

Dr. Nabarun Ghosh
Assistant Professor
Department of English
Jagjivan College, Ara

Topic: Significance of the Proviso Scene in William Congreve's *The Way of the World*

Proviso scene in Restoration dramas is a convention where the hero and the heroine bargain with each other before coming to a mutual agreement. The proviso scene occurs in the Scene-V, Act-IV of William Congreve's play *The Way of the World*. This scene has been universally acclaimed as one of the wittiest scenes of the play which serves the dual purpose of generating fun and at the same time providing the basic principles for a harmonious conjugal life. Although written in 1700, this scene surpassed time and space as it is relevant till today irrespective of society and culture. Mutual bickering and putting allegations upon each other are some of the most common reasons of unhappy marriages. This scene throws light on how to get over personal ego and give priority to adjustment and sacrifice in order to live a happy married life.

Millamant, the heroine, tells Mirabell that he must not call her by fancy names after marriage, such as, my love, my sweetheart, my dear etc. She will not go to Hyde Park on Sundays after wedding which she thinks is a show-off by the newlywed couples in order to get attention and create rumour. She neither wants to pay social visits, nor wants to go to theatre wearing fine dresses like others. She wants personal space not only inside the house but also in public places. Mirabell should not enter her privacy without permission. She must not be restricted from wearing what she wishes, eating as she likes and inviting her friends at home. In other words, she wants to have freedom after marriage. She believes that every woman loses some part of her liberty after marriage which is the reason of quarrels between many couples.

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Mirabell also does not shy away from expressing his opinion. In a calm, composed, satirical and witty manner he points out the follies that contemporary women have. According to Mirabell, a woman should not use cosmetics in order to look beautiful as long as her husband likes her without them. He expects the same thing from Millamant. He does not want Millamant to go to festivals wearing mask. She must not wear tight fitting clothes during her pregnancy for showing her fashion statement. She will be prevented from drinking foreign liquors. He does not want Millamant to engage herself in gossiping about absent persons.

Thus, in the proviso scene we see that both the hero and heroine of the play *The Way of the World* lay down their expectations from each other and arrive into a mutual understanding before marriage. Through Mirabell and Millamant, William Congreve gives his philosophy of love and happy married life. According to him, both the partners should sacrifice some part of their ego in order to live happily. Marriage is the other name of adjustment which people tend forget and thereby ending in unhappy conjugal lives.

Please visit the following links for further study:

1. <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/w/the-way-of-the-world/summary-and-analysis/act-iv>
2. <https://gradesfixer.com/free-essay-examples/reading-the-proviso-scene-of-congreves-the-way-of-the-world-in-the-21st-century/>
3. <https://literatureessaysamples.com/reading-the-proviso-scene-of-congreve-s-the-way-of/>
4. <https://literaryocean.com/importance-of-proviso-scene-in-the-way-of-the-world/>

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