

# Women Not To Marry A Thai Father's Instructions to His Son

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There are many collections of profound, poetic, and inspiring proverbs in Thailand. They range from the old and broad-ranging *Maxims of Phra Ruang* to the well-defined and exquisitely written *Proverbs for Women* of Sunthorn Phu. In such company the following little prose piece is clearly outclassed. Witty rather than wise, it is light and written strictly for fun.

The author, true enough, deals with an important subject. For a young man, what could be more important than choosing a wife? But the categories of women that eligible young bachelors should avoid are altogether trivial. And truly "bad" types of women (if such there be) get never a mention. Perhaps our author felt that including hussies, harlots, and Jezebels would make the tone of the dialogue too serious, or perhaps he felt that everyone knew these types well enough already.

Here, then, is "Characteristics of Eight Kinds of Women." The author is unknown. (The text has been published as an addendum to *Suphasit Thai Son Chai* [Thai Proverbs for Men], which the Phitthayakhan Press attributes to Sunthorn Phu. It is highly doubtful if the *Suphasit* is by Thailand's great poet; it is unthinkable that the "Characteristics" is.) Although the significance of this piece is small, it does cast some light, feeble and flickering though it may be, on what Thai men thought of women, the marrying kind, some decades ago.

## Characteristics of Eight Kinds of Women

Father: Your father will teach you how to find a wife, the woman you should take to be the mistress of your home. Finding such a wife, my son, is by no means easy. If, my boy, you go looking for a mistress of your house, you must look for a woman who does not appear in these

rules of your father. If a woman is on my list, you must never take her as a wife. I, your father, have already tested it out. Never take any woman who is described in these rules as mistress of your home.

Son: These rules, Father, what are they all about?

Father: Oh, I got these rules of mine from a learned master. He says there are eight kinds of women that must be avoided: the "Not Yet," the "Bottomless Pit," the "Husband Interrupter," the "Hearth Mover," the "Talking Flying Horse," the "Sweet Bellow," the "Palmist," and the "Upholder of the Just." If you run into any one of these, don't ever take her as your wife. If a woman is not on this list, she is acceptable as a wife.

Son: What are they like, Father? Please explain to me so I can understand. These types of women—what are they, Father?

Father: Oh, the "Not Yet" woman is a woman who clings to "not yet." For example, her husband asks about something, "Have you done it?" She answers "Not yet." And on something else, "Have you put it away?" She again says, "Not yet." No matter what the husband asks about, her answer is always "Not yet." That is the type, my son, that they call the "Not Yet" woman.

Son: So that's the way it is, father. The "Bottomless Pit" woman—please, Father, explain her to me thoroughly so I'll remember.

Father: What is the "Bottomless Pit," eh? Whatever is in the house she eats. She has no concern for children or husband. A peddler comes selling, she buys and eats it all up. She thinks of no one but herself. This we call the "Bottomless Pit." Feeding her will be your ruin.

Son: And, oh, the one you called the "Husband Interrupter"—please, Father, tell me what kind of woman she is.

Father: Well, the "Husband Interrupter," eh? Let me give you an example. Someone comes looking for her husband to speak with him. She competes with her husband in talking and asking. It doesn't matter if the visitor is poor or a gentleman. She butts in, her voice vying with her husband's. This is the type we call the "Husband Interrupter." Remember it.

Son: I get it, father. And the woman who is a "Hearth Mover"—what's she like, Father?

Father: The "Hearth Mover" woman, you say? She's the kind who doesn't like to light the fire in her own hearth. Seeing that another house already has a fire going, she lifts her pot to it, doing her cooking at house here and there. Wherever it's convenient, that's where she'll do her cooking. Sometimes when it's cold and she sees people huddled

about a nice charcoal fire, she'll carry her pot to cook there, taking the common fire as her own. Women like this, my son, are what we call "Hearth Movers."

Son: The "Talking Flying Horse"—what sort of person is that?

Father: Oh, the "Talking Flying Horse" woman? I'll give you an example. She goes around blabbing to people here and there about all sorts of personal domestic matters between herself and her husband. And no matter what she hears—from whomever or wherever—she picks it up and tells it all over the place. This is what we call the "Talking Flying Horse" woman.

Son: What kind of woman is the "Sweet Bellow"?

Father: Oh, the "Sweet Bellow" is a woman whose loud voice carries beyond the house. Her voice reaches to wherever one may be. This we call a voice that rises to the heavens, a face that rivals a drum. This is the type of woman we call a "Sweet Bellow." [The term "Sweet Bellow" seems to imply that the woman's words are sweet and loving enough, just embarrassingly loud.]

Son: And, Father, what kind of woman is the one you call the "Palmist"?

Father: The one we call a "Palmist" is like this: whenever she talks to anyone at all, she raises her hands with every word. This is the type of woman we call a "Palmist." [This category is the vaguest; the author seems to mean women who talk with their hands.]

Son: And what kind of woman do you call the "Upholder of the Just"?

Father: The woman called the "Upholder of the Just" is like this: her husband asks her, "My dear, have you put this away yet?" and she says, "Just a minute." "Have you put that away, dear?" "Just a minute." It's "Just a minute" all the time. Women such as this, my son, are what we call "Upholders of the Just."

These eight types of women, my son, you must avoid. Don't ever marry any of them. But if you find a woman not on your father's list of eight, do take her as a wife, and your life will be sublime.