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A CREATIVE ANALYSES OF MARRIAGE, SEX AND DESIRE:
MARRIAGE A HISTORY BY STEPHANIE COONTZ AND THREE
WOMEN BY LISA TADDEO

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ABSTRACT

After a lot of research and interviews, Stephanie Coontz published her highly influential book with regards to the evolution of marriage from the past to the current times in the year Two thousand and five. The book deals with how love and fulfillment have taken priority in the making of marriages replacing economical and political gain as the sole concern. The book primarily deals with the evolution of marriage in the west, but most of the content is valid for India too. Analyzing the book makes one conclude that India is following the lead of the west in the case of marriage too, with rising divorces, live-in relationships, nuclear families where men and women perform androgynous roles, serial monogamy and variety of relationship design. The book concludes that divorces and love will go together, and how economic independence is must for a woman to live a healthy and fulfilling life. Another book that will be the concern of our research is 'Three Women' by Lisa . This is a nonfiction account of the life of three American women, whom the author follows for eight years , get to know about their life by interviewing them in cafes, reading their legal documents related to court cases, to depict the intricacies of being a woman. Again, the book is primarily about the lives of three American women, but many things are relatable to women all across the globe.

Keywords: Feminism , marriage, female desire , adultery.

Introduction

Marriage, which creates a family, is the basic unit of social fabric and its existence is the basic necessity for the sustenance of a community and a nation-state at large. But there was always fear since ages regarding the existence of marriages, whether it was the last generation which had a 'legitimate' marriage and family and the future generation is going to destroy it. This fear regarding the existence of marriage with threats it is facing from the experiments of youth in relationships concerning opposite

sexes was since ancient times and it's not something new. Things like live-in relationships, premarital sex, out of wedlock childbirth, adultery are happening since ages, the only difference is in its prevalence and its keep on increasing and decreasing, its like rhythm of heart, cycle of chaos and order. But the most significant change that has taken place in the past few centuries is the emphasis on 'Love' or emotion, Romance in finding a partner replacing the economic and political priorities. It isn't that love and fulfillment have completely taken over the economic and political aspect, But it's now one of the most important pillars in a marriage and the lack of which ensures divorce. In the past, Marriage and reproduction was too important, a concern for the community to be left over to the capricious emotions of two people. Here, it is important to note that reproduction was the main concern of the community as it decided the distribution of property and resources and also alliances or what we call 'Network', But as contraceptives were not available, there was no separation between sex and reproduction. Sex was synonymous with procreation. Love and sex were separate things which may or may not exist at the same time. It was during the age of Romanticism that the notion of having sex with only the one you love gained prominence, otherwise, In ancient France, adultery was a norm among the aristocratic class and it was expected that you don't necessarily have to love the person you are married with. The objective of this work is to analyze the text and relate it to Indian context and create a better understanding of the lives of women.

Marriage and it's Changing Concept through Ages

Starting from the times of hunter-gatherers, there was no arrangement of marriage. Anybody used to have sex with any potential mate. There was no concept of 'Fatherhood', as it is said, "A mother's baby, father may be". Whether we were polyamorous or not, but we were not completely monogamous. Then after the advent of agriculture the real changes started to take place. In the agricultural age, some tribes learnt to grow crops, thus settling at one place. The tribe distributed land among its members and to ensure the 'Paternal certainty', sexually exclusive or closed marriage was invented. In hunter-gatherer society, women cooperated with others but were also self-sufficient. The community helped the women while being pregnant instead of a single male partner. But, after the advent of agriculture, the hard labor that it demands put the man at a bargaining position for female chastity. Paternal certainty became an important concern because nobody wants to spend their hard-earned resources to raise someone else's child. It is important to note that the form and arrangement of marriage varies widely and its concerning nuances. There are certain practices in the marriages of some of the tribes that are shocking to common understanding. Many tribes across the globe have the custom of lending their wives to the guest as a show of respect and love. Few South American tribes don't have the concept of marriage, and they have sex with anybody, and they don't have the understanding that sex results in procreation, they view children as a gift from dead ancestors. It's normal for women of some South American tribes to have multiple sexual partners, and when the child is born, all will bear the responsibility of that child. The 'NA' people of China don't have the concept of 'Fatherhood', any man whom a woman likes will visit her home, have intercourse with her and his duty is over. The child is the responsibility of the brother. Even though we don't have to go far in this respect, The 'Jaunsari' Tribe of India, in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand practice polyandry, one of the few tribes around the globe and the reason is poverty. Usually brothers will have a common wife with whom they will have children so that the property does not get divided. These brothers don't feel jealous and it shows how much our emotions are a result of our societal conditioning.

