Evaluating the Scope of Love and Freedom for Indian Women in Arranged Marriage

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Abstract

The focus of the paper is on the effect of arranged marriage on the lives of Indian women. Arranged marriage should not be thought of as a one-off event. The paper argues that it is the first step in creating a vicious cycle to limit and define the role of females. The environment that leads to the need for arranged marriages is a roadblock to society's advancement. The paper is divided into two sections, each having subsections. The first segment tells a story from the perspective of Indian women and presents a bleak picture of women's lives at various periods of their lives. The goal is to illustrate the gravity of the challenges that lie under the surface of India's arranged marriages. The paper addresses the complexities of a girl's upbringing and the critical circumstances and events involved in an arranged marriage. The implicit indoctrination of girls by their parents to prepare them to consent to arranged marriages is also a source of concern. The second portion delves into philosophical ramifications, in which the concepts of liberty and love, and the relationship between consent and freedom, are prominent. Finally, the article looks at how love and marriage are related.

Keywords: Arranged Marriage; Freedom; Consent; Love; Women

1. Introduction

Marriage is a universal institution that exists in practically all countries and civilizations. Marriages, on the other hand, differ in terms of their kinds, rituals, and norms among cultures and countries. Marriage is often conceptualized as an institution in which interpersonal relations, typically sexual, are either recognized or refused, given the diversity of cultural and religious perspectives. It is uncommon to find a definition of marriage that encompasses all of its intricacies and is widely accepted. Despite this, Haviland et al. proposed the following definition of marriage:

> Marriage, also called matrimony or wedlock, is a socially or ritually recognized union between spouses that establishes rights and obligations between those spouses, as well as between them and any resulting biological or adopted children and affinity (in-laws and other family through marriage).[1]

Arranged marriages, as the name implies, are marriages between bride and groom that are arranged by individuals other than the pair, most commonly parents and family members. Parents of a couple have started utilizing numerous applications and websites as a result of technological advancements. Arranged weddings are a regular occurrence world-wide, but India has a disproportionately high frequency of them. While it is true that Indian media and folklore support love, India's modernization has had little impact on the "sturdy" system of arranged marriages.[2] The seeming capacity of arranged marriages to adapt to new developments and survive is rooted in Indian culture and values. Arranged weddings have a cultural component that dates back to the Vedic roots of traditional Hinduism circa 500 BCE.[3] In India at that time, there were a variety of alternatives to arranged marriages, but arranged marriages quickly surpassed all other possibilities and continue to this day. As India became more urbanized, various cultural shifts occurred, creating a false contradiction between love and arranged marriages. The false dichotomies have given rise to phenomena like "self-arranged marriages," an illusion of free choice to the prospective couple.[4]

The meteoric growth of love marriages has already taken off, thanks to increasing economic, social, political, and cultural reforms, as well as women's empowerment. In this sense, love marriages refer to a couple's first contact without the involvement of their parents or family members. In India, there is also a third idea of love-cum-arranged marriages. With their parents' permission, sons and daughters in love-cum-

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[1] William Haviland, Harald EL Prins, and Bunny McBride, *Cultural Anthropology: The human challenge* (Cengage Learning, 2013), 65.

[2] See Dale Hoiberg, and Indu Ramchandani, "Students' Britannica India: Select essays," *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* vol. 6 (2000).

[3] See George Monger, Marriage customs of the world: From henna to honeymoons (Abc-clio, 2004).

[4] Monger, *Marriage customs of the world: From henna to honeymoons*, 44.

arranged marriages are free to meet several potential spouses and to say no or yes to each other. One can make sense of this system as Tinder matches planned by parents and relatives. When a couple agrees to marry after meeting multiple times and now conversing on the phone and chatting, it is known as a love-cum-arranged marriage. I argue that love in love-cum-arranged marriage is not a true form of love. The reasons are outlined in the section on consent and freedom in this paper. Both arranged and love-cum-arranged marriages are the result of a lengthy search by the men's and women's families. Arranged marriages involve "marriages between consenting adults well past the age of sexual maturity."[5] In India, men must be 21 years old to be considered legally mature for marriage, while women must be 18 years old. Arranged marriages and love-cum-arranged marriages are nearly interchangeable due to the component of consent in the marriage agreement. Arranged marriages and love-cum-arranged marriages are both referred to as arranged marriages in the paper.

