

Imran and Jemima – Don't Do It!

Published in the Daily Express May 16th 1995

Once upon a time, I actually played cricket against Imran Khan. He was possibly the wisest bowler ever to demolish my middle stump. I swear he could make balls swing in three separate directions at the same time. But not even Imran Khan can defy the laws of matrimonial gravity.

I fear his proposal to marry Jemima Goldsmith is the silliest since Prince Charles wooed Diana. It can't work; it won't work and if his best friend hasn't told him, I will.

Strictly speaking, the comparison with Charles and Diana is not accurate because at least the Wales's came from the same broad background. Their insurmountable differences did NOT include race, first language, country and creed.

But the same cancer agents that dashed the Charles and Diana marriage are ready to undermine prospects for the Khans. I'm sorry to say it but research shows that people like Jemima and Diana who settle down young are unlikely to stay happily married even for five years.

Moreover, just as with our royals, the difference in age and outlook can prove utterly fatal once the honeymoon enthusiasm is over.

ALL research into love and attraction, literally hundreds of studies, is agreed on one point.

The myth that "opposites attract" and give a lasting platform to a relationship is total bunk!

If you want a recipe for enduring happiness summed up in a single word it is - "similarity".

Over 99 per cent of successfully married couples are of the same race and mostly of the same religion, same education, sociological class, intelligence, and even physical characteristics like body shape. Even couples who date regularly are found to share the same political values, views on sex and sexual roles.

Couples who are the most similar at the outset of their relationship are in fact the most likely to stay together in the long run. Married couples who experience the least marital conflict are also those who have similar personalities and enjoy doing the same things and watching the same tv programmes.

I defy anyone to suggest that the future Mr and Mrs K have the natural ingredients for this sort of compatible relationship.

If I'm stating things brutally this is because I'd rather cause offence now than see two lives condemned to misery, not to mention the difficulties facing any future children.

It's not of course remotely surprising that Jemima has fallen for her Prince of the Cricket Pitch, this swan among ducks. My own partner has languished over him for years. But studies in America suggest Jemima's probably suffering from what's called the "Distorting Mirror Effect".

Tests show that when we first fall in love - that crazy state of half-mad obsession, we cannot appreciate any of the faults of the object of our passion. I believe Ms Goldsmith is suffering from a bad case of "rose-coloured spectacles".

Hand-in-hand with this inability to use our judgement goes something called "best behaviour syndrome".

What the future Mrs Haiqa Khan is seeing from her Imran now is the most loving and kindly treatment she can ever reasonably expect to get.

I'm not suggesting that the former Captain of Pakistan is some sort of Ferdinand Lopez figure who in the novel by Anthony Trollope marries for cash, using honeyed words and fond glances before the ceremony only to present his wife with a bunch of invoices soon afterwards.

But I AM saying that a Moslem male of 42 whose driving ambitions are fund-raising and politics is not going to spend much time seeking his young wife's opinion on the disposal of the family fortune, nor sit around wasting precious hours pondering the meaning of life.

He already knows! Middle-aged men, especially bachelors, are inevitably set in their ways. Increasingly, they come to resemble their fathers. Without noticing it, they tend to revert to the orthodoxies of childhood.

What Jemima Goldsmith is proposing to marry, I believe, is the Imran Khan who thinks men should make decisions while women make cakes and babies.

What's in this proposed transaction for him? He gets a nubile and beautiful young woman, the prospect of children and perhaps access to considerable wealth.

And for her? She "pulls" the media's Number One bachelor, gets world-wide fuss and attention and perhaps lets her parents know she really can move and shake on the big stage.

Who knows how difficult it's been growing up in the shadow of Sir James Goldsmith himself? Has a younger daughter ever found it easy to get his attention and respect?

Would it make short-term sense for her to seek qualities in a future mate identical to those of her famous father?

Ominously, both Sir James and the Pathan Prince have a reputation as international playboys with an awesome appetite for competition fed by individual arrogance.

I'd be so much happier if Jemima simply did what people in love should always do - have a corking good affair but take absolutely no major life decisions on the basis of such temporary feelings.

Research even indicates she'd probably be better off plumping for an ARRANGED marriage. But only with someone from her own background!

For these reasons I hope and pray the parties will think again.