

PSYCHOSOCIAL CHALLENGES OF MARITAL LIFE IN INDIA: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Marriage is defined as "the legally or formally recognized union of a man and a woman as partners in a relationship." The concept of marriage has changed currently due to changes in the social, religious and political scenario. The traditional marriages are facing lot of resistance and are breaking up not only in western societies but also in India. Many young people today are scared to marry and prefer non-committed and meaningless relationships. Many prefer to be alone or want to experimental relationships such as co-habitation or live-in relationship. Similarly, married couples who are dissatisfied with their marriage seek out for extramarital relationships. Also of concern is homosexuality which is still stigmatized and not accepted as a normal variant in many countries. We need to look at these important issues in a developing country like India.

Indian family system was hailed for the traditional joint family system. Currently, it has undergone a wave of change in terms of breakdown of joint family, change in the authority structure and the empowerment of women leading to their egalitarian role in the family. In this context, we will be looking at the issues related to the challenges faced by the traditional Indian Christian family.

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The Roman Catholic view of marriage is that it is a "covenant by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of the whole of life and the procreation and education of offspring." In India, marriage is viewed as a perpetual bonding and an element of divinity is attributed to it. Arranged marriages continue to be preferred in India and one of the unwritten rules is that "all marriages must result in children and preferably male children." The marital practices also have changed significantly in India. Traditional child marriages, consanguineous marriage and polygamy are decreasing. Currently, the marriages are not considered sacred or divine. It is seen just as a commitment and a formality than as a sacrament. The views on marriage such as life-long commitment, openness to children, fidelity and indissolubility are considered too restrictive and unreal for the current generation. This has led to worsening of the current situation to domestic violence, dowry harassment, divorce and marital discord even in Christian families. Not only that people are afraid to get married, but have gone on to develop different types of relationships such as 'live-in-arrangements', Extra-marital relationships and Homosexuality. There has been a clash between the contemporary society and the younger generation regarding the newer styles of living and practices of instant pleasure; leading to reaction by the society such as Honour killing.¹

We need to relook at the current issues of marriage in our culture and also acquaint ourselves with the changes which are occurring in this area.

Marital Distress

Once the honeymoon period is over, the true personality of the couples emerges. Initially, they are willing to sacrifice their time and money for the sustenance of the relationship but the moment they get married they are sensitive and not willing to live with the same true love. The spouses expect the same romance to continue even after marriage which the other may not provide.

The age and educational levels of the couple have an impact on the marital adjustment. Happier couples reported using the following techniques such as agreement, empathy, validation, support, and fulfilled expectations compared to unhappy couples. Enhanced levels

¹Krista Payne, "FP-11-11 On the Road to Adulthood: Sequencing of Family Experiences," National Center for Family and Marriage Research Family Profiles, Grace Bahalen Mundu & Sayeed Unisa, 2011.

of happiness in marriage were correlated with couples' experience and expression of intimacy while conflict had a negative effect on marital happiness.² It has been observed that wives derived greater happiness in their marriages, if they were satisfied with the housekeeper role and the husbands, on the other hand, attached greater importance to satisfaction with their role as a provider. However, currently with the egalitarian role of women, she has to play multiple roles. This has led to significant stress in her to give the quality time to the husband and children and has led to mental and physical exhaustion due to work and indifferent attitude of the in-laws towards them working outside. All these have led to significant misunderstandings, poor coping and violence. A study by Ratna Issac and Anisha Shah on married couples found that non-distressed individuals show high androgyny (combination of masculine and feminine) characteristics and androgynous dyads showed better marital adjustment.³ Based on multicentric studies in different continents and cultures, they formulated a 'Family Strengths model' which reports that some of the qualities of healthy and happy families include Commitment, Appreciation and affection, Positive communication, Time together (Quality time), Spiritual wellbeing, ability to cope with stress and crisis.⁴

It is important that there is a detailed evaluation of the cause of marital distress. It is necessary to understand each person as an individual and address the issue. The therapist must be non-judgmental and should not favour any of them. Initially, simple techniques can be initiated and later more detailed ones can be used. The first and foremost principle is to avoid quarrels during the sessions and outside. Some of the techniques suggested by most psychologists to improve their marital distress are negotiation, compromise, mutual awareness, improved communication skills, giving benefit of doubt, ability to work out problems and controlling arousal Levels.