The rising number of nuclear families is a direct result of modernization and urbanization. The rise of nuclear families has reduced the influence of close relatives in marriage decisions. As a result, in India, clan ties are dissolving, leading parents to use new techniques such as publicizing marriage offers on the Internet and in newspapers. India now offers a multitude of marriage services, including shaadi.com, which has grown to become the world's largest matrimonial service, thanks to increased internet access.

The paper addresses the impact of arranged marriage on Indian women's lives. Arranged marriages should not be thought of as a one-time event. It is the first step in a vicious circle of limiting and defining women's roles. The environment that leads to the need for planned marriages is a roadblock to society's advancement. In the end, given the social, economic, and cultural ramifications of arranged marriages, women must bear the brunt of the negative effects. The paper is divided into two sections, each having subsections. The first section tells the story of women in India in general. The paper purposefully presents a bleak picture of women's lives at various periods of their lives. The goal is to il-

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[5] Patricia Uberoi, *Freedom and destiny: Gender, family, and popular culture in India* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 63.

lustrate the gravity of the challenges that lie under the surface of India's arranged marriages. The story will illustrate the complexities of a little girl's upbringing. The emphasis is on the critical circumstances and events that necessitate an arranged marriage. The implicit indoctrination of girls by their parents to prepare them to consent to arranged marriages is also a source of concern throughout the story. The second portion is dedicated to delving into the story's philosophical ramifications. The concepts of liberty and love are prominent. There is a study of the relationship between permission and freedom. The article concludes with a discussion of the link between love and marriage.

2. A Narrative of the Life of Indian Women in the Context of Arranged Marriage

This section attempts to portray a *general* picture of a typical Indian woman's life leading up to an arranged marriage. The term "general" is stressed since the story's goal is to provide readers a glimpse into the life of an Indian woman. As a society, India is rapidly changing and improving. The tale told in this section may not be the story of every woman, but it serves to illustrate the suffering of women who are forced into arranged marriages. The narrative is organized in the form of a life cycle. This life cycle in arranged marriage has four stages: early childhood, teenage years, maturity for marriage, and post-marriage life. The early childhood stage will concentrate on defining the mentality of those that surround the girl child. Censorship, limitation, and ground rules are only imposed for girls throughout their teenage years during this era. Maturity for Marriage delves into the arranged marriage procedure in a typical Indian household. Post-marriage life is a speculation regarding a woman's life after an arranged marriage.

2.1 Early Stage

Discrimination against women begins before they ever see the light of day. In India, it is prohibited to check the gender of fetuses and to perform abortions. The law has been introduced to reduce feticide. The reason for this feticide was simple: either parents did not want daughters, or there had to be a boy after each set of daughters. The predominant argument for this reason is that a male is required for the continuance and advancement of a clan or family. Despite a welcome decrease in female

feticides, the issue remains concerning. The following statistics from a countrywide study on the male-to-female sex ratio of children born in India reflects modern India's harsh reality:

> The natural ratio is assumed to be between 103 and 107, and any number above it is considered as suggestive of female foeticide. According to the decennial Indian census, the sex ratio in the 0 to 6 age group in India has risen from 102.4 males per 100 females in 1961, to 104.2 in 1980, to 107.5 in 2001, to 108.9 in 2011.The child sex ratio is within the normal natural range in all eastern and southern states of India, but significantly higher in certain western and particularly northwestern states such as Maharashtra, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir (118, 120 and 116, as of 2011, respectively). The western states of Maharashtra and Rajasthan 2011 census found a child sex ratio of 113, Gujarat at 112 and Uttar Pradesh at 111.[6]

According to the Indian census, there is a link between an anomalous sex ratio and higher socioeconomic position and literacy. The research reveals a link to India's dowry system, which views girls as a financial burden on the family.

