

The battle goes on.

S

ix years of marriage, I still remember the two memorable quotes - one from my friend's mother and another one at the time of *rukhsati*. My friend's mother said, "Baita, the day you feel you can keep the balance between your mother and sisters and wife, get married." And the other one uttered just at the time of *rukhsati* was, "Another one bites the dust." I still remember these two quotes and often contemplate as to why I did not heed my aunt's advise when I had the time whereas it was too late to even give it a second thought to my friend's pearls of wisdom.

Humankind has made progress in all fields but the *saas-bahu* rivalry is still the same. Same old characters and the same old script.

Whether it is all about control or clash of generations is unknown. It is very hard to characterise this tussle as sometimes the tussle tilts towards the control while on the other side it seems purely the case of generation gap. In any case the tussle goes on and the battle ground is clearly divided into pro-*saas* and -*bahu*. Books and books have been written on the subject but one character is always forgotten. If not forgotten then that character is inevitably blamed for not striking a balance in the relationship between the *saas* and the *bahu*. That character is the poor man. The man who is sandwiched between the devil and the deep blue sea - the husband.

The real life starts The Day After - day after *Valima* - where both the parties come out in show of strength - though discreetly. To many it is all about battle for control. Who controls the poor man? On whose tunes the man dances? The battle for control begins where wife tries to seduce the husband to take her side while the mother and sisters play the emotional card to the fullest. Both the parties dictate terms to the husband. Mother and sisters order husband to make sure she wears this and she does that. While the wife takes refuge behind the reason that she does not want a conventional husband as she is not a conventional wife.

Son/brother tries to calm down and reason with mother



By Rizwan Ahsan All

and sisters outside while inside he tries to explain the wife that it is just a matter of time before all this *nayee dulhan* syndrome will die down. Outside the son/brother is labelled as henpecked while inside he is termed Mommy's Boy. What a poor man is to do who is divided between mother and wife, the woman who gave birth to him and the woman he is going to spend the rest of his life with, the woman who took care of him come what may and the woman who would side with him for the rest of his life at all costs.

Why does it have to be so complicated; why the mother insists on not having a maid for the kids on the grounds that she was not allowed one and she raised the kids perfectly well; why is it not allowed for the wife to call her parents when the same is condoned when imposed on her own daughters; why she objects to having a cook while she prays for the same facility to her daughters; why she always asks the son to keep an eye where the *bahu* goes while she hates it when the same is imposed on her daughters?

Why the wife has to be a sweatie with *saas* only when husband is around?; why she has to do just the opposite to what the *saas* says even though it is just for the sake of opposition; why she has to dress up the kids

not in the cloths her in-laws have sent; why she always criticises the *bari* and hates to wear those cloths; why she has to listen to her mother while completely ignoring husband's advise or ground realities not understanding the fact that her mother would advise her keeping her own in-laws in mind?

The worst case scenario is when poor man takes a decision about anything - and when I say anything it means about the most petty thing - and *saas* and *bahu* both accuse him of reaching this decision on the behest of the other. This often forces men to lie to both the parties to avoid the hassle of being unduly interrogated by them.

I have not yet met a man who can give me advise as to how to handle these bickerings and keep a balance. It is absolutely impossible to keep a balance between two parties who are not ready to listen to the logic. Ninety per cent of men have failed to conquer the fight between *saas* and *bahu* and the remaining ten per cent who say that they have overcome this dilemma are liars. It is simply because you cannot pinpoint whether this is all about fight for control or simply generation gap - as I mentioned earlier in the article and if you do not remember reading it, you are not being attentive.

Why, why, why. These are the questions which are hard to answer but must be replied. But the more important question is: by whom? The mother and the wife of course. Till these questions are not answered this will continue and we, the men, will continue to suffer. But again as the saying goes, 'what you want and what you get are two different things'. One thing that comes to my mind is that that no matter how hard the two parties try, mother-in-law cannot become mother and daughter-in-law cannot be a daughter. The day this happens, I am too scared to imagine the scenario.

