged during the time of marriage to establish the bond between bride-giver and bride-taker. Women's fertility is vital for the reproduction of the next generation within a group and marriage, in this scheme, marriage is a mechanism of exchanging productive labor, (Lewis Henry Morgan, 1877). In the society, the education of a girl is generally related to her 'future value'. Educated brides are more preferred in the marriage

market as an educated could be used later if the groom's family underwent economic shocks or financial instability. The parent usually intends to marry their daughter to men who were older and better educated with more economic resources (Goldner, 1991). This disparity going into marriage sets up an imbalance between the marriage and men gets more power in decision making as he is the breadwinner for the family. Like this, women enter the labor force and become submissive to every decision of the men.

Discussion and Results

Various Governmental and Non-Government Organizations are working simultaneously to bring equality and justice to women. National Women Commission has been set up to take care of women-related issues separately whose objective is to promote gender equality and empower women. However, all these efforts have affected only a microscopic part of the society while the vast pool of citizens has remained unaffected. And the reason behind it is the patriarchal society that weights the women based on their marital status. It is the reason parents are always in hurry to get their daughter married as they think marriage is the only way to grant their daughter safety stability, and respect. This socially constructed traditional concept is injected among the girls from their childhood in such a way that they start to believe marriage is their goal. Even educated and aware women have to bend and accept the marriage within the time set by the society for them to get married. And if they try to go against it and try to establish their own identity and earn for their own they are tagged as rebellious, spoiled by society. Hence, the researcher tried to examine women's identity construction in the society.

First, researchers had purposively selected four married women for this study. Out of them, one had completed class three. Another one had completed class eleven, next passed plus two-level and one woman finished master level because researcher tried to examine perception on marriage, the relation between marriage and women identity among the different women's in the culture, Next, researchers took permission to take interviews and record their interview in mobile recorders and then transcribed interviews for analysis and presented below.

Rima

She lost her dad at a young age and mom was the one who took care of her and her brother. She couldn't pass the +2 examination and since then she started to work. She got married to a man who was 8 years older than her. At the time she got married she was just a twenty-year-old girl and was working in finance of a cooperative organization. At first, she was not ready for such a big step in life. But gradually she agreed because she was pursued by her relatives saying her would-be husband is a good one as he was the only son of their parents, has cemented house, and owned the drinking water tanker supply business and electronic shops. After the 2015 earthquake, their house was destroyed and was living in a tent. So, she always dreamed of having a good house. And just like that, she got married within just a week of knowing him her husband. And that left her with the biggest regret of her life. Only after one year of marriage, she came back to live with her mother and it's have been 4 years since then. Her husband and she aren't

legally divorced but no longer together. They never had contact with each other since then. She wished, she had focused on her dream and career. The girls are treated as commodities by the patriarchal society. She is good to be traded during the time of marriage. She is needed only to fulfill the desire of the males and to agree on every term of her husband.

Tina

Her marriage is a partnership, not a dictatorship where both of them share mutual bonds and feelings. She got married when she was 22. Although she was ready for marriage still she wished to complete her bachelor's degree. She was happy with her marriage and she was continuing her education even after getting married but she would have preferred to have a little more time. And for the women, she thinks a career should come first instead of marriage.

She combined both career and marriage without compromising 'either'. She believes one doesn't need to be unmarried to chase a career goal. Tina defined her desire to be independent with a list of 'wants' 'own career', 'own things', 'own money, which she believes to be able to carry along with her duty as a wife. And it is the contrast she hasn't completed her bachelor yet she believes marriageable age for a girl is after completing her bachelor, she seems to be in confusion like all women of today's world. It is set on a women's mind that she belongs to someone else. From early childhood, she is trained to be someone's wife and mother. So, after growing up she choose to get married before reaching thirty and she thinks it's her own choice but in reality, it is a society that influenced her decision.

Sita

The society sees girls not getting married by 25 as very shameful. She was 34 and still unmarried. She had completed her Master's in Business and was working as a teacher. She was not ready to get married even though she received lots of marriage proposal as almost every relative were looking for a groom but she kept denying it. After, reaching near thirty-five everyone started to taunt her saying that son of her sister has already reached the age of marriage, is she planning to stay single for her whole life, she has been already old and she won't be able to carry a baby. So, by age of 35, she said "yes" to marriage because somehow their taunts were crippling her inner thought, and just like that, she got married. He was a good person and she was allowed to continue her job. As she was not young anymore they planned for a baby. After giving birth, she planned to start her clothing business from her savings but it never came true. Her husband didn't deny it but she got so wrapped up in household work, looking after her son that she had no time left to think about business. Hence, society has decreed that women have to get married and carry on a family's legacy because it's all part of the culture. Generations of women have followed this principle of getting married stepping on her dream of creating her own identity, earning for herself, and being someone.

Siya

She was twenty and her husband was five years older than her. In beginning, she wasn't ready to get married. She used to do mushroom farming and never planned to get married anytime soon. But she had no choice, her parents saw the guy was from well off family and had a good personality. She was approached by her cousin saying, "The guy is good and if she misses the chance maybe she will not meet anyone better as she put her in dilemma. The guy friend said, "Everyone should get married so why to hesitate, early the better. Like this, she was convinced and nodded, "yes" for the marriage. After the marriage, she was solely dependent on her husband for her economic need. She knew knitting, embroidering, farming from which she could have earned for her living but was denied by her in-laws so, she just focused on her household duty and looking after children. And she has been still doing the same after twenty years of marriage. Sometimes, being economically dependent makes her feel inferior, and has to follow her husband and agree with him although she feels like denying it because she is the one who provides for the family.

Conclusion

From the above data analysis, the researcher concluded that the perception of people towards marriage is the union of two families. Parents feel that it is their responsibility to arrange a marriage for their daughters so that they can live with dignity. The women's dignity, respect, and empowerment are steered by their marital status. Women are always, "assigned duty of reproduction and transmitting the traditional social rules and values across generations and discouraged to do the job. This makes women spin around their household chores, taking care of children and in between this she loses her identity as an individual. And when she is economically dependent, she loses her confidence and feels like an inferior being and the male becomes the superior and the decision-makers. The society sees the identity of women as highly connected with the man. Her self-identity, success, career isn't as important in front of her value as a wife of a man. So, man's sign value is high in the society. Women do not have value without the presence of male identity because it's all part of the male-dominated culture. Many girls in the society are persuaded to get married as soon a guy is asking for a girl's hand in marriage. So, most of the girls get married before the age of twenty-five. Hence, all most all women's identity is under the shadow of male identity. Some women are trying to create their own identity without the presence of male value but only a few women hardly get success. So, most of the women are self-conflicting situation in the culture.

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