> Urban India has higher child sex ratio than rural India according to 1991, 2001 and 2011 Census data, implying higher prevalence of female foeticide in urban India. Similarly, child sex ratio greater than 115 boys per 100 girls is found in regions where the predominant majority is Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian; furthermore "normal" child sex ratio of 104 to 106 boys per 100 girls are also found in regions where the predominant majority is Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian.[7]

These findings counter theories that sex selection is an old practice that occurs exclusively among the poor, uneducated, or followers of a specific religion in India. The data was gathered over fifteen years ago, and India's society has seen numerous significant changes since then. People's attitudes about females have improved dramatically as a result

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[6] Janaki Ramaiah, T. Chandrasekarayya, and P. Vinayaga Murthy. "Declining child sex ratio in India: Trends, Issues and Concerns." *Asia-Pacific Journal of Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2011): 183.

[7] Ibid., 188.

of fast increases in education and knowledge. Abortions are no longer as prevalent as they formerly were. People have begun to accept girl children into their homes as well. Now a celebration takes place with the birth of both girl and boy, but the enthusiasm level will be different. The disparity in excitement suggests that while the conscious mentality has improved, girls remain liabilities implicitly.

The arranged marriage is responsible for a big part of the perception of the girl as a responsibility. In India, girls are frequently referred to as "parāyā dhan". The loose English translation of the Hindi phrase "parāyā dhan" might be "others' property" or "others' money." 'Others' here refers to a family with whom a girl will marry. The common practice of dowry in Indian marriages also contributes to a girl's status as a responsibility to her parents. The dowry system may be the subject of a whole other paper or book, but for the sake of brevity and concentration, I will not go into detail. When a girl is born into a family, she immediately becomes a responsibility, and parents begin to consider how much money they need to set aside on a regular basis in order to find a suitable spouse for their daughter. The amount of money spent on dowry and marriage is closely proportionate to the groom's quality. Dowry has become a criterion for arranged marriages, and it has become a plague for Indian culture. Between the contemporary context, there are no significant distinctions in male and female child raising in terms of schooling and other amenities. However, from early childhood, mothers start conditioning and preparing the girl child for 'the other family.' Girls are encouraged to participate in domestic chores such as cooking and cleaning. In current times, this is not the case in every home, and both boys and girls are nearly on an equal footing until they enter school.

2.2 Teen Stage

Although there is no consensus among specialists on the specific definition of adolescent teenage year, it is widely acknowledged that a teenager, or teen, is a young person aged 13 to 19 years old.[8] Because their

[8] Sonata Žukauskaitė, Lašienė, Liudvikas Lašas, Bronislava Urbonaitė, and Peter Hindmarsh, "Onset of breast and pubic hair development in 1231 preadolescent Lithuanian schoolgirls," *Archives of disease in childhood.* vol 90, no. 9 (2005):

age ends in teen, they are referred to as teens. The onset of adolescent years causes instability in the lives of teens due to biological and psychological changes. Parents who have direct experience with this turbulence in their adolescents are aware of the opposite gender's newly discovered curiosity. They start making plans for their daughters' virginity to be saved for marriage alone. The narrative starts with a simple instruction to keep a safe distance from boys. Making friends with someone of the opposing gender is still frowned upon. Males in the family, such as the father and brother, become more wary of the family's female members. Any indication that a female is befriending a boy is a significant problem. Family members approach such matters with seriousness. To create a precedent for the near future, the family frequently verbally or physically punishes the daughter.

As girls get older, they begin to receive advice on how to act right in order to convey the elegance to the 'other' family. The behavior lesson covers a variety of themes, including how to walk, talk, laugh, eat, bathe, and so on. Girls, for example, should move or speak softly in order to avoid attracting unwanted attention. The limitation is usually imposed because they are concerned about their daughter's life with 'other relatives,' rather than because they wish to be harsh to her. Censorship, restriction, and punishment of various types are done to make the adaptation and transition of a girl's life after marriage easier. The logic behind this is that if a girl does not develop these wonderful talents at a young age, how can she be able to care for a whole new alien family?