Till now, we have seen how much variation exist in the form of marriage, There are two opposing views when it comes to function of marriage- first is that marriage is an institution invented to oppress women and the second view is that marriage is for the protection and welfare of women which they need and both are not completely true. As always, the truth lies in the middle, marriage provides women and their children important resources and protection in exchange for their personal freedom. It was a trade off. Marriage between brother and sister was common among kings, as in the case of

Egyptian kings, stepmother and son, father and daughter in law, anything that deemed their blood pure and noble, as it was more of an alliance to continue their reign. Marriage was a different phenomenon for the propertied class and lower class. For the rich -upper class it was all about forming an 'alliance' with rich and powerful 'in-laws'. No likes and dislikes of the person involved in marriage was considered. It doesn't matter whether the man or woman you are going to sleep with is ugly and a stupid human. It was all about 'Pooling of the resources', so that resources don't get diluted by marrying 'down the status'. We see this in the marriages of politicians and rich businessmen. Recently, we saw it in the marriage of Mukesh Ambani's son with Radhika Merchant who herself comes from a billionaire family. A cow marries a cow, a buffalo marries a buffalo. And the legitimacy of marriage was also a big concern in earlier times. Before the church, it was the community itself, the network of kith and kin that provided sanction and approval to a marriage but later church and now the judiciary of the state holds the right to declare a marriage legitimate or not. The legitimacy of marriage was a concern because of the prospect of the child that will be born out of that marriage. For kings, it was a special concern. It is also important to note that a wife was more concerned with her son and maternal relatives than the husband. And often as kings were polygynous, wives plotted to kill the husband so that her son would be put upon the throne and the interests of maternal relatives were also at stake. Usually women worked as 'Peace weavers' between two clans or kingdoms. The marriage of Akbar and Jodha Bai, how Genghis Khan married his daughter to the kings from whom he got defeated. They usually presented their daughters as a gift to the victorious king. That is one of the reasons why 'queen' is one of the strongest posts in the game of chess.

The basic strategy for an ambitious man to rise in the hierarchy was to kill the king, capture the treasure, and marry his widow to gain legitimacy. For the common people, the major concern was endogamy. Their first concern was whether their neighbors will approve of this marriage or not otherwise they will have to face ostracization from the community. Here we can also see this from the viewpoint of Ambedkar who said that exogamy was there to maintain peace between clans and it helped in the creation of a well connected peaceful society. Endogamy was there to keep the property and resources of the community to its own and was a major perpetuator of inequality in the society, so his emphasis on inter caste marriage and 'Mixing of blood'.

Before the age of enlightenment, ignorance, oppression, subjugation was the norm. There were double standards for men and women. Men were supposed to commit adultery, it was said that a man must be boring enough to find his own wife enticing. Even women accepted that, but the same, if committed by women, flogging till death was the punishment. This doesn't mean that women did not commit adultery, but the consequence of it was so disastrous that many avoided it. And as there was no DNA testing technique in that age, many fathers raised the child of someone else or to simply put, got cuckolded. Most of the ancient society was the same but India has an exceptional ability to maintain its primitiveness till today. Reading ancient texts like Mahabharata gives one ample amount of evidence in the forms and variety of relationships. Things began to change from the seventeenth century when for the first time the emphasis of love in marriage was highlighted. Economics and politics took a backseat and love became the chief factor in marriage. It impacted both the classes of the society but more so it does the common people. For the first time they started marrying the one they love and loving the one they have married. The search for a soulmate began. Then in the eighteenth century, the values of reason, liberty, equality were put on pedestal. The publication of 'The vindication for the Rights of Women' by Mary Wollstonecraft was the beginning of changing power dynamics between the genders. It started with the suffrage movement with women demanding equality in public/political life. Later, they realize that the private is also political. Soon they started demanding rights to their own body, right to maternity, the right to choose mates, the right to have a child outside marriage. Few countries even provided legitimacy to children born out of wedlock- "There are no bastards in France" was one of the slogan of French revolution. Then the next phase of change began in the 20th century. Earlier marriage was a need of an individual and a family, it helps to create children which in a few

