



Ramaiah's Matrimonial Advice to His Daughter

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"Why not look for another match?" said Roopa sounding pleading.

"But why reject this one," Ramaiah seemed persuasive.

"No, he's not my man," said Roopa wishing that they spared her.

"Maybe, he's a simpleton, but do realize that he's young and has a long way to go," said Ramaiah, who seemed to have read his daughter's mind.

'If something isn't presentable at its ninety per cent, it wouldn't be much different either at cent per cent,' thought Roopa but to buy time she said,

"Give me some time to think."

However, after dinner, Ramaiah went up to a brooding Roopa in the verandah.

"If you're not interested in this match, so be it, but if I don't show you, life as I've seen it, I might be failing you," he said in all earnestness. "Matrimony is a vague hope nursed by the young minds. If marriages are made in heaven, I'm sure the gods would take the realities of life into account. In marriage, it's only after consummation that couples come to appreciate the true meaning of married life.

In spite of its infinite possibilities, life has its own limitations. As you would realize, mostly it is situational in its reach and breach. As one incident doesn't encompass life, ardency is not the only opportunity that marriage affords women. As you could guess, maternity is gift-wrapped by heaven for married women. Marriage is so much more than a private affair of the spouses. Know it's an extension of the family that ushers in a new family. Gratification in marriage is multifaceted as well as multi-sourced, like the success of a child can obliterate a lifetime of parental failures. Believe me; a couple could feel that their life was worth living just for the sake of that moment.

In the good old days, alliances were struck based on parental preferences. One might even say prejudices. Inclinations of the children didn't count; when married, they were too young to have a mind of their own anyway. I know times have changed, and I'm not holding a brief for the bygone era any more. However, I guess neither the new waves have washed any wisdom ashore.

The doors of opportunities in today's world have led to the advent of the salaried classes, with the attendant disparity in incomes. Social status seems to have shifted its focus onto the white collared. This insensibly upset the marriage order of yore, amongst the families of the communes. These days every maiden seems to feel that her wedlock is not secure unless engineered by an engineer! Parents too have come to equate their daughters' security with the sons-in-law's bank balances.

Every bachelor, forget about his own eligibility, has come to imagine that the bridal world is at his feet, to be kicked at his will. An Alanaskar Syndrome so to say! Well, in his unceasing search for someone better, even the pretty ones fail to get his nod till the law of diminishing returns catches him up by the scruff. Then with his eligibility on the wane and despondency on the rise, he lands up with a languid dame for all the sprightly in the race would have married by then. Of late, boys and girls are getting married past their prime, they being victims of the compulsions of their own making,' he paused for her reaction.

And finding her attentive, he continued,

"All said and done, nature seems to have loaded the dice against the maidens. One may like it or not, they are the perishable fruits of the marriage market to be disposed off well before they tend to rot. Even otherwise, it does often happen that a maiden would shun a Gog in time, only to opt for a Magog, past her prime, wasting her time in the meantime. In the final analysis, shorn of their shirts, all men are ordinary, save the extraordinary. Moreover, the odds against spotting the right man remain the same even if chance were to bring him to your doorstep as a prospective groom. Ignoring these realities can land one in the deserts of life, chasing the mirages of hope, of course until there is hope. If cultural prejudices produced child widows those days, social aberrations lead to the proliferation of spinsters these days. When maidens cross their mid-twenties, they find to their consternation that men whom nature meant for them by the logic of natural selection, were indeed bending towards the younger ones, tending them to fend for themselves as singles."

Ramaiah paused for Roopa's response and seeing receptivity in her demeanor, he resumed,

"Moreover, there is another angle to marriage; it is fallacious that parents wish idle comfort for their daughters, in their married life," he seemed to philosophize. "I would rather prefer that you lend your husband a helping hand to build the structure of your married home, brick by brick, hand in hand. In that lies a woman's true fulfilment in marriage. The boys have proved to be no wiser either, failing to appreciate the joys of sharing the toils as just married. It's a pity grooms should think in terms of furnishing their bachelor dwellings as if their brides are the paying guests."

Carried away by his own rhetoric, he reached out to her to help her enlarge her vision thus:

“Weddings have come to symbolize the vanity of the society. Designations of the grooms, conveyed in conversation and carried on the wedding cards, have become the new nomenclature of alliances. It’s as if business firms get free mileage when bachelors on their rolls get married! Who says there are no free lunches? The status of the fathers-in-law too is brought upfront as though to suggest that no protocol was breached. Alas, marriages are being turned into public *melas* from the family functions they used to be! I know you can appreciate that pomp and pageantry may adorn a wedding but it’s the warmth and love that sustain the marriage.”

Realizing that he reached the threshold, he paused for a while before he crossed it for her sake by averring,

“As for married love, know it’s the man who overwhelms his mate,” he forced himself to tell her, “and nature in its wisdom induces woman to get drawn to the man who deflowers her. You couldn’t have failed to notice intelligent women adoring their mediocre husbands. You must also realize that happiness is not an accompanying baggage of marriage; couples have to mould it with insight and imagination. If anything, the woman has to put in the greater effort, but the rewards could signify the specialty of her life. Try to understand what I’ve said so that you can see life in its proper perspective.”

When he concluded the brainwash, Roopa was mystified by his rhetoric, but after he had left her, she tried to weigh his words against her own inclinations.

Her innate urge, accentuated by the male attention she received, brought her femininity to the fore. The attractions she experienced and the fantasies she entertained shaped a male imagery that ensconced her subconscious. Her envision of a he-man ennobled her self-perception as a female. Insensibly, confident carriage came to be associated with the image of maleness in her mind-set. Her acute consciousness of masculinity only increased her vulnerability to it, making her womanliness crave for the maleness for its gratification. That persona she envisioned as masculine, she found lacking in Sathyam.

Excerpted from the author’s Benign Flame: Saga of Love, a free ebook in the public domain.