

LOVE DEFILED



By Giridhar Jha

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"If I become an IAS officer, dearie, I'll marry you," I sounded maudlin as I clasped her hand tightly. She flashed her disarmingly endearing smile; put her other hand on mine the gently said with a glint in her eyes, "....and if for some reason, you don't, then I'll marry you."

It was so typical of her-witty to the hilt, understanding to a fault. For eight years, we lived our lives together, becoming in the process emotional anchor for each other. We laughed, we cried, we fought and we invariably kissed and patched up. We were more than platonic lovers, taking things as they came. Separation was the last thing on our minds and we were labelled as the "made-for-each-other" couple whose formal alliance was a foregone conclusion.

Destiny, however, had other ideas. Faced with parental opposition and bellicose kin, I developed cold feet when it came to tying the knot with the girl I had so passionately loved. My early jibes at those who loved and parted when it came to the crunch stared in my face as I cooked up thousand and one excuses to snap my ties with her.

Having had an impartial assessment of my grey cells, coupled with my inability to burn the midnight oil, I had already decided to spare the bureaucracy from myself, falling back upon journalism which my girlfriend always wanted me to pursue.

A beauty who never failed to turn many heads, she was least conscious of her charms which often made me realise that her real beauty was actually not visible to the naked eyes. Her simplicity ran contrary to my proclivity of overdoing things. Tall, boorish and just short of being called an anthropologist's delight, my insecurities made me more voluble about my seemingly non-existent qualities. The louder I talked about my virtues, the faster I made a fool of myself.

Still she was the only one who understood me, overlooked my shortcomings and made me feel confident about myself. For many years, I visualised my life as totally barren without her. She was my life force, my source of inspiration and my alter ego, all rolled into one. Little wonder I felt part of myself being sliced off when I decided to say goodbye.

She was wearing a canary yellow dress, my favourite, when I called her for the last time. With myriad thoughts crowding my mind, I entered the restaurant with trepidation, rehearsing flimsy excuses, adding lachrymose sentimentality to my side of the story — so ingenuously laced with all kinds of mundane reasons, ranging from caste, creed, culture and language to sheer helplessness, my tragic flaw of character and our stormy future.

She heard my cock-and-bull story patiently, never showed any emotions and insisted on footing the bill. "You don't have any complaints, dear?" I asked with moist eyes and choked voice, all affected. She clasped my hand with both hands. "How can I have complaints against a man who has given me so many moments of happiness? I think if you are happy this way, I should not be so mean as not to feel happy for you. Goodbye, and take care."

That was the last I saw of her. I fought shy of inviting her to my wedding and never mentioned about her to my wife. Her dad had been transferred in the meantime and the story of my romance appeared to be part of my cherished memory. My 'life' for eight years seemed dead until a phone call brought back cascades of nostalgic sentiments.

She was on the other side of the line, exactly two years later, inviting me to her wedding reception. I had realised my monumental folly of having let go of her and I resolved to attend her wedding, unescorted by my better-half, of course. As I shook hands with her husband, a handsome IAS officer, at her reception, she flashed her disarmingly endearing smile: "Meet my husband! How strange, he wanted to be a journalist."

I struggled to retain my plastered grin when her hubby told me: "Thanks, but for you I would not have got her. Still, I wonder why on earth did she have to leave a guy like you?"

For a while it looked as though I had lost all reasons to live. Here was a woman who was ditched by me, and yet had no hesitation in not only giving me a clean chit but also telling her husband about her past prior to embarking upon the conjugal life.

For the first time in my life, I realised I was also ugly from within and despite our eight years of togetherness, her goodness had not rubbed off on me in any way.

Exercises

Let's Answer

1. 'It was so typical of her - witty to the hilt, understanding to a fault.' Sketch the character of the girl in the light of this statement.
2. 'The louder I talked about my virtues, the faster I made a fool of myself.' Sketch the character of the narrator in the light of this statement.
3. 'For the first time in my life, I realised I was also ugly from within and despite our eight years of togetherness, her goodness had not rubbed off on me in any way.' What made the narrator feel so?
4. Has the goodness of some one ever made you feel very mean? Explain.
5. Why did the narrator leave the girl he loved so passionately? Was he honest in his relation?

Let's Discuss

1. Live-in relationship is against our social values.
2. One should listen to one's heart rather than anything else.

वन्दे मातरम्

सुजलं सुफलां मलयजशीतलाम्
शस्य-श्यामलां मातरम् ।

वन्दे मातरम् ॥

शुभ्र-ज्योत्स्ना-पुलकित-यामिनीम्
फुल्ल-कुसुमित-द्रुमदल-शोभिनीम्
सुहासिनीं, सुमधुरभाषिणीम्
सुखदां, वरदां, मातरम् ।
वन्दे मातरम् ॥





राष्ट्र-गान

जन-गण-मन-अधिनायक जय हे,
भारत - भाग्य - विधाता।
पंजाब सिंध गुजरात मराठा,
द्राविड़ - उत्कल - बंग।
विंध्य - हिमाचल - यमुना-गंगा,
उच्छल - जलधि - तरंग।
तव शुभ नामे जागे,
तव शुभ आशिष मागे
गाहे तव जय गाथा।
जन-गण-मंगलदायक जय हे,
भारत - भाग्य - विधाता।
जय हे, जय हे, जय हे,
जय जय जय जय हे।



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