years will be ready to perform labor. Later on the church emphasized on celibacy to achieve heaven. In reaction to it, some sects of the church termed a good family as a way to heaven. Everywhere, whether east or west, for most of the period, bachelorhood was seen as an anomaly, a taboo, something is wrong with someone if he/she chooses to remain single. Single females were seen as prostitutes and there was question on the manhood of men who chose to remain single. In India, bachelors were not allowed in temples in earlier times. Grihastha was an important stage in the achieving of moksha. But as time took turns, child labor was banned, women became economically independent, sex was easily available outside marriage(" who needs to rear a cow when you can get milk for free?"), the economic burden of raising children.

All these things worked against the choice of marriage. In the twentieth century, during the war times, women for the first time realized their capacities of doing things that were only expected of men. This opened the eyes of womanhood regarding their own potential. Also till this time, feminism has broadened the vision of womanhood, from being just a reproductive instrument to "in addition " of being a reproductive instrument. Education and self realization took priority.

Women started attending colleges, first time free from the constraints of family and society. Co-ed institutes have become more prevalent. Many women started having lovers with whom they frequently eloped. Many women reported to have experienced petting and fondling below the neck with their lovers. The car became the place for love making. Some people even called it 'Brothel on wheels'.

And finally comes the sex revolution. Thanks to the contraceptive which was invented by a male for females. It bought the era of recreational sex. It gave control to women of their own sexuality. It gave women chance to sow their share of wild oats. Divorce raised. The dissolution of the 'Male breadwinner female homemaker' family began. Females with their newly gained economic independence started to contribute a significant amount in the household earning. The household acquired an egalitarian gender dynamic. Both partners became androgynous to some extent in the nature of their role. The twenty first century will be the age of happy marriages and divorce simultaneously. As it seems, the more people value love and fulfillment in marriage, the more divorces happen. Fulfillment and divorces are like horse and chariot, they both can't be separated.

Some feminist even declared adultery as a moral right. And these things are gaining prevalence in India too. As they say 'Rock roll down the hill'

FEMALE DESIRE

The book " Three women" starts with the author's mothers being followed by an old man on the streets of Italy who used to masturbate behind her. Lisa Taddeo is a complete female advocate. She says in the book that for ages men have broken the hearts of women, and there is some truth in it. Men are more concerned with sex than relationship and love. It is said that women fake orgasm, But a man fakes the whole relationship. But what does a man say?. Men also blame women that they are the one who breaks their heart, They are the one who cheat, they are the one who empty their pockets and take the custody of their child while leaving them poor and alone. Well the real problem is when both are true. The author says that women fear poverty more than a bad and abusive relationship. These things were true for most of the time, but as women are gaining economic independence and understanding the structural subjugation they have to face by men in every sphere of life, they are fighting back for their liberty and happiness. The author also claims that women's biggest enemies are other women. Women are social animals, they are "too" socially attuned to the comments and remarks of other women. There is also some scientific research that says that women lack cooperation among themselves. It's not that women can't cooperate with each other, In history we have seen many times when womanhood came together to fight for a particular cause. The thing is that the need to cooperate barely arises between women.

In the book, Maggie, Sloane and Lina are three women, and they don't get any help from their 'sister-hood', but only harsh judgment. Maggie is first raped by a thirty one year old army man when she was sixteen years old, and the reaction she got from their female schoolmates were "Fat Bitch", "Ugly Cunt", "Slut". To get relief, she confides in a popular teacher of her school called Mr. Knodel. She doesn't know that the savior is the predator himself. Maggie is sixteen and Mr. Knodel is thirty. Mr. Knodel seduced Maggie into having oral sex with him on many occasions, in the classroom, in his home, in his car. Maggie started idealizing Mr. Knodel as a vampire lover from *Twilight*. As always, there is something exciting about forbidden love. Things fall apart when Mr.

