

Decoding 'I Do's and 'I Don'ts': Exploring the Surge in Indian Divorce Rates

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Abstract

The research explores the evolving dynamics of marriage and divorce in India, highlighting the rise in divorce rates due to increased stress, lack of bonds, and female independence. The study argues that women's financial self-sufficiency has led to a decrease in their willingness to tolerate unsatisfactory or abusive marriages. The research also emphasizes the influence of urbanization, Westernization, and changing attitudes toward marriage as factors contributing to the increase in divorce rates. The study underscores the need for societal changes that support women's financial independence and their right to choose their marital paths, free from societal pressure and financial dependence. The research also highlights the importance of addressing the root causes of unsatisfactory marriages, such as societal expectations and gender roles, to create a more equitable and fulfilling marital landscape for all individuals. The study emphasizes the urgent need for societal reforms that bolster women's financial independence and uphold their right to choose marital paths devoid of societal pressure and financial constraints. Additionally, it underscores the importance of confronting root causes of marital dissatisfaction, such as entrenched societal expectations and rigid gender roles, to cultivate an equitable and fulfilling marital landscape for all individuals. Furthermore, it investigates how education and exposure influence perceptions of marriage and divorce, especially among younger cohorts. It advocates for increased understanding and tolerance of varied marital paths to create an inclusive and nurturing atmosphere where people can seek fulfilling relationships according to their preferences. Additionally, it suggests implementing tailored support programs to equip couples with the tools and assistance needed to overcome obstacles and cultivate strong partnerships. Ultimately, the study envisions a future where marriages prioritize mutual respect, parity, and individual satisfaction over societal expectations or financial imperatives.

Keywords: Marriage, divorce, individualism, traditional norms, westernization

INTRODUCTION

The research presented in the given text discusses the changing dynamics of marriage and divorce in India, focusing on the increase in divorce rates due to the growing awareness of self and the defiance of societal structures. The main argument of the research is that the rise in divorce is a result of women increased financial independence, which has led to a decrease in their willingness to tolerate unsatisfactory or abusive marriages. The research also highlights the influence of urbanization, Westernization, and changing attitudes toward marriage as factors contributing to the increase in divorce rates.

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From a feminist perspective, the research emphasizes the importance of women's financial self-sufficiency and their ability to make choices about their marital relationships without being bound by financial reliance on a spouse or partner. The research also sheds light on the societal pressures that have historically kept women in unsatisfactory marriages, such as the emphasis on family reputation and the subordination of women to their husbands and in-laws.

In conclusion, the research highlights the need for societal changes that support women's financial independence and their right to choose their own marital paths, free from societal pressure and financial dependence. The research also underscores the importance of addressing the root causes of unsatisfactory marriages, such as societal expectations and gender roles, to create a more equitable and fulfilling marital landscape for all individuals.

What is Marriage?

Matrimony, or wedlock, is another name for marriage, which is the legally recognized union of two or more persons known as spouses in culture. It lays out their respective rights and responsibilities as well as those of their in-laws and any children they may have. It is nearly a cultural universal, but the definition of marriage varies between cultures and religions, and over time [1]. The act of two people making their connection official, permanent, and public is called marriage. It is the merging of two individuals in a relationship that is said to endure till death [2]. In the diverse cultural tapestry of India, a multitude of traditions and rituals encompass the sacred union of marriage. Despite the rich variations, a common thread unites these practices: the symbolic journey of the bride to the groom's familial abode and her subsequent commitment to serve his family. This fundamental essence underscores the myriad expressions of matrimony across the nation, reflecting the cultural unity within the nuanced diversity of Indian customs. But in me, marriage is the process of ritualization for union amongst the 2 lovers that functions as per the social construct created in society.

What is divorce?

In the literal sense, "divorce" means a legal separation of two persons of the opposite sex who desire to respect and honor each other.

Data

The following figures will help you to get an idea about the divorce rate in India with respect to global divorce rate [3].