During the preparatory course for Marriage, the potential couples need to undergo intensive course to understand the issues they may

²Shaifali Sandhya, "The Social Context of Marital Happiness in Urban Indian Couples: Interplay of Intimacy and Conflict," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 35, 1, (January 2009) 74-96.

³R. Isaac and A. Shah, "Sex Roles and Marital Adjustment in Indian Couples," *International Journal of Social Psychiatry* 50, 2 (2004) 129-141.

⁴John DeFrain, "Strong Families," (multinational study), *Family Matters* 53 (Winter 1999) 8, 12-13.

have to face during the marriage. It is important to reduce the romanticism of marriage and make it more practical to stay together in a marital relationship. The pastoral care or the Diocesan priest should consider help for the eligible couples not only during the marriage or sacramental rites but the care should continue for lifelong.

Some of the topics which needs to be covered in a marriage preparatory course should include Self-awareness, emotional literacy, trust, mutual respect and responsibility roles, values, and beliefs, communication, conflict management, problem-solving skills, intimacy and friendship, family-of-origin issues, empathy, commitment, Forgiveness, negotiation and compromise, power and control, expectations, finances, anger and stress management, Self-care, identifying destructive behaviours and patterns.⁵

Dowry

Dowry system existed in India even before the British ruled India. In the Pre-colonial India, Dowry was an institution managed by women and it was to establish their status and have resource for emergency purpose. Parents and kith and kin gave their wealth as gifts to their daughters. But this practice changed when Lord Cornwallis introduced the system of Permanent settlement of Bengal in 1793. In this system only men could possess the property. This affected the status of women in India and prohibited women from owning any property. This led to extortion, oppression, victimization, harassment, violence, suppression of women and deaths. Thus, the practice of dowry system started in India. Later, few laws were created to overcome this issue but none were effective.

In Christianity, love is the basis of Marriage. This nuptial bond has been created not by men but by the God. God has endowed it with proper laws. Wife is considered a part of the husband's body. The expression of love leads to procreation and then children. All leading to glorify God.

Do Christian families also practice dowry system in India? Yes, in fact dowry is practiced strictly in southern states like Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The groom's family demand it as if it is their right and torture the bride's family from the time of engagement. In Kerala, the poorest of the poor have to shell out at

⁵Robin Dion, "Healthy Marriage Programs: Learning What Works," *The Future of Children* 15, 2 (Fall 2005) 141.

least one hundred thousand rupees in cash as a dowry. This is the plight of the Christian families. This is contradicting the Christian faith and practice.

The church should consider this issue seriously and intervene to protect the women. It would be great if there are educational sessions in the marriage preparatory courses to make the groom and his family understand the trauma that the bride's family undergo to pay the dowry. Strict regulations, formation of women's cell to counteract dowry system, encouragement of young boys rejecting dowry, Bishop's use the homilies and pastoral letters to remove dowry are a few methods suggested by Vimal Kumar et al to overcome this deadly social evil.⁶

Domestic Violence

The prime targets of domestic violence all over the world are women and children. In India, it is estimated that 40% of the women experience violence by an intimate partner. Every 33 minutes one woman is being abused by the husband.⁷ In the Indian states, Bihar has topped the list were 59% of women were more violently abused and followed by states like Madhya Pradesh (45.8%), Rajasthan (46.3%), Manipur (43.9%), Uttar Pradesh (42.4%), Tamil Nadu (41.9%) and West Bengal (40.3%).⁸ 50% of women experienced physical violence even during pregnancy. However, wife-battering and forced incest with women are seldom reported to the police or law courts.

It has been found that domestic violence against women was found to vary considerably among countries with a high majority in Christians as reported by the United Nations.

Christian groups do acknowledge that domestic abuse does occur. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops found that men who abuse women often misquote Ephesians 5:22 out of context and justify their actions. In fact verses 21 to 33 dwell upon the mutual submission of husband and wife out of love for Christ. Husbands should love their wives as they love their own body, as Christ loves the Church.⁹ Even though patriarchal Christianity has been blamed for this, it cannot be

⁶Vimal Kumar, BalaKiran V, Joseph Thambi G, MR Sharma, Shaji George K., "The Impact of the Dowry System in the Christian Communities," *Asian Horizons* 7, 2 (2013) 357-375.