Knodel's wives discover their text on his birthday. Their relationship broke. Six years later Mr. Knodel received the Teacher of the year award while Maggie was depressed and suicidal, waiting for his reply every day in these six years. Then she revealed her story to some of her friends who called the man a scumbag and the incident a rape. Later, she revealed this to her parents, her father cried the whole night. She filed a civil suit against Knodel in which she got defeated. Only young women know the tragedy of being a "young woman". When your mind is of a kid but your body is ready to create a child, you are going to get in trouble in this opportunist world. Men are not angels walking around. It's not surprising that in these ages they fall for "Bad boys" and idealize a man. In the case of Maggie, how she was made to feel undesirable by other girls, so she jumped at the first sign of acceptance she received. Young girls are too easy a target for manipulators. The desire to feel desired is the main driving force among the young girls. And the only way to feel desired is not being useful to society, to become a compassionate, competent individuals which are the main determinant of self-worth. But, no, as young people are known for their lack of suffering and shallowness, looks are the main determinant of self worth. But it would be utterly wrong to generalize the whole age group. The common thing among the adolescent period of all the three women is that they all have lost virginity before marriage, Maggie and Lina through rape, and Sloane by the so called athletic "bad boy". Things are not the same here in India as for now. It may have got some prevalence in the metropolitan cities like Delhi and Mumbai. But sexual harassment in any form is faced by most of the girls even in India. The other woman, Lina, who doesn't think she is pretty enough, spends hours in front of the mirror before going outside. She also falls in love with a high school hunk named Aiden with whom she would have numerous sexual encounters in future while being married. While being young One day, she goes to a party called by her elder sister's boyfriend. Here, she was drunk and got raped by three of the boyfriends friend. Later, rumor spread in the school that Lina had threesome. It's easy for men to think that women should get over any bad sexual encounter, but it's hard for women, 'because the body keeps the score, it has a memory of its own'. They feel used, ugly and dirty, They develop a hatred for their own body. Hundreds of baths can't erase that. You start to hate all men and sex. But later on Lina goes to marry a man who doesn't make love with her. They have got two kids.

The only thing that she wanted from her husband was a passionate love making. All she wanted was a French kiss. It has been eleven years since she had her last child and thereafter her husband has not made love with her for once. And then at last she decided in the middle of the night that she will get separated. This is not just the story of Lina but many women all across the globe. It's in the middle ages when women were tagged as sexless angels. They don't have any desire for dirty things like sex, only men have. And 'chastity' becomes one of the highly prized virtues for women. In India, you can't expect the 'pativrata' 'saubhagyavati' women to ask for sex from their husband. Orgasm is still a topic that they can't discuss, and to discuss a topic, you have to at least know something like orgasm exists. Many are unaware about orgasm, far less have experienced it themselves. In the earlier times, many 'hysterical' women were treated by doctors who would rub the pelvic of the women and women would orgasm and her hysteria would be cured. In the case of Lina too, when she visits her therapist, her therapist asks her to have sex and orgasm, many women who had emotional troubles find relief in that. Sexual desire when constricted develops into sexual frustration and later into panic attacks, anxiety and ultimately depression. The therapist asks her to lose weight and become 'sexy', which will arouse

jealousy in her husband as other men will start to get attracted to her. She does that but still her husband is too dormant. In an interesting experiment in Britain, husbands were told to post some 'hot' pictures of their wives anonymously on a website and see the comments, and their desire for their wife got renewed after reading the comments. It seems that a man is by nature competitive, and only desires things which other men desire. In the therapy group of Lina, there was a woman named April who told that her husband likes to hear the name of her previous lover while having the intercourse. It is necessary for humans to have a healthy and satisfying sex life, to achieve 'sexual self realization' for their spiritual growth. When Lina told other women in the therapy group about her condition, they reminded her about legal and conjugal rights that she should be aware of if she isn't. When she reveals to them about her affair with Aiden, they all get silent. One side of them was calling Lina a slut while the other knows that they are not different. Forbidden things are more desirable, more exciting. Its wrong assumption that adultery happens only because of a troubled marriage, usually it often happens to transcend the ossification of identity by eloping with someone new, to find something exciting in their monotonous existence. Humans are novelty seeking animals. It's highly important to find meaning and purpose beyond sex and domestic life for women. Women are more prone to anxiety/depression and existential crisis because they really lack adventure. Monotony is the root of all evil. Sometimes, it's good to break routine. Women must have a career or calling. The feeling of being powerful, to be in control of their own life that economic independence brings is very important for a person to live a fulfilling life. And a woman who is worldly wise is also able to understand the troubles of her husband better.

