

A GAME FOR TWO

To **Have** AND **Hold**
FROM THIS DAY
Forward, to **BETTER**
or for **WORSE**, for
richer or poorer,
IN **SICKNESS** and In
Health, to *Love*
and to **CHERISH** from
This Day Forward
As **L O N G** As
We Both Shall
L I V E

MYAT MOE KHAING

Winter is here (or what's supposed to be winter). As we take a stroll in the season of weddings, be it for *Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge*, *Snow White* or *A Walk to Remember*, we have all wondered upon the existence of a "happily ever after" fate. With getting older though, we do realize that marriage is probably the greatest leap of faith.

Though the fundamental definition of marriage remains the same, this article is about the take of today's youth on marriage.

According to Mukitir Reza, a student of North South University, marriage is having a "player two in the game of life" to help each other through joy and sadness. A perfect marriage would be where you and your partner are at your best because of being together.

Labib Rashid, a competitive programmer, rephrases marriage as "a major commitment," which he thinks one should not go into unless one is absolutely sure.

To Zahin Zaima, a student of East West University, wedlock is "having a best friend without the efforts of dating."

However, the three have agreed that people change with time. Lust fades while mutual friendship sticks. **YOU CAN PURSUE YOUR DREAMS** It's like an endless cycle of parents trying to convince their kids that the future gets better *only* if the offspring fit into the normative society. And marriage is the cherry topping of all your success.

While many young male professionals aim at earning money and promotion, their families want them to settle down and get the tag of "responsible men".

Our society generally considers it safe for a woman to study abroad only when she is married. While this may be a safety assurance to worried parents, the fear of compromising motherhood with career strikes today's career-driven women.

"I don't want her to compromise anything just because she is married. She can do anything she wants. We will find a way to make it work." - Mukitir's opinion reflects the changing view of today's generation.

BIYE SHOB KICHUR SHOMADHAN

If you're a bachelor trying to find a flat to live alone, my condolences. Your landlord suspects you of being the undead Osama bin Laden.

And if you're a bachelorette, the gynecologist's cure to your every possible menstrual problem is having a baby which only comes with marriage.

THE RITUALS

While most of my friends and cousins are getting married, I still hold on to Harry Potter as my idea of reality. From smiling relentlessly at *holud*, wedding and *boubhaat* with kgs of jewellery on, I gave up on the *bhabi* world.

"I find it unnecessary to have a huge wedding with a lot of guests; I prefer to invite only the closest of friends and family," says Raisa Zaman, a student of IBA. Adib Shamsuddin, a student of LCLS, dreads the act of putting turmeric on one's body.

Many don't mind spending money on their weddings as long as it turns out memorable. But Zahin



plans to spend more on the function and less on the guests.

IF YOU'RE MARRYING SOMEONE, YOU'RE MARRYING HIS/HER FAMILY

From not being able to sleep in the middle of the bed to changing the menu for dinner, marriage is all about a new lifestyle. "I can hardly keep track of my schedule. How am I supposed to remember the new family tree?" - Raisa giggles.

She adds, "I grew up as the youngest among my siblings. Marriage might demand that I mend my ways, but I am ready to blend in if my husband makes the same effort."

Couples today take longer to know each other before finally getting married. In the meantime, they get a general idea of the new family they join. "It should take a year or two to get used to married life." - Labib assumes.

COMPROMISE,

COMPROMISE

The biggest fear daunts us when compromise, responsibility and commitment are brought under a single umbrella. We don't know how the person, who we are going to spend the rest of our lives with, will turn out to be.

"As long as he doesn't cheat and respect my choices, I am ready to compromise," Zahin looks at the bright side. While many hang on to the idea of the right to know the ins and outs of two people in a marriage, Labib doesn't think it's necessary, "In the end, we need space as individuals."

"Kids are amazing. Though it seems like a lot of responsibility. I would think a million times before bringing another human being into this world," Mukitir says.

How I Met Your Mother and *F.R.I.E.N.D.S* started with Robin and Rachel running away from their own weddings. None of them were forced to make the choice of marrying their fiancés. Yet, the idea of settling down could boil your head when you're finally getting married.

Marriage to Tanzia Islam, who has been married for five years, is never about two people, especially in our society. If families aren't compatible, sooner or later, problems will arise.

"If you have a stable relationship for more than 4 years, then you should get married right after you get your first job. You should take a baby as soon as possible so that you three can grow together. You may choose to not get married, which is highly unlikely of getting approved by your parents," says Dhrubo Rahman, a former student of IBA, DU.

DO PEOPLE CHANGE?

Most married couples agree that changing a full-grown person, stripping him/her of old habits of decades is impossible. What is easier is to change how we respond to them. At times, it's the least romantic parts that give us the biggest lessons about ourselves and our relationships.

"Change is inevitable. Though our chemistry was different before marriage, the relationship now is no less than what he had then," Tanzia Islam makes it simple.

IS THIS WHAT I SIGNED UP FOR?

We all fear getting up one day and wonder if marriage made us happy or not. It's not the exact mother-daughter-in-law relationship in Hindi serials. The oaths don't really kick in unless life showers us in tragedy. Relationship fortitude is tested mostly by the

sameness on a daily basis. Subrina Khan, a young housewife, reflects: "Yes, marriage was a sugarc coated fantasy. Now I realise marriage isn't a destination. It's a journey."

Once you let go of the ideal image of marriage, it will be more rewarding and acceptable. To Siam Kabir, a young banker, it is totally different when someone is living with a person 24/7. "You see your spouse when she has just woken up and hasn't brushed her teeth yet. It's not always sunshine and roses, and they might be throwing tantrums. But you get used to it."

AM I SETTLING DOWN?

Marriage is a bit of settling down and gearing up for the future. Today's scenario of matrimony in Bangladesh is different from what it used to be 15 years ago. Girls aren't married off early, spouses and in-laws are more supportive in the case of careers than ever before.

"There are restrictions when it comes to social norms. I have to attend birthday parties and weddings of my in-laws and friends of my husbands. But at the end of the day, we are all managers. Managing is the key." - Sheuly Pervin, who is currently doing her PhD abroad, feels blessed to be able to get married to the guy she dated in BUET. Her husband got into a job while he inspired her to pursue her PhD. But there's always your bucket list. Complete that first!

BING!

Up until marriage, the anticipation is positive. Once it is fixed, the fear of commitment and change becomes real.

The idea of living with one person for the rest of your life may seem crazy but people here are more agreeable. When asked about splitting incomes, Dhrubo Rahman says, "That's what marriage is all about. If one has problems with it, one shouldn't get married."

In marriage, there isn't any right or wrong. It's

simply the way of looking at things. And that's what fuels most marriages here. Tanzia illustrates, "Once I started appreciating the differences, I realised striking a balance benefits us both. Of course, couples fight. At times it gets serious. But we mend our ways and that's what we are still learning."

From the opinions, the concept of marriage seems to be different to different people. That's the strange beauty of it. Often it teaches you the hardest lessons no one can prepare you for.

*Some names have been changed to maintain privacy.

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