

Do the Preconditions of Market Exchange of the Sexual Economics Theory Apply in the Indian Marriage Market?

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyse whether the preconditions of market exchange of the paper "Sexual Economics: Sex as Female Resource for Social Exchange in Heterosexual Interactions" apply in the Indian context. A highly controversial paper, it studied the dynamics for heterosexual relations through the economic tools of supply and demand. We first went through the history of mate-selection in India, followed by an analysis of the demands of men and women from their current/prospective partners. The results of our study show that three out of four preconditions of market exchange required for the theory don't apply in the Indian context. We have also included the general criticisms of the paper.

Keywords: Sexual economics, Indian marriage market, Patriarchy, Gender inequality

Introduction to Sexual Economics Theory (SET)

The research paper "Sexual Economics: Sex as Female Resource for Social Exchange in Heterosexual Interactions" (Baumeister & Vohs, 2004) tries to explain the market for heterosexual relations (before marriage) through the economic lens of supply and demand. It proposes that women are the primary suppliers and men the demanders of sex. Men purchase sex from women through either monetary or non-monetary resources and women regulate the market for sex through various measures aimed at keeping the price of sex high. Women can control the supply of sex because they have a lower sex-drive than men (according to another paper (Baumeister & Vohs, 2001) written by the authors in 2001). Hence, according to the "principle of least interest" in Social Exchange Theory (Cook, 2015, 341 – 342), women have a higher power to dictate the supply of the commodity, i.e., sex.

According to the paper:

"Cultural systems will tend to endow female sexuality with value, whereas male sexuality is treated by society as relatively worthless. As a result, sexual intercourse by itself is not an equal exchange, but rather

an instance of the man getting something of value from the woman. To make the exchange equal, the man must give her something else in return and his own sexual participation does not have enough value to constitute this.”

The man can offer a variety of things to the woman in exchange for sex: material gifts, financial security, respect, the promise of a relationship, social clout etc.

Table 1. Factors Influencing Sexual Exchange

Factors	Effect on Price of Sex
Preconditions of market exchange	
In general, men want sex more than women want sex	
In general, men have resources women want	
Women are free to make sexual decisions	
The man and woman live in a culture in which information about others' sexual activities is known or hinted about, so that each person knows the current market price	
Individual factors	
Woman's age is past young adulthood	Lowers
Woman is unattractive	Lowers
Other women also want the man (competition)	Lowers
Woman has high sex drive	Lowers
Man has much higher status than the woman	Lowers
Woman lacks alternate access to resources	Lowers
Woman has had many prior sexual partners or has the reputation of having had many sex partners	Lowers
Woman is attractive	Raises
Woman is in young adulthood	Raises
Woman wears sexy clothing	Raises
Other men also want the woman (competition)	Raises
Man has high sex drive	Raises
Woman has had few or no prior sexual partners, or has the reputation of having few or no sex partners	Raises
Market factors	
Larger pool of women than men (supply exceeds demand)	Lowers
Permissive sexual norms (low market price)	Lowers
Men have easy access to pornography or prostitutes (low-cost substitutes)	Lowers
Larger pool of men than women (demand exceeds supply)	Raises
Female collusion to restrict men's sexual access to women (monopolistic manipulation)	Raises
Men have few opportunities for sexual satisfaction	Raises

(The above picture is of Table 1 from the paper. It lists the preconditions for their theory to work and the factors that they have assumed would impact the price of sex.)

Criticisms of the Sexual Economics Theory

Laurie A. Rudman and Janell C. Fetterolf in "Why Sexual Economics Theory Is Patriarchal: Reply to Vohs and Baumeister's (2015) Comment on Rudman and Fetterolf (2014)" summarize how their research undermines the three central tenets of the theory 1) that women (not men) are responsible for suppressing female sexuality, 2) women are more invested in sexual exchange than men are, and 3) that men like sex more than women, which affords women a bargaining chip.

Both evolutionary psychology and feminist theory predict that men are largely responsible for suppressing women's sexuality. Baumeister and Vohs reason that women have more to gain than men from restricting female sexuality because "it is always within the best interests of an oligopoly of sellers to restrict the supply of its product" whereas "men will tend to support initiatives that lower the price of sex".

