EDITORIAL

A NEED FOR MARRIAGE COUNSELLING

Marriage is a social system through which a man and woman come closer to each other and start living together to fulfil certain social and personal needs. Marriage is one of the most important events of life affecting physical status as well as psyche of an individual. It not only serves to satisfy the fundamental biological need of sexual gratification of the individual through a socially acceptable way but it also helps the individual to achieve a higher level of personality maturation. The need of being loved and to provide love, concern and care for another individual are the important aspects of personality that are developed easily after marriage. Both the spouses act as a complement to each other's dependency needs. In terms of protection hypothesis marriage acts as a sort of insurance against psychological breakdown. A preponderance of psychological disturbance has been found among the single, widowed, divorced and separated individuals.

Intact and harmonious marital relations are required not only for the psychic health of the individual, but also for the progeny and thus for the society in a broader perspective. There are numerous studies showing a higher frequency of delinquent children coming from broken homes (as a sequel of separation), divorce or death.

Unsatisfying and stressful marital relations lead to increased emotional disturbances and thereby decreased concentration leading to lowered efficiency at work. Contracting road accidents or scolding subordinates after a hot exchange of words with the wife at breakfast is a common occurrence.

Most important cause for marital maladjustment is the lack of adequate training and preparation for marriage. When there is conflict between the role performance and role expectation of spouses, it leads to maladjustment and ultimately marital breakdown in the absence of availability of proper guidance for readjusting the attitudes of erring spouse. Various common grounds for divorce amongst western couples are adultery, desertion, cruelty, imprisonment, drunkenness, impotence, insanity and a host of other factors, such as snoring. Britt (1960) finds some experimental confirmation for the belief that patriarchal attitudes in husbands tend to be associated with marital maladjustment. Wife is expected to play three different roles—that of wife, mother, companion, and partner. She may have difficulty in choosing between roles, or she may long to perform a different role than she is expected by her husband. This poses a conflict and tension for her leading to difficulty in adjustment. Many times these tensions can be reduced by helping the couples to achieve a better understanding among each other through psycho-therapy in the presence of a trained psychiatrist or marriage therapist.

Until some time ago in India, joint family set up was a very common experience and arranged marriage was a fashion. Spouses were thus inhibited in giving a loud vent to their discontents. If they had any maladjustment problems other senior members of the family usually intervened and the differences were cleared. With increasing industrialisation and expanding city population, nuclear families and self arranged marriages are on the increase. The role of society in maintaining the marriage is diminishing. With the increasing participation of females in outward social activities, increased number of
working females, and increased awareness of individual rights among females, the definition or realization of masculine and feminine roles in the marriage are changing. This has increased the chances of marital conflicts, tensions and disharmony. In recent years the problem has almost become acute, since dowry deaths and/or increased rate of divorce and separation are of daily occurrence. The role of psychiatrist or marriage therapist is vital in helping the spouses on warpath to readjust and achieve a better understanding. Marital counselling or therapy units are therefore, a need of the hour.

—B. B. Sethi.

REFERENCE

Barret, S. H. (1960). Social Psychology of modern life. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 409.