2.3 Maturity Stage

The passage of their school days, according to Indian view, marks the beginning of the mature period for females. Here, maturity denotes that they are ready to marry. With college and higher education, the education pattern, which was essentially same for both males and girls through high school, alters. Boys are more likely to apply for financially feasible courses such as engineering, law, and the army, but girls are more likely to enroll in economically irrelevant courses. The notion of *parāyā dhan* comes into play once more. Boys are still seen as breadwinners, while girls are seen as housewives. The traditional gender roles apply here as well. There has been an upsurge in the number of girls enrolling in professional courses during the previous decade. However, this increase is due to a shift in demand for the arranged marriage market, not a desire to financially empower women.

The current expectations of the arranged marriage market continue to govern a girl's conduct, lifestyle, and education. Due to urbanization and modernity over the last decade, the qualifications for the appropriate bride have changed dramatically from what they were a few decades ago.

The professionally trained bride has been a prestige symbol for a groom's family in recent years, leading in girls enrolling in management and teaching courses. Another factor contributing to the rise in demand for professionally prepared brides is an increase in the expense of living in metropolitan India. Without enough money, it has become impossible to exist in a big city in India. Working women in India have a favorable attitude regarding contributing to the family's income as a result of the structural change in society. This positive trend has aided women in gaining financial independence and empowerment. Women have begun to question the concept of arranged marriages as a result of their greater economic independence. Urban India is rapidly rejecting arranged marriages and embracing love marriage as a kind of independence.

The description of the maturity stage would be incomplete without mention of the bride and groom search. The search for a potential partner is the most time-consuming of all the actions involved in an arranged marriage. In India, ladies must be 18 years old to marry, while guys must be 21 years old. Although it is not customary for girls and boys to marry around the time they reach legal age, the hunt begins around this time. The prevailing consensus is that getting a head start boosts the odds of finding a suitable bride or husband.

The job hunt and the search for marital partners have an eerie similarity. In this case, the parallel example of employment recruiting and selection is useful. A job description and specification are included for every position. The candidate who best fits the job description and requirements has a greater probability of being chosen. Similarly, the bride and groom have certain personal preferences and requirements. The matchmaker's job is to take into account various family preferences, including the son/ daughter's preferences. This desire and consideration may vary, but it is likely to include the following.

- **Religion:** In India, religion is frequently the first factor that matchmakers must consider. Arranged marriages are most often between people of the same religious background. Same-religion arranged marriages are followed like a norm, especially in the upper class.

- **Caste and culture:** Next to religion, caste and culture are important considerations. In most cases, the same caste is given first priority. Even among members of the same caste, ancestry plays a significant influence in the search. A parent encourages choosing suitable mates from the same location, language, culinary habit, custom, and cultural conventions.
- **Horoscope:** Since ancient times, combinations of planets and stars at birth, as well as numerology, have played an important part in shaping most elements of life in India. Parents and matchmakers in Indian culture have utilized these to predict the compatibility of marriages. The horoscope's point and percentage match indicates the marriage's success. If one of the partners is Mângalik, which means that Mars has a negative effect on them, the horoscope becomes a deciding factor.
- **Profession and status:** The family's financial stability, occupation, and social position are all important factors, especially for boys.
- **Physical appearances:** Physical looks have remained important, particularly in the case of girls.

Matrimonial websites have mastered the use of these characteristics and criteria to narrow down the search for possible partners.

2.4 Post-Marriage Stage

The first night of a marriage celebration, also known as the first night or suhaag raat in Hindi, is reserved for sexual consummation. A young lady is compelled to engage in sexual activity with a man she barely knows. The girl is now a woman, and the boy is a man as of this night. Throughout their prior years, this man and woman had been taught to refrain from sex. As though they are in possession of some sort of gift that they must exchange only with their better half. The same *sex* that was prohibited only a day before is now celebrated.

Everyone in the groom's family expects the bride to do certain chores for them. A member of the groom's family thinks the bride has received the necessary training to accomplish her obligations. From the first week to her whole life, every labor, effort, and obligation will be judged by the expected gender role of an ideal bride. Her initial responsibility is to prepare meals that would satisfy every member's taste buds. If she fails to complete this assignment, her entire family will be held accountable for neglecting to teach cookery. The groom's mother and

sister, who were previously responsible for home duties, will decrease their participation to a bare minimum. The mother-in-law has two reasons for this: she has been doing all the work since she became part of the house; second, her body is too fragile to make any contribution to the work. The sister's reasoning is simple: she will eventually end up doing these things when she marries; until then, she can rest and assess her sister-in-performance. One of the most intricate and difficult parts of Indian society is the relation between in-laws. More than half of Indian cinema's soap operas are centered solely on this relationship.

