



The Marriage Proposal: A True Story

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When my son turned into a marriageable age, all our friends, relatives and acquaintances started asking the inevitable questions, "When will he get married?" "Doesn't he have a girlfriend?" "Living in the US for so long hasn't he picked up any 'gori ladki' yet?" "Do you still believe in arranged marriages in the twenty first century?" When I answered in the negative, a colleague commented that probably he was too scared of his over-dominating mother to choose a bride for himself. I could not make them understand that one actually needed to socialize and also sometimes indulge in small talk to pick up a suitable girl. They didn't just fall on your lap like a ripe mango. After all, sitting in the university research laboratory day in and out, one couldn't get married to its computers! Also, with someone who had such an aversion for the Indian Student's Association, finding a *desi* girl was even more remote a possibility.

After a couple of years of coaxing and cajoling one fine day he asked us to look for a suitable bride for him. She can be a freelancer, an artist, a homemaker, or anything else, but not a computer engineer or a dumb IT professional who would spend fourteen hours in front of a computer. Also she should be able to take care of herself and not nag him all the time. And so our ordeal began.

"Don't worry, just put in an advertisement in the matrimonial column of the newspaper and you'll be flooded with proposals," a veteran sister-in-law advised me. But unfortunately in our case, the response was less than satisfactory. Probably parents were unwilling to get their daughters married to an unknown groom living thousands of miles away, what with the horror stories of wife beating and abuse one gets to hear frequently. For some willing

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