

Chapter Four

A Comparative Study between East and West

So far we have outlined the perspectives and philosophical significance of marriage following Indian and Western tradition. In the Western tradition, we have explained the view of Kant, Hegel, Plato, Mill, Russell, and Nietzsche. It seems that there are some similarities and dissimilarities regarding the objective and philosophical aspects of marriage. In Indian tradition, there are as many as eight different types of marriages out of which four types are recognized as valid and the remaining are recognized as invalid according to the Shastras. The eight types of marriages are Brahma Marriage, Daiva marriage, Arsha Marriage, Prajapatya Marriage, Asura marriage, Gandharva Marriage, Raksha Marriage, and Pichachi Marriage. In Western tradition there we do not find any divisions of marriage. However, the concept of Polygamy, Polyandry, and Monogamy is common in both Indian and Western literature.

According to Indian Shastras, the very objective of marriage is to produce good progeny. In this regard an ideal matching is essential. How to get an ideal matching is clearly stated in the Shastras. In this regard, the concept of Varna is introduced. The first four types of marriages as cited above in order are maintained according to the Varna system and the remaining four types of marriages are not maintained following Varna-system according to Shastras. Indian Shastras clearly stated that if the matching of Varna is violated, then the progeny or offspring would not be sound and better. As a result of that, the development of the family, society, community at large would have degenerated. If the future progeny is not good then all sorts of problems will be created. We do not know whether the concept of Shastras is at par with Eugenic. Many would claim that the concept of Shastras is at par with Eugenic. There is no question of doubt that even in the age of the Feminist movement and civilization at large, majority of marriage is held

following Shastras in India. Indian Shastras do not accept love marriage or romantic marriage legal. The concept of Gandharva Marriage is a case in point. Gandharva Marriage is based on love. It is not legitimate according to Shastras. The progeny created through Gandharva Marriage would not be a better progeny. We find a considerable similarity between Indian Shastras and Nietzsche. Nietzsche denies love marriage or romantic marriage (Gandharva Marriage) because he reveals that it would create problems and complications in conjugal life. He acknowledges gene matching which is very similar to Indian Shastras. For Nietzsche, through gene matching, parents should be able to create children greater than themselves. The same is applied in Indian Shastras. According to Indian Shastras, through the concept of Varna matching, the parents should be able to create or produce better progeny than themselves.

Another important aspect of marriage is to engage in a sexual relationship. There are various interpretations of sexual relationships. Most Western traditions acknowledge sexual relationships as an important aspect of marriage. Russell also talks in favor of sexual engagement. He even attributes marriage *to legal prostitution*. The business of prostitution is nothing but sexual engagement. In marriage, whether it is love, or romantic, or spiritual, sexual relationships cannot be ignored. There is nothing wrong with a sexual relationship so a long sexual relationship does not violate the *ethics of sex*. The ethics of sex is very important. The sexual relationship must have *ethical implications*. In this regard, it can be said that the basic objective of sex ethics is directed to produce *good progeny*. This is single line ethics of sex that has been pronounced in Christianity, Indian literature, and in various other philosophers' writings. A sexual relationship without producing good progeny is nothing but *prostitution*. In prostitution, sexual relationship occurs without the motive of producing good progeny. Now the vital question is: Why does Russell attribute marriage to legal prostitution? Marriage has been regarded as legal prostitution because modern-day romance overtakes the essence of marriage; mere love takes the upper hand

of the marriage system. Physical gratification with the help of condoms or with the help of medicine, an invention of science, is the main objective of sexual relationships. Such a sexual relationship goes against the *very essence of marriage*. Modern marriage is legal prostitution because the basic objective of modern marriage is a romance where the sexual relationship is going on without the motive of bringing good progeny of good offspring. However, it is legal in the sense that it is accepted by the community, society, and the law. It has been legalized by law. Here we find the relationship between Indian Shastras and Western traditions. In Indian tradition, the very objective of marriage is to produce good progeny, and to produce good progeny sexual relationship is welcome. We find the same in Russell, Mill, and Nietzsche as well.