Aside from the day-to-day running of the family, the primary expectation of a married woman is the carrier of the next generation. Even before nine months of marriage, she begins to get favors for having a child (implicitly a baby boy). The family breathes a sigh of relief if the firstborn is a male. She can now have a baby of any gender. The stakes aren't particularly high for the mother. However, if the firstborn is a girl, the wait for the son starts. Even after several daughters, the wait remains. The family is incomplete till the son is born. If the lady is unable to give birth to a boy, curses and murmurs begin to flow. People who are close to such women begin to suspect that something is wrong with them. The birth of a boy elevates a woman's social standing because she has now given birth to the clan's bearer. It is now fine to have daughters, and they will go through the same life cycle as her mother.

3. Philosophical Analysis of the Narrative

3.1 Freedom and Consent

Depending on the context, the term freedom can have a variety of meanings. In general, someone or anything has freedom if free to act. The concept of freedom is inextricably linked with the concept of liberty in philosophy and religion. Both freedom and liberty are associated with the ability to act freely and without unnecessary restraints. "Freedom is also traditionally understood as freedom from the arbitrary will of another".[9] Slavery contradicts the condition of freedom since a slave must always submit to the will of others.

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[9] Friedrich August Hayek, *The constitution of liberty* (London: Routledge, 2011), 21.

A free individual, on the other hand, is not obligated to obey the will of others; one may choose what to do and what not to do as long as one does not infringe on the freedom of others. One of the most thorough approaches of understanding freedom is the positive and negative liberty delineation of freedom provided by British philosopher Isaiah Berlin in his article *Two Concepts of Liberty*. Negative liberty, he stated, is "the absence of constraints on, or interference with, an agent's possible action".[10] He used the terms liberty and freedom interchangeably. An increase in negative freedom indicates a reduction in the restrictions on an agent's available actions.

Positive liberty, according to Berlin, is associated with notions like self-mastery, self-determination, and self-control over one's prospects. One aspect has to be clarified here: the exercise of positive freedom is subject to the limits of negative freedom. Both notions were believed by Berlin to be representations of human values. He did, however, warn of the vulnerability of the positive idea of freedom to social-political exploitation. He contended that, as a result of Rousseau, Kant, and Hegel's adherence to the positive idea of freedom, European political intellectuals distorted the concept of liberty by linking it with various sorts of political limitations.

The positive idea of liberty is useful in determining the liberty involved in arranged marriages. It is not the parents' intention for their daughters to suffer. They think, however, that their sons and daughters are not mature enough to make the proper option when it comes to choosing a spouse for themselves. The parents continue to believe they are doing the best for their girls but, in truth, they have been depriving their daughters of their freedom since the girl was born. In the case of arranged marriage, Berlin's paraphrasing of Kant's words, "Paternalism is the greatest despotism imaginable".[11] In the early stages, girls have a lot of freedom. This independence stems from a lack of care for the girl's marriage at this period. With the onset of adolescence, parental worry about marriage begins to limit a girl's liberty, which continues throughout her life. The concept of freedom is central to feminist thought. It is associated with discrimination, equality, agency, individu-

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[10] Isaiah Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 19.

[11] Berlin, *Four Essays on Liberty,* 11.

ality, and rights. Girls' independence becomes being eroded, paving the path for them to be discriminated against. Because of this inequality, females are treated unequally in society. Inequitable treatment raises the issue of agency. Individual expression is hampered by a lack of sense of agency.

In the same vein as freedom, the related idea of consent needs considerable in-depth deliberation. Arranged marriages are typically deemed voluntary in the Indian setting. In many respects, the phrase "consensual" in arranged marriages is deceptive. The illusion of consent is more deadly than the deprivation of freedom. The limitation of freedom sends a clear message about what one is not permitted to do. Denial of freedom allows for dissent or revolt if one is unwilling to accept the forbidden thing.

