

## The Divorce Revolution

It aimed at righting the much publicised cruel wrongs that had kept the fairer sex and henpecked men in chains of oppression, until the point of this legislative enactment.

The ensuing rush of divorces that carried momentum well into the late 1990s, gave the impression that the floodgates to marital freedom had been thrown open to the needy and justice was being done. From less than 35,000 divorces in 1961 to a peak of 180,000 divorces in 1993, divorces in the UK have been showing a consistent growth rate averaging around 13 per thousand of the population.

The no-fault divorce law, which was meant to end the adversarial form of divorce and its attendant sufferings on women and children, was the direct cause of a 40% increase in divorce rates from 1970 onwards, in the United States.

Other reasons like pending divorce applications (prior to no-fault divorce law legislation), were also cited as the cause for the increase. Whatever the reasons for the increase, there was no doubting the fact that the period from the 1970s to the late 1990s witnessed a never before, never after spate of divorces. Many said that it was the promise of a divorce revolution, in the making.

In retrospect, the key evidence supplied by statistics, in many countries has led to a consolidation of thought that there was actually no revolution in the increasing number of divorces. The no-fault divorce laws instead of ensuring equality had, in fact, only widened the disparity and not achieved anything substantial for the oppressed divorcee.

It had only succeeded in ensuring a quicker split of the relationship without ensuring a proper mechanism for post-divorce survival. The mother and children were eking out a living somehow, despite the lack of worthwhile skills, while the ex-husband experienced a noticeable enhancement in his living conditions, without being plagued with the major responsibilities to his ex-wife and child. Divorce settlements were also not being honoured by most of the divorced men.

The so-called divorce 'revolution' turned out to be a God-sent boon for the greedy spouse. Obnoxious male behaviour was the main reason publicly quoted for a divorce, in the increasing number of divorce cases initiated by women. A fair number of these divorce cases were also witness to the fact that there was nothing objectionable about claiming an unfair share in the monetary assets solely built up by the male or fighting for a distorted settlement that would pamper the spouse for a lifetime!

Revolutions, as witnessed by history, are the winds of change that sweep across nations and communities for bringing about a visible change in the betterment of society or culture. It is an en masse movement that engulfs beings, in large numbers. To the extent of witnessing a huge increase in the number of divorces, a divorce revolution could have been said to have taken place. Yet the negative after-effects of the increased numbers, do not justify the title of 'revolution'.

Boorish male behaviour has been the stated cause for a majority of divorces and women are the initiators of divorce in a majority of the filed cases. What about the social consequences on children and the tolerance levels of a man and woman to adjust their lives around each other?

In direct contrast to the above assumption, is the fact that, despite the visible male-female intolerance, many unmarried couples are practising live-in relationships. Does marriage bring out the worst in men and women? The flourishing of live-in relationships forebodes the decline of marriage in particular and the society in general. Where live-in relationships take root, marriages register a decline along with the reported decline in the number of divorces. This is now being experienced in many countries after the late 1990s. A neat bypass of the pain and hassles emanating from a legally committed relationship, is taking place, but with serious repercussions in the long term.

Post-divorce, women are usually granted child custody, in most divorce cases. Working, rearing the children, unfair divorce settlements and absence of a father figure, make it excruciatingly difficult for the ex-wife to mould model citizens out of the offspring. Society witnesses the accumulation of negative mindset in vast numbers, due to the increased divorces.

The promise of an intended equitable treatment for both the partners has been soured by the increasing fragility, intolerance and commercialisation of relationships. Ambition, friendships, conversation and thoughts of the individual are centred on achieving selfish material happiness. The cost to society or the trampling of others' feelings and lives is secondary.

Only a radical change in attitude can promise a real revolution. Let there be a divorce revolution for the betterment of marriage and society.

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