



Saying No To NRI Grooms

Marriage Wedding

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Home is where the heart is, for many Indian women who prefer to steer clear of NRI grooms and avoid the potential pitfalls of the NRI liaison. Savia Rajagopal investigates why more Indian women now view India as the 'land of opportunity.'

"Why should I want to marry someone and move abroad when I can have the very best life has to offer right here in my homeland?" questions Mira Parikh, confessing to being NRI-phobic.

Echoing a similar thought is Evangeline Fernandes, a 26-year-old accounting professional who states, "Many of my female cousins chose to go abroad after marriage but now regret that decision. I have travelled the world and am not remotely intrigued by the prospect of staying with a stranger in a foreign land. It just doesn't appeal to me."

The sentiments expressed by these women are representative of many Indian women who are refusing NRI grooms and insist on settling down in India itself. The reasons for this refusal are myriad, ranging from financial to social reasons.

It's an increasing reflection of India's growing economic status as well as the after-effects of the '91 Economic Policy, which has heralded the era of Globalisation in India, with its impact being seen on the social and economic decisions that women are now making.

No More Dollar Dreams

The lure of the much-sought after Dollar doesn't hold as much appeal anymore. While many Indian women chose to chase the Dollar (and Dollar grooms, to state it explicitly) right into its land of origin, women nowadays are not inclined to move in that direction. They are reaping the benefits of an increasingly professional work environment, replete with perks and a taste of the good life.

"With the Indian economy booming, there are ample work opportunities for qualified people in India who are valued with huge pay checks, which was not so in the earlier years when success was equivalent with going abroad to 'the land of opportunities.' When it comes to looking for an educated

and successful mate, there is no dearth of such men who are based in India," explains Dr. Minnu Bhonsle, Consulting Psychotherapist & Counsellor, Heart To Heart Counselling Centre.

She adds that, women seeking mates who are based in India have the added benefit of being close to what they value - their own work, their family, friends and a familiar environment along with a successful mate of their choice.



Putting Career First

In Indian society today, the emphasis is ever more on having a career and being a working professional. This applies to urban women too, who now are appalled by the idea of giving up their professional aspirations and opting to settle abroad where they may or may not succeed in the same way.

As Dr. Bhonsle, points out, "Often educated urban women themselves have cushy jobs in India, and do not want to make the shift if they cannot get a similar opportunity abroad. Their work life is an important aspect of who they are and therefore the refusal to marry NRIs which may require such a shift." In many organisations, high-level executives are given the opportunity to travel widely and sample cultures from around the world. And many women find that working in India has its own charm.



Media professional, Sumitra Seth, shares, "I worked in the Gulf for a few years but it doesn't come close to the buzz in the same creative industry in India. Besides, how long can you motivate yourself for money? It's about the creativity and connect I have with my Indian colleagues that made my decision to move back here easy for me." There are many such cases of reverse migration with Indian women coming back and settling down with Indian grooms, in a bid to find their 'happily-ever-after.'

Family Bonds And Social Support

Apart from monetary considerations, many women prefer to stay closer to their families and friends. Financial advantages are viewed in comparison to maintaining familial bonds and other close relationships. In many cases, the latter wins as increasing numbers of women are supporting their parents.

When it comes to having children, many women are keen on bringing up their children closer to home. Some women are honest enough to admit that having hired domestic help and a support system in place also influences their decision to stay put in India. It is easier to balance work and personal commitments with the help of hired help, apart from family, they confide without a second thought.

The Fear Of Bitter Experiences

While there are many success stories available about a smooth transition into life abroad, the very same coin has a terrifying aspect to it. Not all women have a perfect life once they move abroad. Being isolated in a new country can sometimes lead to them being abused or victimised as many news reports indicate.

It is this very knowledge of bitter experiences, albeit, second hand accounts, that forces women reconsider the prospect of moving away from home. As Dr. Bhonsle points out, "Stories of disillusioned and depressed women who married NRI men and did not find 'the pot at the end of the rainbow' are rampant, and this too has led to women today saying NO to NRIs."

India Is Where It's At

Often many women have studied abroad, have had the practical experience of living abroad and are able to appreciate the benefits and disadvantages of living out of the country. Moreover, foreign lands no longer hold the "charm" associated with it in the yesteryears.

Admittedly satellite television, the internet and various other sources give women a taste of life abroad cathartically. "The attraction of the unknown no longer holds true", opines Dr. Bhonsle, "There is no mystery about foreign lands and life there, and India is today viewed more as a 'Land of opportunities'

than any other country in the world.”

In the ultimate analysis, there is a far greater freedom of choice when it comes to urban women selecting their prospective spouses. Higher levels of education and greater awareness of the world around them, has empowered Indian women into making their own personal choices relating to their partners.

A greater degree of financial independence allows many women the luxury and right to choose how and where they wish to live their lives. It is no longer just a man’s prerogative to choose his abode and for women to meekly follow in his footsteps. And for now, many urban professional Indian women are choosing to stay right at home, close to where their heart is.

**Some names have been changed on request.*

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