⁷National Crime Records Bureau Report of 1991.

⁸National Family Health Survey-III.

⁹United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, "When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women," (November 12, 2002).

taken as the sole cause for abuse; other factors such as personality disorder, alcoholism, depression and financial issues can also be considered. Christ has reiterated more symmetrical and respectful model of male to female relations. The church needs to take this issue seriously and reinforce respect for women in a family. Any reported cases should be sympathetically looked and both the couples be counselled in detail.¹⁰

There are a few legal acts, such as Anti-domestic violence act (2005) to protect women. There are also a few NGO or self-help groups, for example, VIMOCHANA, MAITRI India, which help in protecting women who undergo domestic violence. VIMOCHANA (in Bangalore) which means liberation was initiated by the Centre for Informal Development Studies (CIEDS) in 1979. It was started due to the increasing violence against women. Some of the important objectives include strengthening women's resistance to violence, making the society responsible for the violence against women and empowering women. MAITRI India is a New Delhi-based developmental humanitarian NGO which was founded in 2005 by Gen. (Retd.) Bhopinder Singh and Winnie Singh. It is committed to facilitating citizenship rights, basic services, dignity, and respect for the most vulnerable populations in India. One of their current programmes is reducing violence against women.

Save Indian Family Foundation (SIFF) is a registered, non-funded, non-profit, men's rights organisation in India. It was founded in 2007 as an advocacy group against misuse of Indian laws related to dowry harassment

Drug Addiction

India was known as a dry culture but now the drugs of abuse are emerging as a major health and social problem. Tobacco and alcohol are the most commonly abused substances in India. More than tobacco, alcohol causes significant medical, family issues and social problems. 62.5 million people in India drink alcohol at least occasionally and 17.4% of them (10.6 million) are dependent (addicted).¹¹

¹⁰The Archbishops' Council, "Responding to Domestic Abuse: Guidelines for those with Pastoral Responsibilities," London: Church House Publishing, 2006, 19.

¹¹N. Girish, R. Kavita, G. Gururaj, and V. Benegal, "Alcohol Use and Implications for Public Health: Patterns of Use in Four Communities," *Indian Journal of Community Medicine* 35 (2010) 238-44.

In India, alcohol use by men is viewed as a symbol of economic status, caste, a person's karma, gender privilege;¹² also often used in social functions such as marriage and funeral ceremonies and during periods of turmoil. Alcohol use by husbands has been associated with poor mental health and spousal violence in married women. A study by Dethier et al found that there is lower marital satisfaction and lower self-esteem in the couples of alcoholic husbands compared to couples of healthy husbands.¹³ Alcoholism contributes to marital distress through creating newer stress or such as financial, work absenteeism, accidents, health problems, verbal and physical abuse. Marital distress in turn stimulates, causes relapses and maintains alcohol problems. Alcohol also causes sexual dysfunction and in some it can lead to morbid jealousy and later delusions of infidelity. This can cause significant marital problems and may lead to violence, stalking or murder.

There are treatments available for drugs of abuse. It may be just outpatient or inpatient care depending on the type of drug, medical condition of the patient or severity of the abuse. Currently, there are newer medications and psychological techniques available to help them. Not only the husbands need help but also the family, i.e., wife and children because they are the victims of alcoholism. However, we need to be careful not to admit them in illegal deaddiction centres or take illegal medications which are basically money making rackets and can abuse the patient physically and sexually.

Divorce

It is the legal dissolution of a socially and legally recognised marital relationship that alters the obligations and privileges of the two people involved. The Bible mentions adultery as ground for divorce (Mt 5:31-32; 19:9) but does not require it.

Earlier, women were expected to compromise the differences in the marital life and were forced to bear the emotional and physical torture of the husband and continue with the marriage for the sake of children and family members. The prevalence of divorce in USA has ranged from 40 to 50%. In India, divorce was uncommon. Following improvement in education, welfare schemes for women, improved

¹²J. Nimmagadda, "A Pilot Study of the Social Construction of the Meanings Attached to Alcohol Use: Perceptions from India," *Substance Use and Misuse* 34 (1999) 251-67.

