

A bond



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A Bond When we speak of marriage, more often than not it bears a romanticized image, being that an ideal man would become a knight in a shining armor saving a damsel in distress from a life of helplessness. That is how the picture is portrayed even in fairytales, and unfortunately it has clung unto our consciousness, rooted in childhood, that we should see marriage as some sort of an escape from drudgery to sweep us unto blissful companionship.

However, as I had previously implied, this is never really the case with real matrimony. And more often than not, it is not exactly because of love do people go off and get hitched. On the contrary, love is perhaps the last reason they would even consider, because in contemporary terms, love is not anymore considered a practical reason except as an indulgence.

Apart from love, women marry for security, what Emma Goldman writes as an " economic arrangement, an insurance pact." This emphasizes on her dependence on a system for survival. She must trade for something in order to ensure that she remains in the society she has to invest in something, which is more often through a certain amount of coercion. In this light, she is likened to the laborer who must toil for a necessity.

It is further explained that " if, however, a woman's premium is a husband, she pays for it with her name, her privacy, her self-respect, her very life, " until death doth part" moreover, the marriage insurance condemns her to life-long dependency, to parasitism, to complete uselessness, individual as well as social" (Goldman), woman suffers in the estranged bond which is like estranged labor reverses this relationship so that the laborer, because he has a conscious being, make his life-activity, his existence , a means for existence. In this exchange the woman loses more than what she gains, thus

defeating the contemporary proverb that " Marriage completes a person, because instead of having finally an access through her other half, she loses her half in order to supplement her husband's completeness.

As Goldman writes,

" Can there be anything more humiliating, more degrading than a lifelong proximity between two strangers No need for the woman to know anything of the man, save his income. As to the knowledge of the woman-what is there to know except that she has a pleasing appearance We have not yet outgrown the theologic myth that woman has no soul, that she is a mere appendix to man, made out of his rib just for the convenience of the gentleman who was so strong that he was afraid of his own shadow the less soul a woman has the greater her asset as a wife, the more readily will she absorb herself in her husband."

Woman becomes a mere commodity, the most miserable commodity at that for her misery stands inversely to her relationship with her husband. Like furniture, she is treated as if she exists in a man's home because he has allowed it. Like furniture, she functions to make life easier for man, never to question his decisions or his actions. " Women and Children are to be seen, not heard" is another proverb that condemns the woman a soulless existence.

Because of this embedded ideology the woman becomes a man-made machine which is expected to perform programmed tasks that she has to follow

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without question. However, " strange to say, she is allowed to know much less about her function as wife and mother than the ordinary artisan of his

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trade. It is indecent and filthy for a respectable girl to know anything of the marital relation. The prospective wife and mother is kept in complete ignorance of her only asset in the competitive field-sex. Thus she enters into life-long relations with a man only to find herself shocked, repelled, outraged beyond measure by the most natural and healthy instinct, sex" (Goldman). And since it is said to be indecent for woman to learn about the fate that awaits her, her inevitable place in the society as a procreator, her labor as a wife and mother becomes something alien and hostile to her. It then becomes not voluntary, but constrained, forced labor. For the woman, it does not directly meet a need, but rather it is a means to meet some need alien to it. This estrangement becomes obvious especially when she sees that as soon as there is no physical or other coercion, her function as a child-bearer is avoided like it is of bad taste. " This alienated labor, this labor, in which human beings alienate themselves from themselves, is a labor of self-denial and self-torture" (Marx). In the end, this alienation of woman to her prescribed function becomes full-blown in that she does her function as a wife and mother not for herself but for someone else, for her husband, and in doing so, she does not belong to herself. Instead she belongs to her husband, the commodity around to meet his demands in bed and in the kitchen, most particularly.

With that opinion being posed by society, Goldman questions:

" Can there be anything more outrageous than the idea that a healthy, grown woman, full of life and passion, must deny nature's demand, must subdue her most intense craving, undermine her health and break her spirit, must stunt her vision, abstain from the depth and glory of sex experience until a " good" man comes along to take her unto himself as a wife That is

precisely what 'marriage' means."

Suppression, then, is what marriage demands of woman, the suppression of her instinctive nature which if only expressed freely would have promoted self-awareness more and the loss of taboo on woman's function in society.

However, this does not seem to be the case, because likened to the estranged, alienated labor of Marx, woman is goaded by society through the prescribed darkness of decency to treat her relationship to her function as a woman as something alien and external to her.

As Goldman further states that the moral lesson instilled in the girl is not whether the man has aroused her love, but rather is it, "How much" the important and only God of practical American life: Can the man make a living Can he support a wife That is the only thing that justifies marriage it is clear that marriage becomes a product bought with the woman's being. Yet no matter how much man can satiate her with a hefty family income, it would only be treated as nothing more than a better salary for the wife and would not recover her human dignity.

True that the woman is not expected to earn a living outside the home, true that she is never burdened with such responsibility. However, it is worse still for the woman, because she now has to depend on her husband. And though she may not be bound in a workplace, "she learns soon enough that the home, though not so large a prison as the factory, has more solid doors and bars. It has a keeper

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so faithful that naught can escape him. The most tragic part, however, is that the home no longer frees her from wage slavery; it only increases her task marriage guarantees woman a home only by the grace of her husband.

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There she moves about in his home, year after year, until her aspect of life and human affairs becomes as flat, narrow, and drab as her surroundings... She could not go, if she wanted to; there is no place to go. Besides, a short period of married life, of complete surrender of all faculties, absolutely incapacitates the average woman for the outside world" (Goldman).

The woman thus becomes estranged from the outside world, since she becomes too tied down with the home that she keeps for her husband. And being that the woman is estranged, she would not feel free except in animal functions: eating, drinking and reproducing, and in her functions she " is no more than an animal" (Marx).

Unfortunately for us, marriage was built upon the whole pretension that to succumb to it, to become a wife, a woman would achieve a fulfillment of her being, but Goldman insists that the " institution of marriage makes a parasite of woman, an absolute dependent. It incapacitates her for life's struggle, annihilates her social consciousness, paralyzes her imagination, and then imposes its gracious protection, which is in reality a snare, a travesty on human character." In this double sense, the woman becomes a slave to marriage, and she is forced to accept it as a means for her survival. The woman is expected to make the marriage work, thus she is a laborer. And she can only keep herself as a wife-laborer only if she is to be liked to furniture, a commodity.