

## Living together; a Parasite in Sri Lankan Culture

Living together means cohabitation of a couple with or without any intention of getting married and it is now being showcased in social media by many westernized countries and recommended by the EU as well. It has now become a growing trend in the urbanized areas of Sri Lanka as well. This is impacting adversely on our culture. In Sri Lanka utmost value is bestowed on a marriage between a female and a male for which unique customs and traditions are observed ceremonially to enable them to be socially acceptable within a social institution where a secure family life is maintained. The present trend of living together on the contrary erodes such cultural norms and tarnishes the traditional institution of marriage. Hence in the real sense of the word, living together is a parasite in the social fabric of the country. Here, I wish to discuss the negative effects of it and how it adversely affects, our community.

Sociological research conducted in 1990's has proved that there are many harmful effects on men and women both who are cohabiters getting married later in life rather than that of non-cohabiters. Higher risk of divorce, less satisfaction in sex, sexual abuse of children, prostitution, issues related to same sex affairs and strained relations in marriage are some of them. All these may result in many problems which harm the harmony of family life.

In Sri Lankan culture marriage is deemed to be a second birth for a man or a woman who tie the knot. Almost all men in our society wish to be married to a bride who has not had premarital sex.

Such women are highly respected in the society and it is considered as a social norm for a woman to start a good marriage life. No one in our society is willing to marry a woman who has had sexual relationships with other men. So in case of a woman who has stopped living together, it would be very difficult task to find a partner for marriage and she may have to remain single all her life. In the context of Sri Lankan society, such a woman loses her personal worth in society and puts her self-respect in a grave position. At the same time, she runs a high risk of falling a victim to sexual abuse. Men may look at her as a toy of lust which in turn will lead to many social problems. Thereby, for the very concept of living together to be accepted in our society, an overall reversal of attitude and cultural norms would have to take place which is quite unlikely to happen very soon.

If a cohabiting couple bringing up a child ceases their living together, the child will become either fatherless or motherless or both. He or she becomes vulnerable to abuse of various types. Many such children are socially neglected and they tend to develop an inferiority complex and are prone to suffer from personality problems. Also if cohabiters do not expect to have children, they may sometimes have to resort to abortion which is tantamount to a murder. Hence it is clear that this creates many problems for children too.

As discussed earlier, in our culture marriage is given high regard. It is the base of a successful society. If the base is just a rickety temporary arrangement, will the