

Treatment of Marriage in House of cards by Sudha Murthy

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Abstract - “Marriage is nature’s law for protection not only on the physical, but also on the mental and spiritual planes. Unless married couple keep in mind the true high purpose of marriage they may never enjoy a really happy life together”, says Sri ParamahansaYogananda. This is best represented in the novel *House of Cards* by Sudha Murthy, Indian Woman Writer in English.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the words of Mridula,the protagonist of the novel,to her son, “Things are different today. Girls are independent now. Their expectations from a partner are high. Boys have to change to adjust with girls now. Traditionally, only the woman was expected to adjust and change. But the modern world demands that boys change too. No modern girl will be happy only with money. Care,partnership and responsibility are the key ingredients of a modern marriage”.

Mridula was born and brought up in Aladahalli, a village near Hubli in Karnataka. She is beautiful with thick, long hair, clear skin and twinkling eyes.She is also a fair and intelligent girl. She grew up in a friendly and honest atmosphere that she became outgoing and helpful. She was not like everybody. She was different. She has enormous enthusiasm for life and unlimited energy for reading, cooking, sketching etc., It seemed that the sun rose for her and the rainbow colours meant only for her. Everyday was to be lived to its fullest and every beautiful minute to be enjoyed. Instead of becoming a doctor or an engineer she chooses to become a teacher. She considers teaching to be a pious profession and taught the children passionately.

In course of time when her husband mocks at her profession she firmly says, “ I enjoy and respect my work. It is oxygen to me and not just a source of income.” She even underwent medical training so as to help the villagers, who were far off from the best medical treatment. She is plain at her heart and expects others to be the same.

In her childhood she came to know from her father that God gave the power of speech to human to share joys and difficulties with others”.He even says education and marriage should be according to our children’s wishes because these are for ever. The most important thing she learnt from her father is that , “Hiding is sin, and one must be open”. This forms the basis of the character of Mridula.

Mridula happens to meet Sanjay at one of her friends marriage, in a strange circumstance. At the auspicious time Sanjay holds the hand of Mridula as he mistook her to be a thief. Sanjay ,though not as fair as Mridula ,but with curly

hair and athlete body,who could easily pass as a model was enchanted by the beauty of Mridula at their first meeting itself. He meets her father too as he came to deliver a package from his professor to Champa Bai who lives opposite to Mridula’s house.

II. SECOND TIME MEETING

They both met for the second time when Mridula went to Bombay and fell sick due to change in food.Sanjay being the assistant of Chandrakant was supposed to take care of Mridula and in the mean time they came to know of each other.Sanjay who feels inferior in the company of others because of his deformity in one of his hand, feels comfortable in the presence of Mridula as she pays no attention towards it. Sanjay feels that Mridula is intelligent and they both belong to same community and language and they can adjust quickly if they got married. So he struggles to write a love letter in which he writes:

“ What you see is what I am. I don’t want to lie to you. I am not equal to you in looks or money..... I am hard working and honest. I want to spend the rest of my life with you”.

Mridula feels that,“a wedding was an important milestone and she couldn’t take the decision on her own. Her parents would have a major say in this”. Hence she reveals the matter to her father and when she was asked about his deformity she replies decisively saying ‘if the accident happens after the marriage that left him handicapped you wouldn’t hold that against him’.

Sanjay too informs his mother about Mridula , sends her photo to his sister Lakshmi, who in turn settles the matter and their marriage was performed in a simple way.As planned earlier Sanjay leaves Bombay and settles in Bangalore as a doctor in government hospital and Mridula too gets herself transferred to yelahanka in Bangalore. Except for the tight economic situation they did not have any problem in their newly wed life. They even bought a flat in vijayanagar with the bank loan and Mridula’s salary and became parents for the healthy baby boy’ Sishir’.

Marriages are made in heaven is an old dictum. It is debatable whether the present day marriages are confined to this dictum. The rupture and parting is mushrooming day by day. It is to be understood by all that marriage is delicate and intricate bond between the two.

Sanjay who used to say, "my goal is to get a government job and teach, that will give me more happiness than private practice", grows restless at the turn of events and at the suggestion of Alex and support from Mridula he began to opt for private practice.

III. JOY OF WORK

When Sanjay was in a dilemma to choose between the government job with no development and frequent transfers and the private practice which promises a better life, Mridula supports him both mentally, physically and financially. She says, "your satisfaction and joy in work is more important to me than my difficulties". "If you are not happy with what you are doing then you should consider itI am different. I don't take life so seriously but you don't share your feelings with others and you take everything earnestly". She mortgages her ornaments to provide him the required money and even gets three lakhs from her father as a loan, faces difficulties with the little sishir as it was difficult to find a baby sitter, takes care of the clinic as an administrator as well as a clerk till Sanjay was able to establish himself in the private practice saying, "as long as you earn money legally and ethically, I'm with you, I'll help you in your struggle. You can earn illegally too, but I'll never approve of that."

Once money began to pour in, Sanjay changed a lot. He began to feel that Mridula is too idealistic and though she is intelligent she is not street smart like his sister Lakshmi to adjust to the present society. He notices a change in every one who took advantage of him when he was in government hospital and finds happiness in retorting them with his newly earned financial status but fails to notice his own change towards his most beloved Mridula.

