



Editorial

## Envisioning marriage and sexuality in New-India

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Marriage has been a timeless and honoured institution for social affirmation of a heterosexual relationship. It also has several legal dimensions with the intent to safeguard civil and legal rights, values and cultural nuances. Sexuality although eclipsed under societal expectations is an equally complex yet important cornerstone of any relationship irrespective of age, region and religion.<sup>[1]</sup> However the day-to-day realities of any partnership has its own dimensions. The very patriarchal nature of partnership since ages is being re challenged by the evolving social and legal revolutions such as questioning gender stereotypes and roles, rights of partners and free expression of individuality.

Covid-19 pandemic played a major role in breakdown of many so-called social equilibrium. As a consequence, many women faced gender-based violence in their households. The whole purpose of social protection under the

umbrella of marriage may not be always true as evident in many cases.<sup>[2]</sup> Hence it becomes important to debate, re-understand and remodel the institution of marriage and sexuality in context of the current social trends. This issue of the journal focuses on many important dimensions of relationship both traditional and contemporary starting from discussing sexuality, the new age relationships, embracing inclusivity for sexual minorities, dissolving strict gender roles and the safeguarding against violence.

### Myths about sexuality

To begin with authors have tried to explore the construct of sexuality among young Indians. Several sexual myths in a background of limited sexuality education can lead to future issues. Parental hesitation in discussing such issues will give rise to distorted information and continuation of stereotyped attitudes about sexuality. Endorsement of sexism, which can instigate gender discriminatory attitudes and practices can be shaped significantly by peer pressure and parenting.

### Understanding diverse sexualities

Sexuality is complex (biologically and socially) but an intricate reality of human identity, understood so far only through a sexual lens.<sup>[3]</sup> Understanding same sex relationships or any identities in the spectrum of LGBTQ + in terms of companionship is important to

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safeguard their rights from rigid social and legal definition of marriage. Further, skewed portrayal of the sexual minorities in cinemas perpetuates a stereotype among public. Nonetheless recent films have tried to give a more realistic outlook fostering some hope for change.

### Contemporary relationships

Throughout history, marriage has been intrinsically tied to societal expectations, often centred around sustaining future offspring and rigid gender roles. With changes in the socioeconomic attainment of both partners, and growing individualisation<sup>[4]</sup>, the expectations and roles have evolved too. Many people prefer love marriages<sup>[5]</sup> and the trend of live-in relationship is gaining popularity among young Indians. All of which has its own pros and cons. However, there are still conflicts between the previous understanding of a marriage vs the emerging needs and redefinition of marriage as a union in itself. The authors have aptly discussed how a reboot is needed for making marriages more fulfilling and less suffocating by addressing the evolving needs of society.

### Parenting and marriage

Childbirth can be a joyous moment for some, but it can also twist partner dynamics.<sup>[6]</sup> With its own set of responsibilities and care giving roles, parenting stress, physical distancing between parents, postpartum psychological conditions and importantly certain outdated cultural practices around intimacy between new parents can cause turbulence in the partnership dyad.

### Legal recognition and equal rights

To keep the partnership intact for societal reasons, a partner may undergo many kinds of trauma.<sup>[7]</sup> Safeguarding against domestic violence, marital rapes, intimate partner violence in live-in relationships, inheritance rights and many more complex situations are

been revisited by the Indian judiciary. Nonetheless these issues are complex to strike the balance between rights and cultural sentiments of the public.

### Education and awareness

A major issue highlighted here is the need of education not merely around the act of sex but the acceptance of sexual diversities, inclusivity, debunking stereotypes and eliminating myths from young mind to foster a more respectful, dignified and fulfilling relationship in any partnerships. This can also go a long way in curbing gender-based violence and discrimination at large.<sup>[8]</sup> Open and non-confrontational discussion by the families, peers and institutions like schools can bring out a cultural change.

### Conclusion

Sexuality being a more individualised construct is equally important in a wider and socially acceptable partnership called marriage. There are many dimensions to it which needs wider understanding through a lens of diversity, uniqueness, dignity and rights. At the same time, contemporary relationships which were a taboo earlier has a growing trend and slow acceptance legally as well as socially. The various articles in this issue bring out glaring points to ponder and debate to make partnerships more fulfilling in every sense.

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