Nonetheless, the illusion of permission, as in the consensual model of arranged weddings, suppresses any possibility of rebellion. On first glance, arranged marriage appears to be a nice marriage model. The bride and groom's parents and family are the closest people to them. They are aware of the two options and their respective preferences. They are sympathizers. Because parents have been nurturing their children since childhood, they always know what is best for them. Most significantly, it is a component of the tradition upon which Indian society is formed. There is also justification for arranged weddings based on the low divorce rate. The low divorce rate, however, may not represent stability; rather, it may reflect the difficulty of the divorce procedure and social ostracism for those who prefer to continue in a bad marriage rather than face the repercussions of divorce. However, there are no trustworthy research papers or surveys available in India that give accurate statistics on divorce rates. This implies that the illusion of consent is the product of conditioning for the arranged marriage.

Owens emphasized the importance of consent, arguing, "Consent is special because of its voluntary nature".[12] Consent indicates intentionality since it is given voluntarily. The lack of freedom jeopardizes the legitimacy of consent since it forces people to agree to things they do not intend to agree to. Generally, it is thought that under moral responsi-

[12] David Owens, *Shaping the normative landscape* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 84.

bility, one would not closely touch the bodies or property of others without their agreement. Thomson defined such responsibilities as "duties, not to trespass".[13] These responsibilities are morally significant for policies in a society that governs physical and property rights. In moral rights parlance, consent acts to surrender our moral rights against being intimately touched, used, or damaged by the person to whom we have given our consent.[14] Giving consent to another person releases the other from the need to refrain from doing one of these acts. Consent to sexual conduct, for example, may surrender some sexual rights but not others. Communication is also an important factor in obtaining permission. However, simply communicating consent is sufficient agency on the part of the one offering consent to make it legitimate in a meaningful sense. Dougherty believes, "Insofar as consent involves communication, that communication must carry content from a consenting agent's mind".[15] The lack of choice to pick their better halves totally on their own does not qualify permission for arranged marriage as real consent. Even if the bride was informed about the groom, the absence of agency in this case reduces the agreement to a marital formality.

3.2 Love and Marriage

The poetry that formed the lyrics of Frank Sinatra's hit song "Love and Marriage" is a good place to start.

Love and marriage, love and marriage,
Go together like a horse and carriage.
This I tell ya, brother,
you can't have one without the other.
Love and marriage, love and marriage,
It's an institute you can't disparage.
Try, try, try to separate them, it's an illusion.
Try, try, try and you only come
to this conclusion:

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[13] Judith Jarvis Thomson, *The realm of rights* (Harvard University Press, 1990), 73.

[14] For details, see, Alan Wertheimer, Consent to sexual relations (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[15] Tom Dougherty, "Sex, lies, and consent," *Ethics,* vol. 123, no. 4 (2013): 723.

Love and marriage,
love and marriage,
Go together like
a horse and carriage…
You can't have one
without the other.[16]

The song portrays a long-gone state of thought in Indian civilization, which had an alternate marriage system mixing love and marriage in ancient times. The horse and carriage analogy of love and marriage effectively conveys the complementarity inherent in the institution of marriage. Arranged marriages, for example, would simply provide the illusion of marriage. Disregarding the institution of marriage is not the answer. It is critical to include love and freedom into marriages.

Historically India has been a home for several wedding systems. In Indian mythos as well different variety of marriages have been acknowledged by Vedic texts, folklore, and in famous epics such as *Rāmāyaṇam* and *Mahābhārata*.[17] For example, a variety of marriage, *svayaṃvara,* plays a crucial role in the plot of both *Rāmāyaṇam* and *Mahābhārata.* In a *svayaṃvara,* invitations to all the eligible and interested men are sent by the girl's parents broadcasting the intended marriage of the girl. The girl was also provided with decisive information about the prospective groom, like their reputation and abilities. The girl, equipped with such information, would announce her choice of marriage by garlanding the man from attendees. Sometimes the father of the bride would make arrangements for the tournament to test the strength, skills, and abilities of the prospective groom. *Svayaṃvara* of *Rāma* and *Sītā,* in *Rāmāyaṇam,* and *Arjuna* and *Draupadī*, are still imprinted in the popular culture of modern India.