¹³M. Dethier, C. Counerotte & S. Blairy, "Marital Satisfaction in Couples with an Alcoholic Husband," *Journal of Family Violence*, 26, 2 (2011) 151-162.

legislations and campaigns by activists for empowerment of women, the women are becoming more assertive, have improved self-esteem and they are overcoming their plights by seeking divorce. There is a significant increase in the divorce rates in recent years in India. It has increased from 0.25% in 1991 to 0.32% (2001). 1.1 out of every 100 marriage ends up in a divorce in India and Bangalore is becoming the divorce capital of India. Northern regions have lesser probability of dissolution than women living in other regions of India. In India, the causes of divorce include sexual incompatibility, adultery, extramarital affair, erectile dysfunction, psychiatric disorders temperamental differences, independent thinking and change in career orientation of women.

Around 2.3 million women are divorced/separated/deserted against one million males. Women married before 15yrs have lesser risk for marriage dissolution than later ages.¹⁴ It has been seen that there is decreased risk of marriage dissolution as the age increases (more in 15-19 ages). It has also been found that Christian women have the highest risk of dissolution (2.11 times) as compare to the rest of the religions in India.

Divorce has an impact on the personal, legal, social, psychological and economic aspects of a women's life. Women are more affected than men. It has been reported that only 20% of divorced individuals had improvement in their life, while 70% of them were either the same or worsened in terms of social and emotional conditions in 20 years after divorce.¹⁵ They are also more susceptible to severe emotional and psychological problems and are rather prone to early death than those who remain in the marital bond. However, it has long term consequences on the children also. They include early behavioural and academic problems, early school leaving and poor mental health.¹⁶ It has been found that children of divorcee's have lower levels of occupational status, low income and higher levels of economic hardships; they often marry young, they have more

¹⁴Grace Bahalen Mundu and Unisa Sayeed, " Marriage Dissolution in India and Its Associate Factors," Presented in the Poster session in the Population Association of America, 2011 Annual Meeting Program. Washington, DC.

¹⁵L. Waite and M. Gallagher, *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier and Better off Financially*, New York: Random House, 2002.

¹⁶Wendy Sigle-Rushton and Sara McLanahan, "Father Absence and Child Wellbeing: A Critical Review," in D.P. Moynihan, L. Rainwater and T. Smeeding, ed., *The Future of the Family*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2004, 116-155.

chances of divorce, they remarry several times and find themselves in unhappy relationships.¹⁷

Wallerstein and Blakeslee suggested that to have a happy married life involves a process and they need to achieve certain psychological tasks to attain it.¹⁸ They went even beyond the concept of 'Family Strengths model' Parker had proposed a few techniques to build a long-lasting marriage. They include Separating from family of origin, Building togetherness and creating autonomy, a unified decision about when to have children, Learning to work through and cope with life events, developing a safe environment for expressing differences, anger, and settling conflicts, exploring sexual love and intimacy, sharing laughter and keeping interests alive, providing emotional nurturance and finally Maintaining the romanticism of the early marriage days and accepting the limitations of the current moment (double vision).¹⁹

The Parish Priests and pastoral counsellors should make an attempt to save the marriage. Despite all efforts by all the parties if it is not working out, then they need to be referred to professional therapists such as Clinical Psychologists or Psychiatric Social Workers. They would make an attempt to understand both the couples in a psychosocial perspective and may consider marital therapy before taking any major decisions about marriage.

The traditional marriage has its own limitations and hence has led to newer styles of living such as 'live-in-arrangements', Extra-marital relationships and Homosexuality. These are given below in the context of its role in the Christian family life.

Live-in Relationship

It is also called in different terms such as or Co-habitation, "trial marriage" or "domestic partnership." It is an arrangement where a heterosexual couple lives together, without entering into a formal relationship called marriage. It is an informal arrangement by couples to basically test their compatibility before marriage, or who cannot

¹⁷C.E. Ross and J. Mirowsky, "Parental Divorce, Life-course Disruption, and Adult Depression," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* (1999) 1034-1045.

¹⁸Judith Wallerstein and Sandra Blakeslee, *The Good Marriage: How and Why Love Lasts*, New York: Warner Books, 1996.

