What meeting your spouse online has in common with arranged marriage

April 4 2018, by Amitrajeet A. Batabyal

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Most Americans who get married today believe they are choosing their own partners after falling in love with them. Arranged marriages, which remain common in some parts of the world, are a rarity here.

But while [doing research](#) about [arranged marriages](#), I've made a surprising observation: These seemingly different kinds of matrimony may be beginning to converge.

Couples who ostensibly marry after spontaneously falling in love increasingly do that with some help from online dating services or after meeting through hookup apps. And modern arranged marriages – including my own – are becoming [more like love marriages](#).

Going strong in India

According to some estimates, [more than half of the marriages taking place around the world each year](#) are arranged. They are the norm in India, comprising at least [90 percent of all marriages](#).

The practice also remains [relatively common](#) elsewhere in South Asia, parts of Africa, the Middle East and East Asian countries like Japan and China.

I believe that [most people](#) in communities where arranged marriages predominate still feel that parents and other close relatives are qualified to select marriage partners. Some [young Indians](#) consider their parents as more objective than they are about this big decision and more adept at spotting compatibility.

In addition, arranged marriages help couples uphold cultural and religious traditions that have stood the test of time. Perhaps this explains why people in arranged marriages tend to [get divorced less frequently](#).

Data comparing divorce rates within countries for arranged and love marriage are hard to come by. But in the U.S., between 40 and 50 percent of all [marriages end in divorce](#). In India, the divorce rate for all marriages is [about 1 percent](#) and it's [higher for love marriages than](#)

arranged ones there.

To be sure, divorce is often frowned upon in nations and cultures where arranged marriages are common – making that metric a potentially unreliable way to assess marital bliss or the lack thereof. In addition, the U.S., Indian and other governments generally don't collect arranged marriage data.

Not your grandma's arranged marriage

As a result of India's rising incomes, higher education levels and technological advances that ease communications, arranged marriage is changing there and among people of Indian heritage who live elsewhere. Young people who tie the knot that way have more power to choose their spouses and can even initiate the process instead of their parents.

In addition, the prevalence of matrimonial websites such as Shaadi (which means marriage in Hindi) and Jeevansathi (life partner in Hindi) empower young Indians who reside in India or North America to become more self-reliant.

The internet, higher education levels, and cultural and economic globalization are also making single Indians freer to do their own searching for future spouses than their parents were. And some traditions that limit choices for single people, such as parents placing newspaper ads to announce eligibility and interest, are becoming less common.

Finally, when Indians reach a marriageable age – usually between 18 and 30 years old for women and between 22 and 40 for men – the ways these aspiring brides and grooms interact are beginning to resemble contemporary dating in the U.S. That's a big change from the rituals of the past, which typically involved a supervised meeting between the

prospective bride and the groom and several meetings between their families.

Arranged marriage, American-style

Arranged marriage [is stigmatized](#)in the U.S., where parents are largely deemed ill-suited for the task of finding marriage partners for their children.

But, in my opinion, things are changing here for a reason. [Online dating and matrimonial sites](#), such as eHarmony, OkCupid and The Right Stuff are proliferating and becoming more accepted.

While these sites and apps don't use the word "arranged" in their branding, it's hard to deny that they do "arrange" for people to meet. In addition, the explicit criteria – online profiles, personality tests, questionnaires – that they use to match individuals resemble the implicit criteria parents and friends use to identify prospective spouses for arranged marriages.

An important difference is that third parties – dating websites and other matchmaking services or their staff – handle the "arranging" activities. EHarmony, for example, pre-screens candidates based on [personality tests](#). OkCupid uses questionnaires to match people. Perfectmatch.com uses algorithms to match people, and The Right Stuff pairs people by profile.

Psychologist [John Cacioppo](#) of the University of Chicago recently did a study with several colleagues about internet dating and modern matrimony. They found that more than one-third of all American couples who got married between 2005 and 2012 met online. Marriages that began when couples met online were a little [less likely to break up](#) than those who didn't and those spouses were somewhat more satisfied

with their marriages, the researchers determined.

In my view, all parents seeking to arrange a marriage for their sons and daughters do so with the best of intentions. They don't always get it right, but they frequently do. My own parents certainly did, 23 years ago, when I got married. And whether parents or computer algorithms make this connection, the ultimate goal is the same: to ensure a happy and long-lasting union.

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