

International Workshop on *Post-Divorce Intimacies in Contemporary Asia*

LSE Care Theme



As part of the III Seminar Series, on March 25th 2021, Shalini Grover (Research Officer for Globalized Care Economies, LSE III) and Kaveri Qureshi (Lecturer, Social Policy, and University of Edinburgh) held the international workshop, *Post-Divorce Intimacies in Contemporary Asia*. This online event was work-in-progress towards an edited volume that brings 12 contributors together to address the theme of divorce and its aftermath in contemporary Asia from countries as diverse as Japan, Bangladesh, China and their Diasporas.

What compelled us to come together is the noticeable unremitting emphasis on strong family values across Asia (a region identified with kin-based societies that has resisted many facets of modernization vis-à-vis family changes) as well as rapid economic shifts on account of globalization. This makes the Asian region an illuminating case study for research on divorce,

intimacy, and questions around autonomy across age-groups. Our interest lies in probing what happens too traditional communities affected by divorce rates? How do women and men engage in new forms of dating and acceptance? How are counsellors adapting and shaping divorce conflict? What role do state laws play in the futurity of transnational family life? The leitmotif of '*post*' makes us question how spouses - including heterosexual and queer subjects, attempt to reconfigure their lives and remap other intimate relationships after divorce. From 'exploding grand-mothers' in Japan to queer men in small Indian towns, our ethnographic canvas is wide and yet disarming. We are aware that divisions between '*pre*' and '*post*' are not so clear-cut. Our key questions evaluate whether the lived experience of divorce can be a porthole, in the sense of a break with the past, a gateway between two worlds; or does it augment stark inequalities that are historically rooted?

The workshop has led us to critically engage with stereotypes that the Asian region is allied with; perhaps by showing that divorce is not a failure everywhere and crucially the scope of women's agency may shift along the life-course. The contributions by the authors allow us to critically re-think the life course and kinship frameworks against the backdrop of societal changes. At the same time, we saliently continue to stress how the power of social norms and socio-legal contexts prove challenging for women and men in Asia many who desire new pathways, identities, lifestyles, and freedom from the heterosexual institution of marriage.

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