Several wedding systems have historically been used in India. In Indian mythology, several types of weddings have been recognised by Vedic literature, folklore, and great epics such as *Rāmāyaṇam* and *Mahābhārata*. For example, *svayaṃvara*, a type of marriage, plays an important role in the plots of both *Rāmāyaṇam* and *Mahābhārata*. In a *svayaṃvara*, the girl's parents send invitations to all eligible and inter-

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[16] See, Frank Sinatra. "Love and Marriage," Lyrics Freak (1974).
[17] See, Bhanwarlal Nathuram Luniya, *Evolution of Indian culture, from the earliest times to the present day* (Lakshini Narain Agarwal, 1967).

ested males, announcing the girl's intended marriage. The girl was also given important information about the potential husband, such as their reputation and talents. Armed with this knowledge, the girl would declare her choice of marriage by garlanding the man from the audience. The tournament was often organized by the bride's father to test the strength, talents, and abilities of the potential groom. Svayaṃvara of Rāma and Sītā, in Rāmāyaṇam, and Arjuna and Draupadī, are still imprinted in the popular culture of modern India.

Another prominent form was *Gandharva* marriage, which was based on mutual love and agreement. *Gandharva* marriages were the result of mutual attraction and love, and there were no witnesses or ceremonies required. It might be viewed as a modern-day analogue of love marriages. The love and marriage of King Dushyanta and Shakuntala in Kālidāsa's world-famous drama Abhijñānaśākuntalam is an example of Gandharva marriage. In addition to Gandhrava marriages, ancient Hindu literature mentions six more sorts of marriages: *Brahma* marriage, *Daiva* marriage, *Arsha* marriage, *Prajapatya* marriage, *Asura* marriage, *Rakshasa* marriage and *Paishacha* marriage.[18]

With the descent of Vedic religion into orthodox Hinduism (about 500BC), the social ideas of conservative intellectuals, particularly Manu, began to dominate.[19] The spread of Hindu orthodoxy pushed Indian culture toward a caste-based structure and patriarchy. Manu and other followers of the traditional perspective of Hinduism publicly condemned progressive systems such as Gandharva marriages and other such systems. Kant elaborated on the suffering of women as a result of ancient India's regressive transformations.

> Under the system they advocated (sometimes called *Manuvad*), women were stripped of their traditional independence and placed permanently in male custodianship: first of their fathers in childhood, then of their husbands through married life, and finally of their sons in old age.[20]

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[18] For detail on these marriages, see, James Lochtefeld, The illustrated encyclopedia of Hinduism (Rosen, 2002).

[19] Johann Jakob Meyer, *Sexual life in Ancient India: a study in the comparative history of Indian culture* (Motilal Banarsidass Publ, 1971), 48.

[20] Anjani Kant, *Women and the Law* (APH Publishing, 2003), 23.

When the aforementioned historical exposition is matched with the story, it is clear that there was still little consideration of love in marital problems. Love is not a despised feeling in Indian society, but there is a glorification of motherly, sisterly, and brotherly love. Before marriage, love between members of the opposing sex is not allowed. The family of the girl and boy employs a variety of tactics and procedures to keep them from falling in love. Societal and institutional customs and workings are geared to make open interaction between men and women impossible. Friendship between males and girls is frowned upon from a young age. Children are taught at school and at home that the other gender of your age is either your brother or sister. In early infancy, they are not encouraged to establish the notion of friendship with people of a different gender. Many schools have different seating arrangements for boys and girls, and there are also gender-specific institutions, such as all-girls or all-boys schools. Even in co-educational institutions, pupils are predisposed to perceive their fellow opposite gender partner with brotherly and sisterly affection – gender division results in the creation of separate boys' groups and separate females' groups. The objective of this paper is not to criticize the school system or family members, but to point out that engagement and dialogue between young children of opposing sexes is discouraged. It should not be interpreted as a ban on talking to the opposing sex or as a punishment for communicating with the opposite gender.

