

Divorce: a marriage to self

In the world where we women are finally able to provide for ourselves and our children, have a voice in our governance, chose our purpose and direction in life, California (one of the most progressive states in our country), has reached a 60% divorce rate. In the last decade overall marriage rates have been dropping consistently across the country. New surveys seem to indicate that younger generations no longer strive for marriage as their end goal in life. Some argue that this is an indication of disintegration of social fabric, some say it is an example of emotionally disconnected society in the digital era, some say it's the end of romance. Pragmatic minds point out that dwindling economic need for marriage renders it socially redundant. From a psycho/sociological perspective however it is also interesting to review the post-feminist age of female condition in the modern society and an emergence of a new cultural narrative that is clearly flipping the paternal scrip for female life path in our society.

It is true that no marriage begins with divorce plans and no divorce is a walk in the park. While personal tragedy involved in love lost, dreams unfulfilled, disappointments and betrayals weathered, divorce is becoming not only a likely outcome of matrimony but a reality for many families across the board. So then perhaps divorce in the modern world is not a failure of a family to stay together but a necessary developmental stage in the growth and development of an open family system that is in direct relationship with its environment. Is it possible then that families that do not end in a divorce are in fact more likely to be closed boundary systems that fail to fully integrate the outer world and therefore maintain their institutions at the expense of individuals within that system? In other words, keeping a family together more often than not requires major sacrifices on behalf of each partner, sacrifices which the society at large no longer demands from the individual. Current culture celebrates individualism, self-actualization, self-promotion, pursuit of individual happiness and taking charge of one's destiny. We are presented with endless opportunities, career choices, ideas and ways of living and expanding our consciousness, the reality of a partnership withstanding such a dynamic and ever evolving culture with matching speed is almost inconceivable. Marriage in modern context becomes inevitably thwarting.

It is undeniable that we need a stable support system to start building a family, it does take a village to raise a child, and certainly, our own families of origin as well as extended families we adopt through our marriages can serve as that village. Yet currently very few families live close to their extended relatives, in reality families rely more and more on relationships they forge with friends in their immediate communities to support this process. With neutralizing gender roles, we are seeing a rise in stay at home fathers and working moms, we no longer raise children in tightknit family systems, children are in fact being raised in the community exposed to multiple different configurations of family systems. There is no social necessity or economic need to remain indefinitely bound to let's say the father of your children. Could we perceive uncoupling as a step toward female liberation from the patriarchal doctrine that states it is somehow "romantic" for us to "belong" to someone. Women in fact don't need to "belong" to their partners any more than men do. When we are emotionally individuated, when we feel truly capable, when we are openly engaged with the world on our own terms, we enjoy a very diverse variety of relational needs with each-other. Not all men we come in contact with need to be our lovers,

or a potential husband for that matter, we enjoy intellectual banter, we enjoy friendship, we enjoy romance, we enjoy raw sexual encounters and not one of these are an absolute for our emotional health, or life purpose. In other words, relationships with our partners are as important, but not more important than relationships we have with our friends, colleagues and the community at large. The most important relationship for a modern woman, is a relationship she has with herself, hence divorcing a partner that no longer serves this relationship is simply a necessity! Modern day divorce for many, is in fact a renewal of vows to one's self and the reality of a contemporary marriage, is that in most cases it has a life cycle of its own. So perhaps it is time we stop asking the question why so many people are divorcing and start asking the question why so many people remain married to the other instead of the self?

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