Sweden – 54.9%
United States – 54.8%
Russia – 43.3%
United Kingdom – 42.6
Germany – 39.4%
Israel – 14.8%
Singapore – 17.2%
Japan – 1.9%
Sri Lanka – 1.5%
India – 1.1%

Why is marriage the union of one man and one woman?

- Marriage's main public goal is to unite men and women for the sake of human reproduction.
- Then, marriage encourages men and women to remain together in order to raise the children that result from their partnership [4].
- Studies indicate that children thrive when raised by their own parents who are married and dedicated to each other [5].

Why marriage is required for the union?

In Hinduism, the four goals of life (Purusarthas) are regarded to be righteousness (dharma), wealth (artha), pleasure (kama), and liberation (moksha). It is believed that marriage is essential to achieving these objectives [6].

Why do the lovers need to make their relationship public?

Marriage is the union of 2 lovers that should work on the union between 2 individuals govern by their love then why do people let the outer world interfere in their personal life.

Earlier the divorce rate was low the reasons behind that are various;

As earlier women were treated as secondary objects who would function as per the demand of men and should be submissive and this was the only thing which was taught to them since birth.

Patriarchal society

As earlier a daughter was controlled by her father then her brother (not only elder brother but even the younger one would feel superior to their elder sister) and then she was made to be married by the only instruction that she had to serve her in laws and had to be the slave of her husband. Hence the only thing women had those days was acceptance because marriage used to work for a longer duration and no matter how unhappy the boy or the girl was the only thing which mattered to them was how the public would view their family reputation if they got separated. Even in those eras, there were the family's if a female failed to satisfy the need or the demand of in-laws then they would send the bride to the maternal house and would not allow her entry back until the bride would accept her forced fault or would submit to in laws.

Did you know that India is the only country where men initiate most divorces, whereas in other countries women initiate most divorces? [7].

Economic Independence

Earlier the believed notion was that women will serve the family and men will earn for the family. As result out of it the women were limited to the household chores and never gained a wider perspective always saw their world in microcosm and distanced view. Money has the power to control the world as the world functions as a trap which functions in a cyclic way and the individual who have the power of money are the ones those who control the entire cycle.

Advancing financial autonomy among women: The increasing trend of women achieving financial self-sufficiency may lead to a decreased inclination to stay in unsatisfactory or abusive marriages, thereby contributing to a rise in divorce rates.

Freedom of Choice: When individuals achieve financial independence, they gain greater autonomy in making life decisions, including choices related to their romantic and marital relationships. They are not bound by financial reliance on a spouse or partner, allowing them to enter or exit relationships based on personal preferences and values [8].

Diminished Economic Dependence: Economic independence diminishes the financial reliance on a spouse or partner. This reduction in financial dependency, particularly for women, can facilitate the exit from unhealthy or abusive marriages, as they possess the means to support themselves and, if applicable, their children.

Enhanced Confidence: A sense of economic independence is frequently accompanied with an improvement in self-esteem and confidence. This increase in self-assurance gives people the confidence to speak out in their marriages, stand up for what they need, and make choices that are in their best interests—including the choice to file for divorce when required.

Urbanization

An individual usually migrates to the urban areas to build individual prospects. Economic expansion and more work prospects are usually associated with urbanization, especially for women. This economic empowerment can give individuals, especially women, the financial means to support themselves independently, reducing the economic barriers that might have previously discouraged divorce. Urban areas in India often have increased exposure to Western lifestyles and values through media, education, and globalization. This exposure can contribute to changes in social norms and attitudes, making divorce more socially acceptable in urban settings compared to traditional rural areas. In rural areas the decision was usually into the hands of the present elders hence there was not a complete individual control on individual life. Education and knowledge regarding individual rights and legal procedures are often

easier to obtain in urban regions. In contrast, traditional schooling is more of a concern in rural regions. People may feel more empowered to make wise choices regarding their marriages, including whether to file for divorce, as a result of this greater awareness. Urban areas in India are characterized by greater cultural and religious diversity. Which provides an individual with a wider perspective of the world. Being urbanized is somehow getting influenced by the western world as by gaining western form of education, western form of clothing, western societies.