In other words, women are more invested in sexual exchange than men are. But Rudman & Fetterolf found that, compared with women, men were more likely to automatically associate sex with money, and endorse hostile sexism. Vohs and Baumeister ignore how this data undercuts SET's core thesis that women are responsible for female sexual suppression because they are invested in sexual exchange. Instead, men are more likely to sexually restrain women and support sexual exchange because men are more invested in patriarchy. SET claims that men mainly want sex from women and fails to take into account that men also desire money, or even affection, attention, time, commitment, and children.

The third basis for sexual exchange is that men like sex more than women but it was noted that gender differences are uncertain when response biases are ignored. Using an attitude Implicit Association Test with photos of sexually engaged couples, Rudman and Fetterolf found similarly robust liking for sex on the part of both genders, adding to a literature that Vohs and Baumeister ignore. They also ignore patriarchal reasons why men report liking sex more than women. The SET can also be seen as objectifying and dehumanizing to women by regarding the female body as a commodity for male satisfaction and entitlement. Furthermore, it encourages and reinforces "slut shaming" and other restrictions towards sexual freedom by dismissing the idea of sexual pleasure for women. (Rudman & Fetterolf, 2015)

Marriages in India

History

In India, marriage has been considered synonymous with arranged marriage owing to social structures, and has been a part of Indian culture since the fourth century. Arranged marriages were seen as a way to maintain caste purity and ensure control and consolidation of family property. It was typically arranged between families with similar social status and wealth. Since the union was majorly determined by parents and family elders, the bride and groom often didn't have a choice in who they were marrying, especially the woman. Most families were patriarchal and patrilineal, with the oldest male member as the dominant head of the family. Several social evils like child marriage, sati and female infanticide were practiced. Girls were married off at ages as young as 8 to husbands who were either children themselves or 30-40 years older. The girl is seen as 'paraya dhan' (someone else's property). It was argued that the nature of a Hindu family rests with the integration of a woman with her husband and his family and it was only possible for her to look at them as her own if she grew up with them. Therefore, her whole socialization process remains constructed as one long preparation to be a good wife and a good mother. Throughout her life, a woman is viewed as property that is transferable - father to husband to son. (Dutta, 2016).

While the extent to which it was practiced is unclear, sati was a horrific and barbaric tradition in which a widow sacrifices herself by sitting atop her deceased husband's funeral pyre. It was often enforced by family members who ostracized women who managed to escape or failed to sacrifice themselves.

An important and prevalent customary practice was that of dowry. Still widely practiced despite prohibitive laws, dowry was a 'gift' given by the bride's family to her in-laws. Hindus believed that kanyadaan, 'the gift of a virgin' was a pious duty. To complete the ritual of kanyadaan, according to religious requirements, made it obligatory on the parents to give something more besides the bride. Marriage thus implied the gift of a daughter decked and bejewelled with expensive ornaments and other presents which were intended for her comfort and better status in her in-laws' house. Everything depended, however, on the financial capabilities and position of her parents.

The "upper caste" women needed to bear legitimate heirs to "high caste" men, especially the rich and propertied. Their sexuality needed to be tightly controlled to sustain the class system. On the other hand, a "lower caste" woman's sexuality is accessible to be appropriated and for the use of "upper caste" men. (Chaudhuri, n.d)

In Islam too, marriages were arranged by the parents of the bride and groom. But unlike most Hindu marriages, they were endogamous and polygamous. At the time of marriage, a gift is given by the groom to his bride as a mark of respect and is called mahr. This will always remain her personal asset. Other variations in marriage practices can be seen among various ethnic and tribal groups in the central, mountainous north and eastern regions. The Khasi and Garo tribes in Meghalaya are examples of societies that follow the matrilineal law of inheritance. (India Today, 2016).

