

## Marriage's Effect on Family

Though not everyone has one, everyone believes in the idea of family. There are many ways families interact and many changes they can go through. Having children, getting married, divorce, or simply raising others are a few of the ways families change drastically. How these things happen and are handled throughout the world show the difference in form and structure that is apparent in each corner of the world. The ways families work differs from one another drastically, whether it be how a marriage is arranged, to walking marriages, to how divorce is handled, each of these differences shows how family is interpreted in different areas of the world.

Marriage is different in every country whether it be tradition or societal. One of the best examples of this is the tradition of arranged marriage in India. A big reason this is different from America is that the potential spouses are not the ones looking for their significant other, rather their parents and guardians are the ones looking. India is a very community-oriented culture and family itself is a community, thus the family looks for a suitable person to marry their child. However, the family is not just looking for a spouse, but someone with a family background that they approve of. How one's family acts and how they act towards family is a big indicator of how they will act towards new members of the family. As mentioned by Nanda in *Arranging a Marriage in India*, "My parents would never arrange a marriage for me without knowing all about the boy's family background... No one will want their daughter to marry into a family that is no good." The family members who are seeking out a spouse for their child must also be acceptable as the other family will do the same judging of whether the family is acceptable. This is a structure of family that is apparent all over India. One's actions and beliefs show as the whole families and thus everyone must try to keep the other in line. This is a problem however, as typically parents have control in these settings, meaning their rule goes. Children may have beliefs that are not wrong but differ from the parents and thus the parent will shut them down or punish them for the differing opinion. Furthermore, this can arise when arranging a marriage as the parent may find a family that agrees with them say politically, with a child that agrees with them. The parents would think this was a suitable choice and accept the proposal while their child could be mortified as they don't agree with any of the people in this agreement. With arranged marriage, many people believe and stick to traditional gender roles and this is not unique but is important to the form and structure of family in India. It is believed that the woman will cook, clean, and not work while the man works and provides. If they have children both will go to school but some families will stop a girl's further education as they plan to marry her off and the cycle continues. The way marriage, roles, and interactions are handled in India are what define its familial structure. This however, is not the only way a family can work.

Walking marriages are a unique kind of connection as the individuals involved do not necessarily become part of the same family. Compounded with this, the people who raise a woman's child are the family and this all defines the form and structure of family in the Mosuo culture. Walking marriage is defined by Lu Yuan in *Land of the Walking Marriage*, "At about the age of twelve, a Mosuo girl is given a coming-of-age ceremony, and after puberty, she is free to receive male

visitors. A lover may remain overnight in her room but will return in the morning to his own mother's home and his primary responsibilities. Children born from such a relationship live with their mother, and the male relatives responsible for helping to look after them are her brothers." This all shows what family is to those who practice the walking marriage. Starting with the young girl who can take lovers, for her the people whom she spends her nights with are nothing more than someone who she sleeps with. She has the option to break ties at no cost and never has to do anything for them. The person with whom she is involved is nothing more than a visitor in her life. The lover who goes home is able to have a "single" life while still having a lover. They are able to go about their day as they would if no one was part of it. They focus on their own life and of those who are their family. The main change that comes to family in this culture is if a child is born. Though they have fathers, the father is not the one who helps raise them. It is their uncles, aunts, and mothers. The family of the mother are the people who raise the child and thus are the family of that child. While in America the nuclear family is two spouses and their children, in the Mosuo culture there is no such thing as it can be vastly different based on who is in the family and how many siblings the mother has. This all shows how different marriages can define the structure of a family but marriage is not the only change that families go through.

How an individual handles divorce typically shows what kind of person they are but it also shows the structure of family. In America, the people involved are typically, the divorcees. The children are affected and many people many talk to them about it, but the decision and what happens are between the two. The conflicts are more public and aggressive. In India and the Mideast however, divorce is handled by not only the divorcees but also their parents/guardians. Especially for women, a man who is their elder speaks for them and they are seen as rude for speaking their mind. Unlike in America, there must be specific reasons for a woman to even mention divorce and it is more difficult to get it. All conflict happens behind closed doors and they try to come to an agreement so it seems as though there is not as much aggression. It is also important to those affected by the divorce what others will think of them as the society is community-oriented and the beliefs of others are weighted heavily. Finally, we can look at divorces in cultures like the Mosuo. They do not have divorce. Rather they can simply split apart with nary a word and move on with their lives. All these different styles of separation show form and structure of families. Americans see the effect on family but they can make decisions based solely on their own choices without being judged. In India, the views of family strongly effect the person trying to get a divorce or divorced people in general. The Mosuo do not have divorce and thus they are unaffected by any sort of familial issue that could arise from it. These are all things that show the drastic differences between cultures.

I have focused heavily on how arranged marriage, walking marriage, and divorce all show form and structure of families in different cultures. How society and culture shapes ideals affects what family is in that culture. Being within that culture means conforming to these standards or society itself can see you as an outlier.