Westernization

Changing Attitudes Toward Marriage: Western cultures often promote individualism and the pursuit of personal happiness. This mindset can influence individuals in India, leading them to prioritize their own well-being and happiness over societal expectations, including the idea of a lifelong marriage commitment. As a person in the growing stage gets more fascinated by the other person who had fully grown. Just like in India the developing country gets influenced by the western world or developed country. Hence the traditional form and the western form of marriage coincide within a single relation which leads to their conflict.

Love Marriages and Higher Expectations: The Western concept of love marriages, where individuals choose their life partners based on personal feelings and compatibility, has gained popularity in India. However, the higher expectations associated with love marriages can contribute to disappointment if the reality of married life does not meet these expectations, leading to a higher likelihood of divorce.

Individual Independence: Western cultures emphasize individual independence and self-reliance. As more women in India become financially independent and empowered, they may be less willing to tolerate abusive or unsatisfactory marriages, contributing to an increase in divorce rates.

Impact of Globalization: Increased exposure to Western lifestyles, values, and media through globalization can shape the mindset of the younger generation in India. This exposure may lead to a shift in attitudes toward marriage, making divorce seem more acceptable or even necessary in certain situations.

Erosion of Traditional Norms: Traditional Indian marriages, often arranged by families based on factors like caste, background, and astrological compatibility, are gradually giving way to a more individualistic approach influenced by Western ideas. This shift may contribute to a change in attitudes toward divorce.

Economic Independence and Changing Gender Roles: Economic growth and opportunities, especially for women, are changing gender dynamics in India. Women who are economically independent may be more likely to seek divorce in the face of an unsatisfactory marriage, challenging traditional gender roles.

Impact on Social Pressures: Western cultures often place less emphasis on societal norms and expectations in comparison to traditional societies. This shift in perspective can influence individuals in India to prioritize personal happiness over conforming to societal expectations, including staying in a marriage for the sake of tradition.

Family Dynamics

The changing landscape of family structures in India, with a decline in joint families and a rise in nuclear families, has significant implications for marital dynamics and may contribute to an increased likelihood of divorces. Long-standing custom in India, arranged marriages can result in happy unions, but they may also contribute to increased divorce rates when couples have little say over who they choose to spend their lives with. This lack of familiarity can result in incompatibility and dissatisfaction within the marriage. Societal pressure to adhere to traditional gender roles and cultural expectations places individuals in situations where they may enter or remain in marriages that do not align with their personal values, fostering discontent and potential divorce. Additionally, interference from extended

family, a prominent aspect of Indian family dynamics, can strain marital relationships, as conflicts with in-laws and relatives become significant factors in divorce. The persistence of dowry practices in some regions introduces another potential source of marital breakdown, as disputes related to dowry can lead to legal action and dissolution of the marriage. Furthermore, the lack of privacy in many Indian households, particularly those with extended family cohabitation, can impede the development of a strong emotional connection between spouses, affecting the overall quality of the marital relationship [9].

The process of divorce involves several stages, as outlined by Bohannon. The first stage is Emotional Divorce, where the marital breakdown initiates contemplation of separation. Emotional distance and conflict have taken a toll, causing partners to withdraw emotionally from each other. Despite outward appearances of functioning adequately in social dimensions, they no longer support each other's growth and engage in increasing criticism. Legal Divorce follows, where the emotionally separated couple may seek legal dissolution. Courts specify legal grounds for divorce, often different from the actual reasons, leading to potential exaggeration of charges. Economic Divorce involves property settlement, a complex process influenced by tax laws. Emotional decisions may hinder a fair settlement, and items of emotional value can become contentious. In determining alimony, the husband's financial capability and the requirements of the spouse are usually considered. The three stages are interconnected, representing the multifaceted nature of divorce, involving emotional, legal, and economic dimension [10].