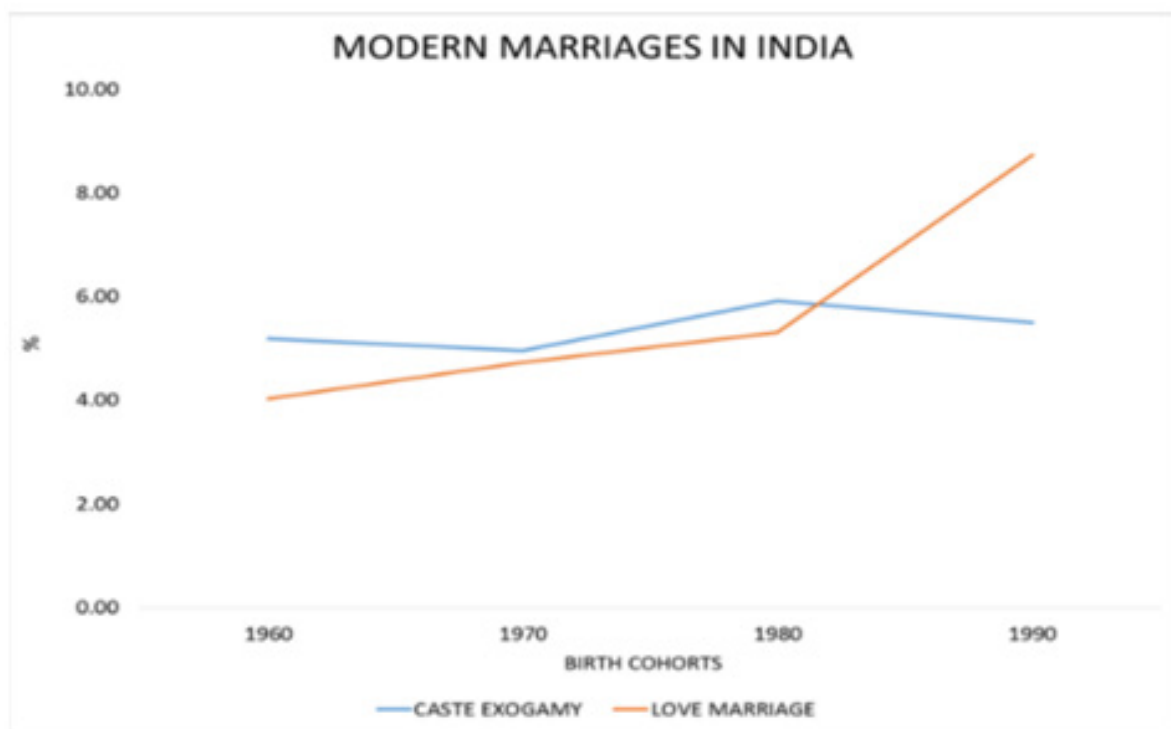
Present Scenario

In the past several decades, the marriage system in India has experienced a number of changes.

The degree of control exercised by the families appears to be waning over time, and there has been a rise in the incidence of elopements and “love marriages”. The trend for love marriage is increasing across all birth cohorts, it has almost doubled from 4.5% in the 1960 cohort to 8.9% in the 1990 cohort (Figure 1). The odds of love marriage are higher for Scheduled Tribes, North-East and East regions. (Sarkar & Rizzi, n.d.)

Nevertheless, arranged and intra-community marriage remains the dominant nuptial form across the country, from the most remote rural villages to the bustling urban municipalities. However, there is an emerging acceptance of inter-community marriage in contemporary India that challenges traditional conceptions of geographic and cultural boundaries. This acceptance remains limited to the urban cosmopolitan population where socio-economic and cultural divisions are more likely to be fluid.

But, with inter-caste marriages constituting a mere 5.8% of all marriages, a number that has only marginally changed in the past 40 years, and with communalist sentiments hindering those who wish to marry out of caste, creed or religion, the unorthodox practice of inter-community marriage, arranged or love, continues to be viewed with skepticism or as a sin (Chager et al., 2010).



Change in the the ratio of caste exogamy and love marriage across the 1960-1990's birth cohorts

The Indian Marriage Market

What do Indian men and women demand from their partners?

If marriage is to be considered as a market, then it makes sense to consider the demands of the consumers, i.e., people seeking a husband/wife. While preferences on the basis of, let's say, personality, education, "attractiveness", etc., do matter, other factors such as caste and religion also play a central role.

The paper "Who Marries Whom? Changing Mate Selection Preferences in Urban India and Emerging Implications on Social Institutions," (Prakash & Singh, 2014) discusses the changes in preferences of men and women over generations regarding their partners.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics for preferences of younger and older generation population, by sex