Then comes our third character Sloane. Sloane was born in a rich family. She was beautiful and every girl knows how being beautiful not just gets you attention and approval from men, but better treatment in all respects. She became too conscious of her look and to optimize her look, she started to become thinnest as possible. From all these characters, the importance of imparting practical and just values in a young woman's mind to measure herself around is seen. But that's not the point. The point is her kinky sex life. She marries a chef. Their life is good, but her husband has a fetish of watching her making love with someone irrespective of whether the lover is male or female

Sloane doesn't necessarily enjoy this but she does it just to make her husband happy. She was always fearful that the world would come to know about their lifestyle, and the world ultimately does. One thing to notice is that in childhood, when she was nine, her twelve year old brother approached her in the middle of the night and asked her 'Do you want to mess around?' to which she answered no half awakened. Incest is a taboo but it does happen. one in fifty American families between brother and sister, usually the brother is older. Recently, a girl in Mumbai got pregnant by her own brother, but that can be the childishness of both but the real tragedy is the incest that happens between a father and a daughter and it happens in one in two hundred American families. we can assume the same for India or close. So can we say that girls are not even safe even in their own families? Friends and relatives are the biggest perpetrators of sexual assaults on women, But many men don't understand the difference between seduction and molestation, the thin line separating it, you have to be skillful to not hurt the other party.

Conclusion

I want to end this article with an oft-quoted story from Bain's The Digit of Man:

"In the beginning, when Twashtri came to the creation of woman, he found that he had exhausted his materials in the making of man, and that no solid elements were left. In this dilemma, after profound meditation, he did as follows: He took the rotundity of the moon, and the curves of creepers, and the clinging of tendrils, and the trembling of grass, and the slenderness of the reed, and the bloom of flowers, and the lightness of leaves, and the tapering of the elephant's trunk and the glances of deer, and the clustering of rows of bees, and the joyous gayety of sunbeams, and the weep- ing of clouds,

and the fickleness of the winds, and the timidity of the hare, and the vanity of the peacock, and the softness of the parrot's bosom, and the hardness of adamant, and the sweetness of honey, and the cruelty of the tiger, and the warm glow of fire, and the coldness of snow, and the chattering of jays, and the cooing of the kokila, and the hypocrisy of the crane, and the fidelity of the chakrowaka, and compounding all these together, he made woman and gave her to man. But, after one week, man came to him and said: Lord, this creature that you have given me makes my life miserable. She chatters incessantly and teases me beyond endurance, never leaving me alone; and she requires incessant attention, and takes all my time up, and cries about nothing, and is always idle; and so I have come to give her back again, as I cannot live with her. So Twashtri said: Very well; and he took her back. Then after another week, man came again to him and said: Lord, I find that my life is very lonely, since I gave you back that creature. I remember how she used to dance and sing to me, and look at me out of the corner of her eye, and play with me, and cling to me; and her laughter was music, and she was beautiful to look at, and soft to touch; so give her back to me again. So Twashtri said: Very well; and gave her back again. Then after only three days, the man came back to him again and said: Lord, I know not how it is, but after all I have come to the conclusion that she is more of a trouble than a pleasure to me; so please take her back again.

Then the man said: But I cannot live with her. And Twashtri replied: Neither could you live without her. And he turned this back on the man, and went on with his work. Then the man said: What is to be done? For I cannot live either with her or without her."

But she was there and there she remained; and ever since man made the best of it, more or less. Oscar Wilde had said "Women are not to be understood, they are to be loved" but how can we love someone if we cannot understand them. Understanding their pain and difficulties takes us closer to their heart. Christopher Hitchens had advised men to try to think like women by putting their feet inside "heels" and to understand how the world looks like. This was just one more attempt in the effort of a man to understand women hood, and understanding women is necessary because they make the other half of the world, they are our mothers, sisters, wives, daughters and they are the one who make life worth living.

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