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Digi-tech for social distress

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Stressful is his joint family life due to his brother's love affair. My soft-hearted friend was trying his best to iron out the social wrinkles leading to his brother's marriage, but impediments are many.

The deep-in-love protagonist couple both work in a foreign company in the IT services industry. The barriers to tying the knot? They are from two different Indian states so speak different languages; he is an upper caste Brahmin, she of a lower caste whereas both follow Hindu traditions. Even being of Indian origin, I have never understood this man-made caste hierarchy. The Hindu way of life is so humane, without any dogma or any system to convert people like other religions have, yet caste puts a disgraceful black spot on it. To me it seems a critical, chronic problem in today's day and age. When the country is growing and trying to dominate the world stage, internally we are continuing to trample on one another for social supremacy without any basis.

My friend is the elder brother; he had himself followed the arranged marriage system. His parents first found compatibility with his in-laws' family. That means they were all Brahmins, of similar social status and Indian state so speaking the same language and eating the same kind of food. His parents chose the girl to

be his bride; he met her, there was instant good chemistry between them, she is an executive in a company and they are very happily married. The arranged marriage has a few changed rules now. Before the economic reforms, a housewife was preferred, but today a working woman has a better position in a joint family. In another instance, the parents of another friend of mine from Jodhpur met 43 families during 18 months to select his bride. He married with 44th one.

Now the brother's inter-caste, inter-state love marriage was looking catastrophic, but my friend has stepped in to make his brother happy. When he discussed with me I appreciated his elder brotherly support to enable this marriage. His wife too is wholeheartedly taking the young couple's side to make this marriage happen. This is the new, open-minded generation. My friend and his wife met his brother and girlfriend to assure them they have support. He is trying hard to convince all extended family members to accept this marriage. Their mother is the most difficult cookie, being highly influenced by her own brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. This kind of social misbehaviour puts my friend off. His brother is frustrated because he does not want to hurt anyone or break away from his joint family to start a nuclear home. Finally, my friend and his wife managed to convince the mother; things settled down with the mother preparing for her younger son's marriage.

Isn't it ironic that we proudly say India is a secular democracy, we are Indians first, there's unity in our diversity. But in practical life our true colours show. Two young working adults in love from adjacent states can face such distress

and indecent, socially created rules inspite of being Hindus with no religious dogma. Both are working in responsible jobs dealing with global clients and both have similar working environment, personal friends and social circles.

For a few months I heard nothing and have been waiting for an invitation card, when suddenly a big problem erupted because of FaceBook.

His mother's family opposed to this marriage now got evidence that the girl "drinks alcohol" which is among the worst "crimes" imaginable in traditional Brahmin families. They saw a picture of hers in FaceBook visiting UB City. The bride-to-be's friend had posted their group picture in her Facebook page having dinner with her colleagues. Bangalore's UB City is among India's most sophisticated shopping malls housing luxury products retails like Louis Vuitton, Jimmy Choo, Armani, Rolex, Paul Smith among others, and a posh terrace of world cuisine restaurants. This opulent mall belongs to United Breweries, the beer and liquor company, and hence the conjecture that the girl was partying here with liquor. The problem is that traditional family folk associate such a premium place first with drinking alcohol. In actual fact, she's a teetotaller!

My friend's mother is very emotional, gullible and traditional. She was shown this picture of the innocent girl celebrating a colleague's promotion. The family of my friend's mother who'd become unhappy since this girl was about to be accepted into the family, obviously kept tabs on her activities. This Facebook picture eating in a restaurant was the perfect ammunition to discredit the girl and say to the mother-in-law to be, "I told you so!" The mother was so disturbed she would just cry continuously.

Each time my friend repairs the situation with his mother, somebody or the other tries to break the marriage: lower caste, speaking a different language, belonging to a different state, then FaceBook added salt to that by raising the googly of alcohol. I've never understood what they can gain from bringing unhappiness. The

young couple aged 29 and 28 years is getting frustrated. He is considering accepting a foreign assignment to get away from it all, she is under pressure from her family because according to Indian family tradition she has crossed the marriageable age.

If you look at today's armchair virtual screen revolution, it is without a clear purpose and objective. Boasting of thousands of friends on a social networking site like FaceBook amounts to useless virtual masturbation where even physical pleasure is missing. Uploading personal pictures on FaceBook of enjoying yourself with friends or on holiday serves to upload human privacy. In India Facebook seems to have become an instrument of espionage for the older generation, particularly in marriage areas. When somebody says "I have 10,000 Facebook friends," I've never understood what it means. Is this the fiber of social distress? I have suggested a creative idea to my friend which I cannot disclose now. I promise you my readers, once marriage happens I'll let you know.

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