Preferred characteristic of mate	Men						Women					
	Younger generation			Older generation			Younger generation			Older generation		
	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank	Mean	SD	Rank
Physical attractiveness ^b	2.57	0.76	2	2.53	0.83	4	2.56	0.70	5	1.78	1.08	9
Good financial prospect ^{a,b}	2.54	0.74	3	1.00	0.85	11	2.75	0.59	1	2.50	0.85	3
Pleasing nature ^{a,b}	2.18	0.95	9	1.50	1.02	10	2.35	0.73	8	1.97	1.03	6
Same liking ^{a,b}	1.77	1.00	11	1.00	1.07	12	2.32	0.82	9	1.85	1.01	8
Socially popular ^b	1.09	1.11	15	0.71	1.20	14	2.17	0.87	11	1.46	1.10	10
Similar educational background ^b	1.85	1.05	10	1.57	1.16	9	1.80	1.09	14	0.85	0.78	15
Similar job/earnings	0.76	0.98	16	0.36	0.74	16	1.08	1.03	16	0.76	0.97	16
Economically even and stable ^{a,b}	1.69	0.95	12	0.92	1.04	13	2.00	0.78	12	1.32	0.91	12
Ambitious ^{a,b}	1.38	1.11	14	0.38	0.77	15	1.93	0.83	13	1.28	0.91	13
Mutual attraction and love ^b	2.35	0.75	6	2.08	0.95	7	2.26	0.86	10	1.42	0.97	11
Domestic skills ^{a,b}	1.69	0.99	13	2.94	0.25	3	1.50	1.05	15	0.90	0.97	14
Good health ^b	2.39	0.70	4	2.44	0.81	6	2.39	0.80	7	1.92	1.00	7
Intelligent ^{a,b}	2.29	0.83	7	1.67	1.29	8	2.70	0.59	3	2.16	0.92	5
Faithful/dependable character ^b	2.67	0.62	1	2.47	0.64	5	2.77	0.53	2	2.41	0.90	4
Same caste ^a	2.27	1.09	8	3.00	0.00	1	2.49	0.85	6	2.73	0.76	2
Same religion ^a	2.37	0.98	5	3.00	0.00	1	2.62	0.73	4	2.81	0.63	1

^a Differences in preferred characteristic of mate among men of younger and older generation are significant at 5 % level of significance

^b Differences in preferred characteristic of mate among women of younger and older generation are significant at 5 % level of significance

(Table 2 from the paper; the highlighted characteristics are the most preferred ones. The ones in pink are the top ranked characteristics for the older generation and the ones in blue are the top ranked characteristics for the younger generation.)

They write:

“Findings unfold significant differences in various preferred attributes about their partner across the two generations... Compared with men from the older generation, younger generation men preferred to have wives with good financial prospects, a pleasing nature, economic stability, and who are ambitious and intelligent. In contrast, older men preferred wives who came from the same caste and religion and who had domestic skills. Similar to men, women belonging to the younger generation differed from women in the older generation in their greater preferences for their husbands with good financial prospects, faithful/dependable character, intelligence, and physical character. However, there were no significant differences between younger and older women in the importance they attached to religion and caste.” Hence both men and women from the younger generation preferred partners with “good financial prospects”.

Who are the primary negotiators?

A 1993-94 survey confirmed over 97% of married rural women aged 15-39 years did not have a say in the choice of their husbands. Additionally, a 2018 survey (Sirur, 2018) proved that increasing the husband's mother's education would boost inter-caste marriages in the country, affirming the belief that parents are a major determinant of marriages in India.

Even today a clear majority of Indians first meet their spouses on their wedding day. In India women have a very limited role in choosing their husbands and in decisions regarding marriage practices and customs to be followed. However, women belonging to Scheduled Tribes and the Christian community seem to be better off than other women – with respect to choosing their husbands themselves and knowing their spouses for a considerable period prior to the wedding. The education status of a female also plays a key role in how much autonomy she has while deciding who to marry. The involvement of a parent's decision on the selection of spouse is preferred due to his/her knowledge and wisdom in selecting a good spouse which apparently ensures greater stability and security than love marriage. A study noted that parent-arranged marriages have been substituted by semi-arranged other than self-arranged marriages.

Hence, although women belonging to some special groups – STs, Christians, those who have received higher education – do have a say in who they wed, the general consensus, however, deem the parents to be the primary negotiators (Soy & Sahoo, 2016).

Preconditions of Market Exchange

Precondition 1: Men want sex more than women want sex

The Sexual Economic theory as presented by Baumeister and Vohs assumes that men have a higher sex drive than women.

