Arranged Marriages vs Love Marriages

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Abstract

Marriage is a very sacred institution in any society, and different societies have different methodologies of addressing marriages. In the subcontinent, the dominant mode of marriage is an arranged marriage, where the spouses are chosen by the respective family members. Love marriages are not widely accepted in this community and are also not thought of as a big success. The inherent pressure of the families of both spouses, in the case of arranged marriages, leaves them with no other option but to continue their marriage. A similar fate does not follow for couples in love marriages, since their families feel greatly left out and the risk is that the couple may not be accepted by both families. Social norms, however, suggest that arranged marriage is a preferred mode of marriage.

Arranged Marriages Vs Love Marriages

Marriage is an institution that is prevalent in most societies of the world. There are many different kinds of marriages, for example, monogamy, polygamy, and polyandry. The most dominant form of marriage out of all of these all over the world is monogamy, and it is the particular type that this paper is concerned with. There are two broad categories into which monogamy can be divided, namely arranged marriages and love marriages.

The difference between the two is that in love marriages, the person getting married looks for his/her partner him/herself. Sometimes it may take a very long time since obviously everybody wants his/her life partner to be perfect (Cherukuri, 2016). They might date or go out with countless people before making the right choice.

In arranged marriages, on the other hand, the person who has to get married ends up with someone not of their own choice but with someone who has been suggested to them by their relatives or family members. Even though it seems very bizarre, this form of marriage is prevalent in many parts of the world, even today, especially in countries of South Asia.

Discussing this topic is important for two major reasons. Firstly, this topic is very relevant to us since we live in a society where monogamous marriages are very common. Almost everyone, at some point in their lives, sees themselves getting married. Moreover, it is an issue that has not received much attention, both in research as well as in academia. In the society of the subcontinent, there are differing views about love marriages and arranged marriages, but social trends and statistics indicate a higher success rate of arranged marriages, though minor success stories of love marriages cannot be phased out.

Arranged and Love Marriages – the Debate.

There are many differing views about both these forms of marriage. Some people are of the view that love marriages are the only form of marriage in which there is a guarantee for the couple to remain happy with one another since they know each other very well and only proceed towards marriage when they are sure that they love each other. However, there is a large number of people who disagree with this view. According to their perspective, couples in arranged marriages remain happier and more satisfied with their spouses and, therefore, it is the preferable form of marriage (Bingham, 2018). They base their argument on research conducted in different parts of the world, both qualitative as well as quantitative.

Arranged marriages are more common than we think they are. However, saying that they are not that uncommon still means that their occurrences are much less as compared to love marriages. This fact would make one think that since love marriages are more common, they must result in happier couples. Moreover, the idea that in arranged marriages, one finds oneself getting married to and agreeing to spend the rest of one's life with a person that one has probably never even met seems pretty scary and leads one to automatically conclude that a love marriage is better than an arranged marriage. However, there is a deeper meaning to arranged marriages, and there are multiple benefits and advantages that are not very apparent. In the following section of the essay, all the advantages of arranged marriages will be discussed and a completely different picture of them will be painted as compared to the dominant perception that people throughout the world have.

Recently, a former High Court family judge stated that according to him, arranged marriages are actually happier and much more successful as compared to love marriages. The justification that he gives for making this claim is that since, in arranged marriages, the spouse is chosen by the family and not by the person him/herself, the pressure of finding the perfect partner to settle down with is removed. Similarly, the founder of the Marriage Foundation Think Tank, Sir Paul Coleridge, recently claimed that he has come to a rather astonishing conclusion about marriages in the UK. He says that based on various studies and research conducted, it has been proven that Muslim women in the UK seem to be much more happily married as compared to women belonging to any other religion or ethnic background (Regan, 2018). Needless to mention, over here, the Muslim women who were a part of these studies had arranged marriages. It shows that the dominant perception of arranged marriages as forceful and miserable is flawed and incorrect.

Furthermore, Sir Paul Coleridge also stated that he has found out through research that Muslim arranged marriages have most of the characteristics of very long-term, happy, successful marriages. They enter the institution of marriage very realistically without any unreal hopes and expectations from their spouses. On the other hand, those entering love marriages do have such "celebrity expectations" and think that their relationship will always remain as romantic and dreamy as it was before marriage (Dholakia, 2018). However, as it happens, their 'perfect partners' eventually show them their real side, and they realize that everything is not just rainbows and unicorns. The

disappointment they face is great, and in most love marriages, when such a point is reached, the next step is divorce.

It has been noticed that due to globalization and increasing technological advancements, the cultures of many regions of the world are evolving. Cultures evolve and become spread out in a way that they are adopted and exchanged by other regions and the people living in those regions all the time. It has been noticed that in South Asian and Central Asian countries, the culture has evolved to a great extent. Borrowing from Western concepts of feminism, humanism, and individualism, the mindsets and perceptions of the people are changing, and this is directly reflected in their practices and everyday lives. Women, for example, did not work before, but now their ratios in comparison with men in the employment sectors have increased considerably (Dholakia, 2018). Many other aspects of South Asian and Central Asian cultures have changed as well, but one thing that has remained static is arranged marriage.

Arranged marriages still take place in these regions in the same proportion as they did about a decade ago. A practice is only continued if it does not create any problems. People have been known to give up practices that they think are problematic for them (Cherukuri, 2016). But the fact that people in Asia have not given up arranged marriages is proof of the fact that they still consider them to be beneficial for themselves and successful.

