

RANGA'S MARRIAGE

Masti Venkatesha Iyengar

Key Elements:

- The concept of arranged marriages in the Indian culture: then and now.
- Ranga as a character who retains his traditions even as he harbours new age thoughts.
- Ranga as a character whose thoughts do not seem to have eventually matched his actions.
- The narrator, Shyama, whose brilliance is in a simple plan of placing elements together and watch as things run their natural course.
- The author's writing style – first person narrative, casual almost verbal communication with the reader, rambling narration, deliberate use of native words, proverbs, anecdotes and other references.
- The narrator's, and therefore, the author's views on the English language.

SUMMARY

Ranga's Marriage, by Masti Venkatesha Iyengar, is a story about a boy who returns to his village after receiving education from Bangalore.

The story is a first person narrative and a major portion of the story is in flash back. The speaker directly addresses the reader. The narrator is a neighbour of the protagonist. He introduces the story with a difference by first giving a detailed description of their village Hoshali. He praises the mangoes from his village. He asks the reader if he/she has ever heard of the village. He replies to the question himself, for the village was not located in any of the maps for the English babus and the ones in our country forgot to put it there. Then he introduces Ranga, the protagonist, in a time ten years ago. Ranga had gone to Bangalore for studies and returned home after six months. It was the time when English was a language not popular and a few people used it. All used to converse in Kannada.

All the villagers arrived at Ranga's place and began scrutinising him. To their dismay, he was still the same old Ranga and they dispersed. However, the narrator stayed back and shared a few jokes with the boy and then left. Later in the afternoon, Ranga arrived at the narrator's home with a few oranges. The narrator judged the boy and felt it appropriate to marry such a well educated and humble boy. However, Ranga had no plans to settle as a married man. He put his views on marriage in front of the narrator that he wanted to get married to a girl who is mature and someone he could admire.

Ranga left after the discussion and the narrator decided then that he would get the boy married. Determined, he began considering Rama Rao's niece Ratna as a suitable bride for Ranga. She was from a big town and knew how to play veena and harmonium. He came up with a plan and arranges a meeting.

The narrator was happy as his plan was working. As his next step, the next day the narrator took Ranga to an astrologer who he had already tutored what to say. It was the meeting with the astrologer when the narrator's name is disclosed. Shyama, he was. The astrologer pretended to read the natal chart of Rangappa and declared that the boy was in love with a girl who had a name of something found in the ocean. Shyama said it could be Ratna, Rama Rao's niece. Ranga's smile was not hidden from Shyama.

Ranga by then had admitted that he had been attracted to the girl.

The story moves forward ten years, or to say, returns to the present. Rangappa came one day to the narrator, inviting him at his son Shyama's third birthday. Obviously, Ratna and Ranga had been married. And now they have a three years old son whom Ranga named after the narrator.

Answer the following questions in 30-40 words:

1. Masti Venkatesha Iyengar expresses an aversion to English language and the English rule in India. Bring out instances.
2. Why does the author equal his countrymen to a flock of sheep?
3. What is Dr. Gundabhatta's opinion about Hosahalli and the world outside?
4. What was special about Rangappa? How did the villagers react to it?
5. What were Ranga's views on marriage?
6. Why does the narrator compare himself to a he-goat and Ranga to a lion?
7. How did the narrator arrange that Ranga should meet Ratna?
8. "Words, mere words! The fellow said he would leave but he did not make a move. How can one expect words to match actions in these days of Kaliyuga?" Who said these words and in what context?

Answer the following questions in 100-120 words:

1. Character sketch of the narrator.

Shyama, the narrator of the story 'Ranga's Marriage' is also the central character. His style of narration evokes a lot of humour in the story. He is an elderly gentleman and refers to himself as a dark piece of oil cake. He is passionately in love with his village and the villagers and rambles incessantly while describing it. He is a keen observer of his surroundings and uses a colourful style of narration. He feels it is disgraceful to use English words in the native tongue.

The narrator is a good judge of people and regards Ranga as a generous and considerate fellow. He is conservative at heart and feels unhappy at Ranga's decision to remain single. He had decided that Ratna would be a suitable bride for him. He means well and his intentions are good. He schemes to get Ranga married and arranges a meeting with Shastri whom he had tutored thoroughly. He is a shrewd contriver as he tells Ranga that Ratna was married. This he does in order to rouse Ranga's desire for the unattainable.

2. What steps did the narrator take to get Ranga married to Ratna?

3. Comment on the influence of English - the language and the way of life - on Indian life as reflected in the story. What is the narrator's attitude to English?
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