A number of studies, including one conducted by Baumeister, show that men's sex drives are not only stronger than women's, but much more straightforward. The sources of women's libidos, by contrast, are much harder to pin down. A number of reasons like difference in psychological states, response to drugs and openness to new experiences between the two genders have been stated as reasons for this asymmetry (Sine, 2013). In his review, Baumeister found studies showing many ways in which women's sexual attitudes, practices, and desires were more influenced by their socio-cultural environment as compared to men. Lauman believed that men have every incentive to have sex to pass along their genetic material. By contrast, women may have to choose their partners carefully, because they are the ones who can get pregnant and wind up taking care of the baby.

On the other hand, alternative theories proved how previous studies have been fundamentally flawed – biased under patriarchal conditions. An experiment conducted by Dr. Terri Fisher in 2013, that asked undergraduate students to complete a survey on their masturbation practices, porn use, and number of sexual partners, proved that surveyees tend to misrepresent their sexual behavior to match the cultural expectations of men and women (Novotony, 2013). According to the survey, on average women had a higher sex drive when they answered questions anonymously as compared to when they were named. Men, however, had relatively similar results.

Thus, there has been no definitive conclusion on which gender has a higher sex drive. While some believe it is men, others hold the opinion that the drive differs for person to person and gender is not a determinant.

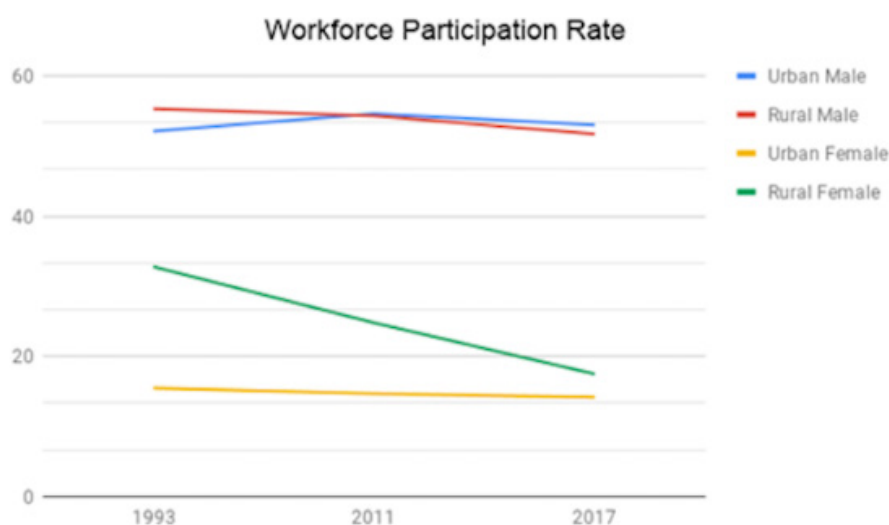
Precondition 2: In general, men have resources women want

Patriarchy and patrilineality have assured that men, right from birth, have access to property and family wealth, while women solely depend on their fathers, husbands and sons for resources and survival. Education as a resource too, was made somewhat accessible to women only after the social reforms of the 19th century, after much opposition. Even after educational reforms, campaigns and changes in laws regarding succession and land ownership rights of women, etc. women are still heavily economically dependent on men.

The enrolment of girls in higher education increased from 39% to 46% from 2007 to 2014, but female participation in India's labour force declined to a low of 27% in 2014 from 34% in 1999, according to a 2015 study by the International Monetary Fund. When the gender parity index – the ratio of female students to male students – in higher education rises, it should lead to higher female labour force participation rates and the resulting human-capital accumulation should boost potential output. However, the percentage of women in India's workforce is declining (Das et al., 2015).

The decreasing participation of women in the workforce can be attributed to socioeconomic and structural reasons. Even if they are educated, many women are not allowed to work by their families. It is implicit among most families that a woman's primary role is to take care of the house and her family and any income generating work is secondary to this role. Women who do join the workforce often need to take extended leaves for maternity and child care, and even the healthcare of other family members (The Hindu, 2019).

Fewer Women Are Participating In The Paid Workforce



Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2017-18

Women who choose to and are able to work after marriage are often overburdened with responsibilities inside and outside the house. In addition, they are treated unfairly at work, not offered equal pay and promotional opportunities as their male counterparts and often face sexual harassment. With wage discrimination, pressure from families to focus on housework, lack of institutional support for child care and constraints on mobility, the incentives to work and returns on education for women are extremely less. The gender pay gap in India, a measure of the gap in the overall earnings of men and women is thus very wide. According to the latest World Economic Forum's (WEF) Global Gender Gap Report 2018, India ranked 108th out of 149 countries on the gender gap index. According to the Monster Salary Index (MSI) published in March 2019 (Monster India, 2019), women in the country earn 19% less than men. The survey revealed that the median gross hourly salary for men in India in 2018 was ₹242.49, while ₹196.3 for women, meaning men earned ₹46.19 more than women.