We think that instead of the spiritual and religious bondage that we normally perceive in Indian society, Western society is more pronounced about moral and ethical sanctions. Kant takes marriage as a social contract. By the term ‘contract’, Kant actually brings the relevance of ethics. That means Kant interprets marriage as a contract – an ethical one where and through which the sexual engagement is justified. Otherwise, sexual engagement is difficult to justify. Thus in Kant, the ethics of sexuality is pronounced. It is a general perception that sexual engagement is a prerequisite in marriage. But the motive or intention of sexuality or sexual engagement is very crucial when we engage ourselves in philosophizing marriage. If mere sexual engagement is the motive of marriage, then it would be treated as a mere passion and physical gratification which is morally wrong according to Kant. Thus like many other systems, Kant does not find any relevance of love marriage. For Kant, if marriage is a social contract, the very objective of it is to bring good progeny and for that matter, sexual engagement is required, then it should include under moral contract. That means we are morally obliged to engage with sex because our moral obligation is directed to bring good progeny. Hegel in this regard differs from Kant. Hegel voices in favor of the non-contractual view of marriage. Hegel reveals a transformation of personality

through marriage. He talks in favor of the unification of selves. We think there is close proximity between Hegel's concept of marriage and the Indian concept of spiritual marriage. Indian spiritual marriage is based on the unification of selves. Moreover, Hegel like the Indian system of marriage gives importance to Weddings and social gatherings. In the Indian spiritual system, there are social gatherings as well. The relevance of social gathering is *the recognition or social acceptance of the marriage*. It has a huge social impact.

There are two different types of marriage, such as legal marriage and divine marriage or spiritual marriage. Initially, Indian marriage held following *shastras* is called divine marriage. It is purely based on religious and spiritual vows and oaths. Such religious oaths and vows are inviolable and unquestionable according to Shastras. However, with the advent of science, technology, and civilization, there we find a transformational shift in the marriage system. The perception of marriage in India is being changed and the concept of legal marriage has been accepted as a means of marriage. This actually opens up the possibility of ignoring the verdict of marriage as postulated in Indian Shastras. If legal marriage is not introduced then the so-called love marriage between upper and lower Varna, a romantic marriage which ignores the verdict of Shastras, cannot be held. Of course, there are some other rational implications of legal or court marriage. It ensures economic rights and stability in case of divorce. It ensures fundamental rights and justice, freedom of the individual. Modern feminism is a case in point. Feminism goes against the so-called divine marriage where there are so many sanctions set up against women's rights and freedom. There is no role of Shastras in the Western tradition. Even though we find some ritualistic aspect in ancient Greek tradition as mentioned by Nietzsche, but such ritual aspects are overturned and subdued by the so-called modern materialistic and individualistic marriage system. The problem with the modern marriage system is that it invites unnecessary separation in the name of divorce which occur in most general cases out of irrational sentiments, irrational

emotion where an extreme form of individualism, subjectivism, egoism are focused. Divorce is a legal process and it helps the couples to lead a separate life. But the fact is that such separate life never ever brings happiness, stability, and peace in their life. Instead, it will create voluminous problems and complications in their life. A divorce is an event of great loss in the sense of humanity. There is no doubt about it. It is true in every society. People of the West would hamper less than the people of the East. The difference is simply for the outlook of marriage. The Western people initially take marriage as a legal agreement and they are the believer of free sex. There is no necessary connection between sexual engagement and producing better progeny. Their understanding of marriage and sexual engagement is just a sort of physical gratification and nothing else. Therefore, they do not bother about divorce or separation. They take it very lightly. But from a human perspective, we cannot rule out the loss of human virtues. It certainly bears follow-up consequences. It cannot be denied.