Things grow more difficult throughout the adolescent years, when biology begins to play a part with hormonal changes. Humans, like all other creatures, are hardwired to reproduce in order to keep the cycle of life going. The opposing gender is attracted by evolution and biology. Girls' adolescent years become the most alert period for parents, relatives, and society as a whole. The youngster who was allowed to mix and converse with people of any gender begins to learn basic principles for living their sexual lives. Gender inequality begins here and continues for females solely throughout their lives. The majority of the lessons, censorship, and limitations are aimed at females. Parents begin to instruct their daughters on how to dress, when to go out, and who to meet. These types of instructions are not given to boys. There is an implicit belief that females require protection and that their sexuality should be concealed. These precautionary procedures are justified by the desire to save the girl for marriage. Child marriages were common in pre-

independence India, but have considerably declined since then. Although it is illegal, it is nevertheless practiced on a limited scale in several regions of India.

According to the article, love can only flourish in a free culture. With love comes concern and respect for one another. There cannot be a marital arrangement. There may also be no arrangement for love. Without seeming mystical, we would want to make a strong argument that only two free spirits can truly fall in love. Individuality and agency may be expressed via freedom. To ensure the success of the marriage, participants wear masks throughout the arranged marriage procedure. When a person's personality is revealed after marriage, the married couple's remaining existence becomes a burden and obligation. Given the stigma associated with divorce and separation, it's no surprise that divorce rates in Indian society are so low. Marriages are arranged under the guises of consent and love.

Many Indian women's post-marital lives become mechanical when they are deprived of love. They engage themselves in housework, children, and family to distract themselves from the anguish of their lives. One cannot comprehend the sorrow and aridity of their souls from the outside, as they will appear to be the perfect daughter, sister, wife, and mother. They have gotten so accustomed and numb to their situation that they are unaware of how much potential they are wasting. A little narrative about an elephant and a rope can give some light on their current state and potential. The plot revolves around how gigantic, muscular elephants can be tamed and held in place by weak and little ropes. In the narrative, infant elephants are bound by ropes that are large enough to hold them. Even when the newborn elephants have grown, they are still chained with the same ropes. They are conditioned to feel that they are unable to escape. They never try to break free because of their convictions.

The same is true for Indian women; their surroundings prepare them to fit into a paternalistic culture. As a result, they lose sight of their potential. Love, which should be the foundation of marriage, is simply a fancy idea in Bollywood films. Everyone who celebrates in the theater after the joyful ending of a girl meeting a boy and falling in love to marry forgets it and returns to the conventional method of doing things from love to marriage, which is mostly arranged.

4. Conclusion

Slavery was once an accepted aspect of life, culture, and society. It was so common that for a long time, it was not even seen to be unethical. Similarly, the frequency of arranged marriage in Indian society has concealed women's hardships. Gradual transformation has begun in Indian society as a result of the expansion of knowledge and awareness. The girls are no longer restricted to the confines of the house. People are starting to let their girls go outside and experience the world. As a result, it is becoming more usual to hear of women's outstanding achievement in practically every field. Boys are no longer living with their parents due to the rise of nuclear households and urbanization. They are losing the status of help for parents in their golden years. The number of working women is steadily increasing. The most powerful tool used by Indian culture to coerce women to submit to an arranged marriage was depriving them of any economic empowerment. Women have begun to realize their full potential as a result of economic independence. They have now begun to see the cultural ties that bind them to their homes. They are passing on this information to their daughters with a new sense of empowerment. Those daughters are now more liberated than any preceding generation. They have begun to express their freedom in many aspects of their existence. They are now deciding how to dress, whom to talk to, when to marry, and with whom to marry.

The love discovered as a result of this freedom will be true love. Marriage will be more rewarding and meaningful as a result of this love. The next generation born from this type of pairing will pass on a new hope for a brighter future. A future in which the girl is not conditioned, coerced, or groomed only for the purpose of marriage. A future in which gender roles will be obsolete. However, until then, the ground reality is still bleak. To make this vision a reality, several steps must be done collaboratively at the cultural, political, and societal levels. There will be opposition from an old perspective, as with any change. However, as long as people accept responsibility for starting the transformation inside their own families, there is little doubt that arranged marriages will be abolished.