Sanjay who believes that white lies are essential to make the lives smoother, keeps his financial accounts secret from Mridula. He helps his sister to buy an apartment, he gifts a car to Anil, his nephew, manages to make his black money white with the help of his brother-in-law Shankar, sends ten lakhs of rupees to his mother without the knowledge of Mridula and many more. He keeps all these things secret from Mridula as she won't accept all these because she is an idealist. But when Mridula came to know that Sanjay became a practised deceiver, and she was being cheated for the last five years, something inside her shattered in to pieces.

IV. TRUST IN MARRIAGE

She said to herself, "I've lived with complete belief and trust in him ever since we got married. How am I going to

live with him for the rest of my life. When the foundation of the trust cracks, how can marriage remain the same"

She says, "...it is not about money. Money can be earned and lost. It is about the faith that a wife has in her husband. That's more valuable than money and gold. Faith sustains a marriage and brings joy to the family. Without it we have nothing....". "He should have told me his intentions. He knows that I always give in at the end. Why did he cheat me like this".

Her cousin reminds her of yakshaprasna, which they read in their childhood:

Who is the best friend to a man and a woman?

The answer is :

A wife to her husband and a husband to his wife. A husband and wife must share everything with each other and sit and sort out conflicts. Otherwise how can a relationship develop ? How can a family be happy?

When she realised that she was under the illusion that she was managing all the financial transactions. But in reality, Sanjay was maintaining parallel financial elsewhere. He acted like an honest husband, but he had stabbed her in the back She felt trapped in her marriage.

As Sishir too left for England, she became lonely and depressed and on the suggestion of her old student Vani she consults a psychiatrist. After a few sittings he says that your husband has cheated you financially but there are men who cheat in ways that are much more hurtful. He even says that if she had been little practical and street smart things would not have been so bad.

Finally she comprehends that everyone had their own problems . A few days later she wants to discuss about her treatment, she over hears a conversation between Alex and Sanjay in which Sanjay reveals that, " I've known her for twenty five years, she won't co operate with us. In fact she will create problems because she is idealistic". After hearing this she did not want to talk to her husband any more. She thought, " if Sanjay kept hiding things from her how can she continue living with him in the same house"

She recollected the words of psychiatrist ,Dr.Rao, " your husband thinks about money and his practice all the time. You can't change him. He's the one who has to be ready to make a change. Please don't expect anything from your husband. The will to change has to come from him."

She thought that if she continues to stay in the same atmosphere, she may have the chance of getting depressed again. She wants to live life on her own terms if she wants to be happy and that may not be possible with the Sanjay around as he ridicules and dominates her .

A month later she came to a decision, and on the day of their twenty fifth marriage anniversary, She announced "my duty towards you and Sishir is over. I've fulfilled all

my duties as a wife, mother and daughter-in-law. Now I want to live for myself. I have my job , my school and my village. You don't have to worry about me any longer. You and Sishir can visit me whenever you want," and left the place with a glow of peace on her face.

"Marriage implies a space of sharing and mutual risk, both the partners have the responsibility to flow towards and into each other, so that they can avert tragedy. If this is not possible, they should part without violence...." Mridula followed this ideal. Whereas Sanjay felt that she will return in a month or two as it is not easy for an Indian woman to live alone.

A few days later he began to feel that Mridula is different. He has taken Mridula for granted, instead he would have been more careful in dealing with her. She had taken a tough decision without blaming anyone. He began to feel like a beggar even with all his riches. He believed that he could buy anyone and anything with money, but for the first time he felt that he lost something valuable. His mind kept flashing back to the day he had met Mridula, how he had courted her and how life had been with her then. But now he felt like an orphan. He thought about their failed marriage and remembered that she had married him despite his handicap and loved him without expecting much. Even though he talked to Mridula only for a few minutes every night and even though she fought with him, she was an integral part of his life. Though his servant served hot food on a silver plate he was unable to eat. There was so much emptiness without her.

In spite of all this , his ego doesn't allow him to yield. On the other hand Neha , the replica of present generation women, reveals to Sishir on his insist that:

"The attitude that money can buy everything may be appropriate in today's society. But the fact is that money can't really buy everything. Life is more than money. It's about having concern for another. That gives a person more satisfaction and happiness. Despite your modern education your mindset has not changed. You expect a woman to remain a subordinate. She should adjust under every circumstance. Marriage is not a final destination for woman. There are other ways that a woman can live her life"

Finally Sishir understands that change may not be easy but may not be impossible also. If he changes for better it is for his own sake. He introspects with himself and views his mother from an altered perspective and finally informs his father:

"When I was there, I never realized how important she is. When I see women here I realize Amma's selfless sacrifice. She's great like you too, but in a different way. Without her help you would have never built such a big empire. She has been and is your strength..... Dad home is not made up of four walls and luxury items. Home is a home because of a father and a mother..... Don't wait for her to call you. You

should make the first move". Two months after this , Sanjay was at Alahadilli with Mridula , giving the novel a happy ending.

V. CONCLUSION

To conclude , when a girl gets married, the extent of her happiness depends upon the husband's commitment and communication with her. A few kind words , a little appreciation and small gifts like flowers can make a girl feel special. And to sustain a marriage it is important that there is effort from both sides then only a marriage can carry on. A successful marriage is like a good recipe whose main ingredients are love commitment , understanding concern and togetherness.

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