Choosing a spouse via arranged marriage has two main advantages. Firstly, the options that one is presented with are from amongst those families with whom the person is at least vaguely familiar. Even if the potential spouse is completely unknown, his/her family is somewhat known. It means that one is familiar with the environment, culture, and financial situation of the family. So after one gets married into such a family, there are no shocking surprises. Moreover, arranged marriage suggestions are mostly made by the family members of the person. Since they happen to be much more experienced in this regard (owing to their age), their wisdom is unmatched. They are mindful of certain aspects that a person would never be able to think of on his/her own. Thus, their decision can be trusted because, since they love their children, they would never make a bad decision on their behalf (Grover, 2017). Moreover, various studies have shown that divorce rates in arranged marriages are a lot lower as compared to divorce rates in love marriages. An unpacking of why this seems to be the case is required over here.

In India, even today, 90% of the marriages that take place are arranged marriages. In 2013, a survey conducted by IPSOS showed in its findings that about 74% of Indian young adults said that they would prefer arranged marriages for themselves as opposed to love marriages. Statistics regarding arranged marriages in other countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and China are also very similar. Furthermore, it was found that in the Bombay High Court, the proportion of divorce cases of love marriages is much higher as compared to divorce cases of arranged marriages and that, too, given the fact that love marriages are fairly uncommon in the country (Regan, 2018). In arranged marriages, people who have similar beliefs are brought together. It is a very important factor when it comes to building relationships. It means that the cultural differences between both spouses are minimal as opposed to

those in love marriages. In love marriages, more often than not, the man and the woman belong to fairly different backgrounds and have rather different families from each other, which makes it very difficult for them to adjust to each other's families regardless of how much they like each other, and thus, divorce is a common end to such marriages.

In love marriages, people give more importance to superficial features of another person's personality, such as looks, physical appearance, bank balance, and residence. Though these things are also important, they are not relevant when it comes to building relationships, especially long-term ones (Cherukuri, 2016). One never knows how the other person would be with the kids, for instance, or how helpful the person has the potential to be. In arranged marriages, the things that are emphasized more are the family of the potential spouse, his/her nature and character, and his/her attitude and dealings with others. Moreover, since the suitors who come are from similar familial backgrounds, the financial standing, levels of education, and worldview are more or less the same between both families as well as between both people who are to get married.

It has been observed throughout the world that wherever arranged marriages take place, divorce rates are lower. This is especially the case in countries like Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, where arranged marriage is the dominant and prevalent form of marriage. Divorce rates of arranged marriages are a lot lower as compared to the divorce rates of love marriages primarily because, in love marriages, the families are not involved. The bride and the groom introduce each other to their families only after they themselves decide that they will marry each other. In this way, it is natural for both families to have an impression that such an important decision has been taken independently, and it leaves the families with a lasting negative impression of the spouses (Grover, 2017). Furthermore, the interaction of the person with their partner's family is minimal. They don't interact with them much except for certain events or occasions. Such lack of interaction, in the majority of cases, is due to the hidden hostility of family members towards the spouses, as if they were not welcome in the family wholeheartedly. As a result, they cannot get close to their partner's family and their relationship is limited to their partner. Thus, at the time of divorce, it is only their relationship with their spouse that breaks.

However, when it comes to arranged marriages, there are always somewhat strong bonds between a person and the family of his/her spouse. In a lot of cases, arranged marriage couples also live with families in extended households. In fact, it is often through the families that the marriage gets finalized, and sometimes the family of the future spouse is known before even meeting the spouse. There are also connections and bonds between the families of both members of the couple; thus, getting a divorce is a big deal and not an easy task. It is so because the relationships of so many people with one another are at stake, and nobody decides to break all of them off before at least thinking twice. Bonding with the other family members also plays a role in strengthening the marriage in a way by helping to resolve any fights or issues that arise between the husband and the wife. Thus, fights are quickly resolved, and divorce is the last option one would want to consider in an arranged marriage.

Conclusion

After discussing both love marriages and arranged marriages at length, it can be concluded that it has been proven that arranged marriages are more long-lasting. The couples in arranged marriages are also much happier and much more content as compared to the couples in love marriages. To prove this point, various strong arguments have been made, and evidence has been provided. The evidence has been based on research that has been conducted in many different parts of the world. Moreover, the arguments made by advocates of love marriage to show that it is the dominant form of marriage that must be practiced have also been discussed, and counter-arguments to them have been provided, thus negating their arguments and points.

To encapsulate all that has been discussed, firstly, forms of marriage were discussed. Following that, brief descriptions of love marriages and arranged marriages were provided and, finally, comparisons were drawn between the two. In the end, it was concluded that couples in arranged marriages are far better off than couples in love marriages. Arranged marriage couples tend to be much more satisfied, and their marriages last longer as well.

Though statistics have been provided to show that arranged marriages are stronger as compared to love marriages, this essay is only based on facts and merely gives an opinion in choosing the better option between the two. However, this by no means is the same as saying that love marriages are not healthy or that all of them end up in divorce or separation. Undoubtedly, there are numerous examples of extremely happy couples in love marriages. At the same time, there are countless examples of arranged marriages that ended up being broken up. Exceptional cases do exist, of course, but the argument of this essay is only based on a quantitative and factual basis. It only looks at and talks about the prevalent trends, and the intention of the author is not to undermine the institution of love marriages. In the end, the decision lies in the hands of the individual person who must be given a free choice of following whichever method he/she wishes.

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