According to the survey, the gender pay gap spans across key industries. IT services showed a sharp pay gap of 26% in favour of men, while in the manufacturing sector, men earn 24% more than women (The Hindu, 2019). A study conducted by Oxfam placed the country's gender pay gap at 34% (Oxfam India, 2020).

Land, in particular, is an important resource because it generally provides food, shelter and income security. Women comprise over 42 percent of the agricultural labour force in the country and yet they own less than 2 percent of its farmland. According to the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) which was a nationwide panel survey conducted in two waves, 2004-05 and 2011-12, irrespective of laws ensuring women's rights to agricultural land, most such land is owned by either men or undivided families. IHDS found that 83 percent of agricultural land is inherited by male members while women inherit less than 2 percent. The numerous barriers in land ownership that Indian women face include lack of legal awareness about their inheritance rights, reluctance to claim property from hostile family members which often leads to conflict and isolation and the biased implementation of laws further fuelling gendered social discrimination. One of the primary reasons for this is that the intervention of women's land rights in India is carried out through various old personal laws and customary practices. These have already been established, and often take precedence instead of legal discourse (Mehta, 2018).

It is largely evident that because of low levels of economic independence among women in India, they depend on men for resources.

Precondition 3: Women are free to make sexual decisions

Relationships in India have almost always been equated to heterosexual, monogamous marriages, arranged by parents and family members. Relationships and sex outside of marriage, even in cultures that accept polygamy do not fit into the country's social norms and are generally frowned upon. Data suggests that pre-marital sex is still a taboo across the country. Only about 11% of single men and 2% of single women in the 15-24 age-group reported having had sex. (However, figures are based entirely on self-reported data, and it is difficult to gauge the extent of false reporting.) (Kundu & Bhattacharya, 2018)

Intrinsically tied to the concept of arranged marriages is the deeply entrenched system of caste and patriarchal-patrilineal property coupled with reproduction and fertility. Sex was also seen as a duty of a woman for her husband's pleasure that she had to fulfil and couldn't refuse. Marital rape is still not recognized and criminalized in the country. About one in six women (16.9%) believe a wife is not justified in refusing sex with her husband even if he has a sexually transmitted disease, or if he has multiple sex partners, or if she is tired or not in the mood. Less than one in six men (14.7%) shared the same view, data showed. Further questions to men on women's sexual rights in a marriage revealed nearly one in 10 (9.2%) believe that men can force themselves on their wives while 8.9% felt that a wife's refusal justified extra-marital sex (Saldanha, 2018).

Prior to marriage, a man's sexual experiences, decisions and partners are not questioned, they are in fact, bragged about and don't affect his rights to property since it could only be passed on to a 'legitimate heir'. On the other hand, conversations about an Indian woman's sexuality, if they exist, judge and label her based on her sexual experiences and could even cost her a matrimonial prospect. Ancient Hindu rituals like 'kanyadaan' applaud women's virginity as a sign of purity, integrity and piety. Despite increasing education levels, men still want virgin brides. A fundamental principle of Hindu social organization is to create a closed structure to preserve land, women and rituals within it. The three are structurally linked and it is not possible to maintain all three without the stringent control of female sexuality, or rather upper-caste female sexuality. Brahminic patriarchy ensures purity in the bloodline of upper-caste men by controlling the sexuality of upper caste women. It isn't concerned about the sexuality of lower caste women, who get termed as 'loose', 'vulgar' and 'sexually promiscuous' while their sexuality is made accessible to upper caste men. On the other hand, Brahminic patriarchy, consistent with scriptures such as Manu smriti strictly 'guards' upper caste women from lower caste men to sustain the patriarchal caste system. Women's co-operation in the system was secured by ideology, economic dependency on the male head of the family, class privileges and the respect given to conforming and dependent women of the upper classes, and finally the use of force when required (Chakravarti, 1993).