Family Structure

Family structure, particularly the prevalence of joint families in many Indian communities, plays a significant role in marital disruptions. The instances of divorce within joint family setups are influenced by factors such as sexual or social gaps arising from employment-related separations, difficulties in cohabitation, desire for independence, estrangement from the extended family, issues related to equal status, and challenges in adapting to traditional practices and value systems. The presence of diverse traditions, value systems, and role-playing norms within joint families can create dissatisfaction and discomfort for newly married couples attempting to adjust to these established practices. The tension between individual preferences and the expectations set by traditional family structures contributes to marital strains and, in some cases, divorce.

In antiquity, familial dynamics adhered to a structured framework designed to facilitate the wholesome development of progeny, ensuring their nurturance was never amiss. The collaborative efforts of both progenitors, the maternal and paternal figures, were dedicated to the comprehensive cultivation of a child's potential, imparting an environment conducive to their optimal upbringing. The convergence of parental roles, where the mother and father harmoniously collaborated, was deemed essential for the meticulous grooming of the offspring. This was a major factor in the couple's decision to live in a compromise-based marriage rather than one based on love. In India if the divorce is filed the custody of child is given to either of parents who wins the case on the legal bases. So, the child would first suffer by not having the love of one of the parents. And when the child grows the society, the society would view him or her as a individual whose parents had committed crime hence a child might also be influenced by that crime. Another factor is that several of the laws which make divorces more difficult in other places tend to make them almost easier in Sweden. Among them is inheritance law. Basically, you can't disinherit your children in Sweden, since every child is entitled to a fixed part of the inheritance, whether or not their parents are married at the time of death [11]. This was the main reason that a family would live a marriage of compromise with the hopes of better prospects in future that will be provided to them. But now a days firstly the parents are self-dependent and the child too work to live an independent life they do not rely on the inheritance.

Marital Expectation

Elevated anticipations of marriage in contemporary times, encompassing desires for profound companionship, emotional sustenance, and personal fulfillment, may become a source of discontent and marital dissolution when unmet.

In the Indian context, considerable cultural and societal pressures often compel adherence to traditional marriage norms. The pursuit of ideals centered around enduring marital harmony can exert significant influence, propelling couples to contemplate divorce as a means of circumventing potential social stigma. Within the framework of arranged marriages, couples may enter matrimony with predefined expectations dictated by familial, caste, or societal conventions. The non-realization of these expectations may instigate dissatisfaction and, eventually, dissolution of the marital union [12].

The influence of romanticized depictions of love and marriage in popular culture and media can cultivate unrealistic notions. Discrepancies between these idealized expectations and the practicalities of real-life relationships can disillusion couples, prompting them to seek divorce. Unrealistic expectations surrounding natural compatibility, where couples anticipate seamless coexistence devoid of conflict, may contribute to the decision to divorce. In such instances, conflicts are perceived as a failure rather than a natural facet of interpersonal relationships. Conventional gender roles entrenched in Indian society may prescribe specific roles and responsibilities for spouses within the institution of marriage. Misalignments with these expectations can precipitate conflict, potentially culminating in divorce. Divergent parenting styles and expectations can exert strain on marital bonds. Varied perspectives on child-rearing, when irreconcilable, may serve as a catalyst for divorce as couples find themselves unable to bridge these inherent differences.

Control on Sexuality

Earlier the female was controlled in the society by the male through her sexuality. A woman getting married would be considered as her 1st relationship with a man. But now the continuous transforming world, the parents go out to work and earn more for their child during this period they forget the child do surge for love too instead of money. Hence the child goes to the outer world to get a bond or the accepted form of love. It is this search by an individual that ends up an individual getting attracted to the opposite gender as this is the tendency or the accepted form of love. This love between the 2 individuals wants a commitment hence they give it a tag of relationship. It prompts individuals to develop a sexual connection, which is usually an essential component of romantic relationships but isn't always as important as people may believe. Couples engage in sexual activity for selfish reasons—it makes them feel good and can increase their self-esteem—as well as relationship-related ones—it strengthens their bond and makes their loved one happy [13,14]. This is so common in today's generation that earlier in the practiced arranged marriages the women would only be accepted if she's a virgin, with the groom having the blurred notion of virginity in his mind. But now a day's individual comes to relationships for love and breaks off due to several reasons hence a person starts understanding their needs, desire, ambition in good terms and even starts understanding the other too. Now a day's people do accept the lady who's no more virgin this motivates or provides hope to a individual that after a divorce too they can have a love relationship with other individual [15].