We have a different perception if we look back at Indian traditions guided by Shastras. In Indian traditions, various forms of marriage are prescribed according to Shastras. Those types of marriages that have been accepted by Shastras are called divine marriage. The essence of divine marriage is a bond between two souls, not between two bodies. As a result of that in the case of divine marriage or spiritual marriage, spiritual oaths or spiritual vows are cited according to the Shastras. The bondage between two souls is supposed to be eternal bondage and it cannot be separated even after the death of the husband. That is why widow marriage has been prohibited in the Shastras. Once the divine bond has been established through marriage, there is no possibility of detachment. Therefore, if there appears external detachment, but from an ontological perspective, there is no possibility of internal, inward, or spiritual detachment at all. However, besides divine marriage or spiritual marriage, legal marriage is also introduced in Indian tradition. However, there are various implications of court marriage. Court marriage is a

Western concept. It has been introduced for economic safety and security. Violation of the laws of legal marriage is not possible because in such a case judicial action will be imposed against the violator. However, the genesis of divine marriage is something different. As it is the dictation of Shastras, it is based on faith, but not on science. The intrusion of science in faith is not possible. It would be a futile exercise. Now what is faith is either based on confession for Wittgenstein, based on the practical reason for Kant, based on dogmas, superstitions, and prejudices for logical positivism and philosophers like Hume and others. Having said that in India we have high regard for divine life, divine marriage because we believe that there is a life after death. The soul is eternal. It will reappear in the name of another jiva. After death, the soul occupies another body in the name of jiva according to the fruit of Karma (action). The reappearance of the human soul through the human body is not possible without marriage. Because only through marriage sexual engagement has been validated and only through sexual engagement based on sexual ethics, a better progeny can be created. Thus the creation of progeny makes it possible to reappearance a human soul through the human body in the empirical world, i.e., in the world of illusion of Maya, according to Shastras. Thus we notice a perceptible difference between the Western marriage system and the Indian marriage system. Even though there we find some rituality in the Western marriage system, but the essence of rituality is different from the Indian system of rituality.

The western marriage system is far more *pragmatic than the Indian marriage system*. Indian marriage system is orthodox, unlike a Western marriage. Western marriage is pragmatic because here marriage is held on mutual agreement having epistemological justification. The outlook of Western marriage is just a tie of co-partnership and nothing more than that. We notice a law-driven practice everywhere in American society. A son after the age of eighteen years must pay house rent legally to his parent if his parent will demand it. Thus, in Western countries, the

marriage relationship is purely based on laws and nothing else. Law is primary and the other issue, if there be any according to their respective culture, would be secondary. When a crisis will come, laws speak the truth. This is all about. The western outlook is pragmatic in the sense that they give more importance to the economy and education when they engage with marriage. Besides, love or romance plays a significant role as well. Religious sanctions and dictations are less important to them. Religious sanctions and interpretation for them are myths. We cannot completely detach from Western culture. In modern Indian society, we witness an artificial type of marriage in various communities where the economic issue takes the upper hand irrespective of the Varna system. There are cases particularly in the urban educated society where the economic issue gets priority over spirituality. The fate of such marriages is the same. A high percentage of divorce is witnessing among such groups of marriage. But the point is that the social implication of divorce is much more complicated in Indian society than in Western society. Nobody is interested to marry a divorcée in Indian tradition. The cases are very small. Moreover, the social status of Indian divorcee is low than the of non-divorcee. This is a fact. It cannot be denied. We are social animals. We cannot live comfortably within the environment of social ignorance. Social ignorance is not legal ignorance. Therefore, the victim cannot take legal action when she is being ignored socially. The fate of a divorcee is more precarious even in village areas. A divorce cannot be married even though Iswarchandra Vidyasagar as a reformist took the initiative to legalize widow marriage law. Legally widow marriage is accepted, but socially it is not accepted. The victim can only realize, other people are either disinterested to realize it or they ignore it in a more calibrated way.

Western marriage is based on a consumerist economy and it is controlled by the dominant world view alternatively known as materialism. On the other hand, the Indian marriage system is based on spiritual welfare.