Female sexuality was thus not seen as distinct from motherhood within a tightly controlled structure of reproduction which ensured caste purity (by mating only with prescribed partners) and patrilineal succession (by restricting mating only with one man). Women in India did not have reproductive rights either, since motherhood was glorified and infertility seen as a curse; contraceptives and the knowledge of their usage along with abortion rights were not accessible in the past. Although women's movements in the country and women's struggle for control over their fertility has led to a separation between sexuality and reproduction, it is not widespread. According to the National Health Survey 2015-16, the need for contraception stands at 13% and the use of modern contraceptive methods stands at under 50%. 1 in 7 married women report that they no longer want to get pregnant but are not currently using any form of contraception. When it comes to agency, a study in rural areas of Rajasthan finds that for young women, the taboo around contraception and sex for non-reproductive reasons is largely insurmountable; therefore, (unsafe) abortion is an easier avenue to exercise one's agency than seeking contraception (Privacy International, n.d.).

Among married 15-19 year-olds, only 40% reported that they had sole say over their own health care or made such decisions jointly with their husband; for the remaining 60% of married young women, their health care is not in their control (Guttmacher Institute, 2014).

Owing to India's diverse cultures, the situation also differs across regions. Region is a strong predictor of autonomy. A woman with the exact same household wealth, caste and religion will likely have more autonomy if she lives in the South. Southern and North Eastern women are more likely to be educated, marry later, choose their own husbands, interact more closely with their husbands, bear fewer children, own more assets in their communities and work alongside men. In North and North-West India, women are much more constrained (Evans, 2020).

Muslim women face oppression on two fronts. Where one, they face challenges from Muslim men and patriarchal structures. On the other side, sexual practices, the attitudes of dominant communities and their perception of Muslim women dictate their sexual decisions. While the limits are defined by the Muslim patriarchal systems, they are reinforced by marginalisation and the lack of social mobility facilitated by majoritarian governments which use social and legal instruments of control over their sexual autonomy (Khan, 2020).

While media and women's movements have started conversations around women's sexual autonomy, it is still tightly controlled by caste, class and patriarchal structures, whether Brahminic or Muslim, and considered indistinct from reproduction. More recent trends and attitudes haven't been analysed, however there is some change. For instance, Outlook magazine in 2003 revealed that more than one out of two women surveyed across 10 cities felt that sex was as important to them in a relationship as it was to a man. And, nearly seven out of every 10 women believed that they were more comfortable with their sexuality now than they were even five years previously (LiveMint, 2018).

Another study (Avasthi et al., 2008) interestingly showed that “many of the participants displayed positive dispositions toward greater sexual assertiveness and a wide range of sexual activities. These findings, contrary to the traditional prototype of the Indian woman, may be explained partly in the light of younger age and urban preponderance in the sample; however, the possibility of an evolving social change in female sexuality is pertinent.”

But largely, conjugal and familial systems construct women in such a way that they hardly live as independent beings and they are seen only in relation to men, depriving them of their selfhood and agency.

Precondition 4: The man and woman live in a culture in which information about others’ sexual activities is known or hinted about, so that each person knows the current market price

Indian society, as discussed above, is conservative. Hence, it is highly unlikely that information about others’ sexual activity would be known by people.

In a research paper on “Changes in HIV knowledge, and socio-cultural and sexual attitudes in South India from 2003–2009,” the researchers found that there was an increase in the belief that “access to condoms promotes promiscuity” and that “sex education promotes sexual activity and promiscuity” by both men and women. In fact, young women increasingly believed that “it is wrong to talk about sex” and that it is “wrong to talk about AIDS in a respectable family”.

In another study done in Metropolitan Delhi, it was again found that: “attitudes to sex and variant sexual practices remain broadly traditional and conservative and there remains a remarkable gender difference in the attitudes”.

Hence it is fair to say that in the Indian context, it would be wrong to assume that people are aware about the sexual activities of others around them.

Conclusion

The key takeaway from this paper is that three out of the four market exchange preconditions of the paper on sexual economics by Baumeister and Vohs don't apply in the Indian context. Hence it is not rational to use this theory to explain the Indian marriage market. This is not to say that the theory should be applied to explain the marriage markets of other countries. We have included a list of criticisms of the theory that was authored by an American professor (Laurie Rudman). Analysis of the history of the Indian marriage market points to the existence of practices like child-marriage which imply that girls were never given much authority over their bodies. Practices like Sati don't align well with the supply-demand approach to marriage. Hence, in India the existence of patriarchy had an overbearing effect on how marriages were arranged.

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