¹⁹Robyn Parker, "Why Marriages Last: A Discussion of the Literature," Research Paper No. 28, Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2002, 19-22.

afford marriage expenses or to avoid other issues related to formal marriage. Most of the time the divorced or individuals left alone in the world get into this kind of relationship. They consider that this relationship gives sexual liberation and freedom to live or walkout anytime. Many believe that it has lower level of commitment and higher level of autonomy.

Even though this issue has come up in recent years, live-in relationship has been practiced in India for many years. This relationship is not approved in many countries and even in India by the traditional communities. However, with the recent legal sanctions permitting live-in relationship, it has opened a whole new world in India. The Supreme Court of India has clearly mentioned it is permissible only in unmarried adult persons of heterosexual sex. If the live-in relationship continues for a long time, it is presumed that they are married and not in a 'walking-in and walking-out' relationship. Also, the Supreme Court has upheld that child born out of a live-in relationship may be allowed to succeed inheritance in the property of the parents.²⁰

This relationship has raised enormous debate about the moral and legal validity of marriage in India. It has been found that living with a romantic partner prior to marriage is linked to poorer problem solving skills during marriage. Lower levels of happiness, lower levels of sexual exclusivity, less sexual satisfaction and poorer relationship with parents have been reported in this type of relationship.

It violates the very basis of love in marriage and also the faith that it is God who selects the partners in the sacrament of marriage. Christianity prohibits live-in relationship. It is clear in this passage from the Bible.

"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral" (Heb 13:4).

Extra-marital Relationships (EMA)

Any relationship outside of the marriage where it is romantic or sexual or passionate attachment is called as EMA. It is not uncommon

²⁰Amartya Bag, "Succession Rights in Case of Live-In Relationships: An Analysis in the Indian Context" (30 March 2011) (<http://ssrn.com/abstract=2011751>), SSRN, Retrieved 9 April 2012; Madan Mohan Singh and Ors V. Rajni Kant and Anr (Civil Appeal No. 6466 of 2004, decided on August 13, 2010, Paragraphs 19-22); Live-in relationship in India: Legal Status (<http://www.gangothri.org/?q=node/33>)

in India. It is more prevalent among men than women.²¹ However, EMA in women is often considered more punishable than men.

There are many types of EMA, they can be classified into four types, (1) **'One night stand'** which is a chance encounter and the most survivable of all types. This occurs unintentionally and need not go onto a continued emotional or sexual relationship. It is still adultery and individuals need to be careful about this. It can sometimes lead to significant guilt and a loss. Many of them feel it could have been prevented. They have a remorse for their act and have a guilt of losing a good relationship just because they wanted to satisfy their sexual desires. (2) **'Emotional outbreak affair'** in which the marriage is experiencing problems and during those times one partner turns towards a friend or companion of the opposite sex for emotional help and comfort. Here the unfaithful spouse continues to love his spouse and thinks there are chances of a reunion. (3) **'Sexual addiction affair'**: In this type of affair, it is more about having sexual gratification and not emotional satisfaction. Some of the causes for this type are boredom, lack of communication, sexual experimentation, poor sexual satisfaction with the same partner, to overcome a sense of loss that can come with ageing and depression. (4) **'Emotional-Sexual Affair'**: In this type of affair the unfaithful spouse not only gives the body but also the heart and there are slim chances of reunion. This can lead to divorce and clandestine relationships. (5) **Social media and Online affair**: Technological advancements have made the humans more handicapped than before. Humans have lost the interpersonal skills and communication skills due to this. Due to the fast life, people communicate with SMS's and other social media apps like Whatsapp, HIKE and VIBER. This has led to a new affair called "Online affair". There are various kinds of computer-mediated communication that differ in some significant aspects: one-to-one or group communication formats, interrelating with anonymous or identified people, and communicating in synchronous or asynchronous formats, etc. Online affairs combine features of close and remote relationships. Even people have gone to the extent of getting married online and having online sex. Usually people involving in this affair are strangers and share their intimate details. This helps them to enjoy the benefits of both close and remote affairs, while avoiding their flaws. There are no strings attached as in

²¹Moni Nag, "Sexual Behaviour in India with Risk of HIV/AIDS Transmission," in *Health Transition Review – Supplement 5* (1995) 293-295.

physical relationship but it gives a strong emotional attachment. They tend to live in a virtual world

