Mother-in-law: The Woman Hitler

There is no dearth of men who have suffered at hands of their mother-in-law. ■ by Wg Cdr (retd) DP Sabharwal

A person called a dentist to inquire about the cost for tooth extraction, and the reply he received was: "Rs 850."

"That's too much! Don't you have anything cheaper?" asked the person and the reply he received was: "That's the normal charge, sir."

"What if you don't use any anesthetic?" inquired the person.

There was a moment of silence, after which the voice came: "That's unusual, but it can be done and the cost would be Rs 400."

"And what, if you deploy one of your trainee-dentists to do the extraction, without anaesthesia?" was the next question.

A surprised voice replied: "Well, I cannot guarantee professionalism and it would be painful also. But the price could drop down to Rs 150."

"Hmm... and what if you make it a training-session, like one of your students does the extraction, while the other students watch and learn?"

By now, even the dentist was drawn to some fantasy talk and replied: "It will be really good for the students but quite traumatic for the patient. And, in such a case, I can pay you Rs 200 for it."

A satisfied voice said: "Now, that is both sensible and reasonable. Okay, it's a deal. Kindly confirm an appointment for my mother-in-law for tomorrow morning."

'How mean,' was my instant reaction on reading the anecdote. However, the stories that go around seem to mirror the anguish and frustrations of some hassled sons-in-law. In fact, a smile crept on my lips as I understood and appreciated the ingenuity of the man's thinking.

Not bothered about whether the incident could be true or just another fictional account, I started thinking about this relationship. Indeed, the mother-in-law is an automatic add-on, the moment one gets married.

The treatment a girl gets from her mother-in-law is well-known in Indian society. It has been portrayed in endless movies in our country, whether produced in Bollywood, Tollywood, Kollywood or any other region for that matter. The roles played by Rohini Hatangadi, Aruna Irani, Shashikala, Nadira and the likes, are likely to flash like lightening, not to forget the eternal tyrannical mother-in-law Lalita Pawar!



However, the unseen and often unheard torture, faced by many boys at the hands of their respective mothers-in-law, has not been captured on celluloid. But there are enough such stories floating around in the air and the written media – of course, without being heard!

A man found a lamp, rubbed it and, sure enough, a genie appeared. The genie told the man, "You have two wishes. You will get whatever you ask for but your mother-in-law will get double."

On impulse, the man wanted to let the offer go, for he did not want to get involved with his mother-in-law – least of all on the good occasion of getting the wishes



fulfilled. However, better sense prevailed and, after thinking for a while, he proclaimed, "My first wish is, that I should get 10 million rupees. And the second is that you beat me till I am half-dead."

One wonders why a man should think of his mother-in-law in that way. Well, there has to be a reason. Once a man gets married, he gets into many more relationships – in addition to the one with his wife. Let us take a look at some of them:

- The one with father-in-law is innocuous and, in fact, devoid of any ups and downs and does not create any upheavals.
- The one with brother-in-law is generally of a buddy-buddy-type and an individual invariably earns a friend.
- As far as sister-in-law is concerned, well the relationship is generally colourful, which has a lot of scope as far as fun, laughter and harmless romance is concerned.
- However, the one with mother-in-law defies any logic. It is considered to be one of the most dreadful relationships and invariably turns out to be that way.

Like all other relationships, the last one, too, is based on 'give-and-take'. However, in this case, she always gives and the man has to be at the receiving end: not love and affection, but endless lectures. He is told that he is good for nothing, at least not good enough for her daughter! No wonder, if you re-arrange the letters in the word 'mother-in-law' you get 'woman hitler'.

"Dad, where did I come from?" asked the child and the reply was, "Your mother gave birth to you."

"And my mom... where did she come from?" was the next question and the answer was: "From my mother-in-law, which means your grandma."

"And grandma.... where did she come from?"

This time, the answer was the coolest: "Straight from hell, son."

You can, perhaps, understand how deep the man's anguish would have been! A rational man, who had been giving decent and reasonable answers to his son, suddenly says something that could have been the honest thought from the core of his heart, but definitely not a suitable and decent one.

This man's hurt and suppressed grief was, perhaps, much lesser than that of another man, which gave rise to the following anecdote:

"Your mother-in-law has died. It is not possible to send the body. Please instruct whether to bury or cremate her." read the telegram.

"I do not want to take any chances. Burn the body and bury the ashes, please," was the reply.

Now it is quite likely, that someone might think that men must be creating situations, giving the mother-in-law the right to thrash the man with a broom. I earnestly feel, that only fools would dare to enter the lion's den and do something so silly and invite dire trouble. On the contrary, there are many recorded evidences, that the mothers-in-law create situations, which force the men to behave in an indifferent manner.

Consider the following: Husband and wife had a fight. The wife called her mom and said, "He fought with me again. I am coming to live with you."

The mom said, "No, darling! He must pay for his mistake. I am coming to live with you."

It was another similar situation, that gave rise to this snippet. "Would you like to donate something to the home for the aged?" asked the president of the service club to the new member.

"Yes. My mother-in-law."

When people have done wrong to you, it is quite natural that you get angry with them. In case they have done harm to you, in all probability, you may wish them to go through equally bad times, if not worse. However, whatever the provocation be, hardly anybody would wish any physical harm to another one – like she should break her leg or she should become bedridden or things like that. But when it comes to a mother-in-law, well, there is no limit to what individuals can think, say and do.

The boss was annoyed because he had given Ravi a day's leave to go to his mother-in-law's funeral. When he came to know that the old lady was not dead, he demanded an explanation. Ravi said, "Sorry, sir, I never said that my wife's mother was dead. I just said that I would like to go to her funeral." ■