Transforming World

In the current era of rapid transformations, a plethora of services, ranging from dating apps to online stores, are readily accessible through the internet. Despite this digital abundance, individuals seek certain aspects in human relationships that remain elusive online – namely, understanding, love, care, emotional bonds, and connections. These elements have emerged as pivotal expectations from interpersonal relationships, superseding mere physical intimacy. Consequently, if individuals find themselves unable to meet these emotional needs, rather than exacerbating their burdens, some opt for the recourse of divorce to seek solace and emotional fulfillment [16].

Unable to Move on from Past

Much of the divorces that take place in the very initial stage of married life are due to various reasons such as the family was not accepting the past relationship of the child due to the beloved's caste, profession, education, looks etc. hence the child breaks off with the partner and marries the other one as per

the demand of parents. Thinking of that the marriage will work but that marriage fails for the long duration as it is the human ability that if get connected with a person emotionally then though they may be separated physically but in human mind and emotion they are still united. This may lead to rivalry.

Marriage is the Control of one Another

Getting married to a person means having control on them. As we see if a woman gets married to a man her only expectation is that men should serve only her and stay away from all other females. Earlier this created norm would get to be fulfilled as humans would have the limited exposure to the outside world and would have a very little contact to the diverse population. Now the market is growing day by day and is moving towards capitalism and in this market if anyone seeks their growth then they must come in contact with the diverse population. This contact of 1 gender partner with the other brings the insecurity in relationship, consequently, this can erode trust, resulting in possible conflicts and obstacles in upholding fidelity and commitment [17].

With an estimated 1.1% divorce rate, India is thought to have the lowest divorce rate in the world. However, divorce rates in India have increased by 50% to 60% in the last few years, particularly in urban areas.

CONCLUSION

The institution of marriage, a cornerstone of society, has undergone significant transformations over time, influenced by socio-cultural, economic, and global factors. Traditionally, marriage was seen as a lifelong union between a man and a woman, primarily aimed at procreation and family stability. However, the evolving landscape of marriage in India and globally reflects changing societal norms and individual aspirations. In India, despite the country's historically low divorce rate of 1.1%, there has been a noticeable increase in divorce rates, particularly in urban areas. Several factors contribute to this shift. Economic independence among women has empowered them to make autonomous decisions about their marriages, reducing financial dependency and enabling them to exit unsatisfactory or abusive relationships. Urbanization and globalization have exposed individuals to diverse lifestyles, values, and perspectives, influencing their attitudes towards marriage and divorce.

Westernization has played a role in changing marital expectations, with an emphasis on individualism, personal happiness, and self-fulfillment. This has led to a shift from traditional arranged marriages to love marriages, accompanied by higher expectations that can sometimes lead to disillusionment and divorce. Family dynamics, including the shift from joint to nuclear families and changing gender roles, have also contributed to marital strains. The erosion of traditional norms, combined with societal pressures and family interference, can create challenges for couples, leading to dissatisfaction and potential divorce. Additionally, evolving perceptions of sexuality and relationships, along with the impact of past relationships and inability to move on, contribute to the complexities of modern marriages. The digital age, while providing unprecedented connectivity, has also highlighted the importance of emotional bonds and connections, which remain elusive online. Finally, while marriage continues to be a revered institution, its dynamics are continuously evolving in response to broader societal changes. The rise in divorce rates in India underscores the need for a deeper understanding of these multifaceted issues and calls for societal support systems that can help couples navigate the complexities of modern relationships. Balancing individual aspirations with familial and societal expectations remains a delicate endeavor, requiring empathy, understanding, and adaptability from all stakeholders involved.

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