Unprotected extramarital sexual relationships may affect the spouses for HIV and sexually transmitted diseases and impacts on the quality of the couple relationship, creating difficulties in communication, sexuality, and violence that may further exacerbate extramarital sex and risk of infection. Women are more prone to HIV infections/sexually transmitted diseases because of EMR of the husbands.²²

In Christianity, EMA amounts to adultery. The 6th commandment mentions that "Thou shalt not commit adultery". Jesus' teachings in Matthew 5:27-28 clears all the doubts regarding that: "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

It may not be an easy task for a lay person to follow this principle. In the current world, where there are lot of misunderstanding between the couples and poor compatibility in terms of personality, communication and interpersonal issues; many fall prey to EMA because they feel the supporting partner may soothe them. It is very important to recognize and help the partner who has EMA. Pastoral counsellors should not be critical rather they should attempt to understand the context of EMA and be sympathetic towards them. They need to emphasize the good points of marriage and help them to smoothly overcome their EMA.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality is described as the orientation and inclination of a person to have sexual relations with a person of his or her own sex.²³ Identification of a homosexual generally is difficult because of the behavioural expression of the sexual inclination may change in their life cycle.²⁴ The current understanding of homosexuality has evolved from the primitive thinking that it is a sin, crime and pathological to a normal variant of human sexuality by the American Psychiatric

²²R. Sonawat, "Understanding Families in India: A Reflection of Societal Changes," *Psicologia: Teoria e Pesquisa*, 17, 2 (2001), 177-186.

²³Moni Nag, "Sexual Behaviour in India with Risk of HIV/AIDS Transmission," 293-295.

²⁴D.M. Thappa, N. Singh and S. Kaimal, "Homosexuality in India," *Indian Journal of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and AIDS* 29, 2 (2008) 59.

Association in 1973 and later by the WHO in 1992. In fact many countries have decriminalized and have recognized same-sex marriage. In India there are around 50 million homosexual men have been estimated to reside in India.²⁵ Kinsey scale has been used to understand whether a person has a tendency for homosexuality or heterosexuality.

The etiology of homosexuality is not very clear, however various biological based theories suggest genetic factors and early uterine environment and their combination playing a vital role rather than parenting styles or early childhood experiences.²⁶ Psychological tests could neither differentiate heterosexual individuals from the homosexual; nor could it identify if they had any cognitive (Brain) dysfunctions. Thus, mental health professionals considered homosexuality as a normal variant of human sexuality.

They have difficulties in terms of conflicts in acknowledging their homosexual feelings, disclosure, forming partners in a heterosexual world, problems in coming out of it, forced marriage with opposite sex by family or society. A few homosexual have expressed difficulty to get true emotional relationship; because most of the partners prefer only sexual relationship. Some of them were even depressed and were contemplating to end their life because they feel that the society does not understand their feelings and ostracize them.

Homosexual are usually stigmatised and marginalised because of the notion that they involve in anal intercourse and that the spread of HIV may be more common in this group. In fact it is as equal with the heterosexuals.

In 2009, the Delhi High Court had overturned an archaic colonial law (section 377 of the Indian Penal Code) that made gay sex an offense punishable by up to life imprisonment. However, in Dec, 2013 the Supreme Court of India reinstated the law that makes gay sex a criminal offense.

Many religions and communities in India have prejudice towards homosexuality and have caused significant misunderstandings in its nature. The medical and psychiatric fraternity have accepted it as a normal variant of human sexuality. We need to have a more non-

²⁵T.S. Rao, and K.S. Jacob, "Homosexuality and India," *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 54, 1 (2012) 1.

²⁶B.L. Frankowski, "Sexual orientation and Adolescents," (American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Adolescence), *Pediatrics* 113, 6 (June 2004) 1827–32.

judgemental approach to understand them and consider accepting them into our culture. The church also should make efforts to understand this phenomenon and deliberate upon this.

Conclusion

It is very important to understand the current changes which are occurring in the marriage front. The Church needs to look at offering more support for its members before they get married. It needs to conduct courses on the issues related to marriage from the adolescent age groups rather than just before the marriage. Also, the Church has to take measures to support the family throughout the life of the couple. They need to be more sympathetic towards members who stay in live-in relationship and extramarital affairs and help them.