

The globalisation of love?: Examining narratives of intimacy and marriage amongst middle-class Gujarati Indians in the UK and India

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Abstract: Recent research suggests that global ideologies of love are shaping marriage practices the world over. I compare the narratives of young (20-30 years) middle class Gujarati Indians in the UK and India, to examine how these ideals are lived out in two very different contexts. In India, heterosexual monogamous marriage arranged with parental consent emerged as the only legitimate modern form of intimate relations due to a complex conjunction of romantic ideologies and ‘traditional’ familial marriage preferences. In the UK, participants distanced themselves from any sense of ‘arrangement’ in their relationships, which seemed to call into question for them the veracity of their love. The social context of the UK both supports and facilitates self-selected ‘love marriage’ amongst young people, while the converse is true in India. Global ideologies of romantic love are pervasive, but they are interpreted by individuals within local understandings of appropriate marriage and relationships.

Keywords: Love; globalisation; marriage; India; Gujaratis

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Research conducted in the last twenty years in various different settings around the globe has suggested that processes of globalisation, transnational migration, and modernisation have contributed to changing understandings of marriage and the role of love and intimacy within it (Hirsch & Wardlow, 2006; Padilla et al., 2007; Reddy, 2006). In particular, it is argued that young people are placing more emphasis on affect as a basis for marital relationships than their parents before them. For example, in Nepal, Ahearn (2001) found that young people use love letters in their complicated courtship rituals, attempting to form marriages based on these intimate exchanges. In China, Yan (2003) has described how young girls seek boyfriends with whom they can ‘talk intimately’. And in Mexico, Hirsch (2003) has described a generational shift from marriages of ‘respect’ to companionate marriages of ‘affect’.

It is not, as Jankowiak (1995) has forcefully argued, that love is ‘new’, but rather that the place and meaning of love within marriage has shifted. Couples are increasingly using love “as an ideal for which to strive and as the means through which they constitute their families” (Padilla et al., 2007:xv), reformulating the intimate practices of their relationships. Intimacy refers to the ‘quality of close connection between people and the process of building this quality’ (Jamieson, 2011: 1.1) while ‘practices of intimacy’ refers to ‘practices which enable, generate and sustain a subjective sense of closeness’ (Jamieson, 2011: 1.2). Love, on the other hand, refers more to the *emotion* which may or may not underlie practices of intimacy (*ibid*).

India has not been immune to processes of change in terms of love and intimate practices. While historical research shows narratives of love going back to medieval India (Orsini, 2006)¹, only recently has love become associated with choice of marital spouse (Author, 2012; Donner, 2002; Fuller & Narasimhan, 2008; Parry, 2001). Jonathan Parry has illustrated this transition through comparing the marriage of a Dalit illiterate man and that of his educated middle class daughter. Parry (2001) describes how the father, now with his fourth wife, speaks “indifferently” about how he came to lose his previous wives, for him marriage is “an institutional arrangement for the bearing and raising of children” (2001:815).

¹ Orsini’s (2006) edited volume explores through literary history, philosophy, social history and anthropology the many idioms of love manifested in South Asia since medieval times.

In contrast, for his well-educated daughter marriage should arise from conjugal bonding, as he describes here:

“A new companionate ideology makes the conjugal bond the object of much greater emotional investment. No longer merely a matter of the satisfactory discharge of marital duties, it is increasingly seen as a union between two intimate selves and carries a much heavier emotional freight” (Parry, 2001:312).

Parry argues that members of the younger generation are less pragmatic, caring less about their spouse’s education and occupation and caring more about the intimate bond that they share.

Yet, while love is increasingly a goal in forming relationships, this is not to say that there emerges a global ‘homogenisation’ of relationship forms. Diverse relationship forms have developed across different locations, even as individuals draw on similar ideals of ‘companionate marriage’. In India, researchers have pointed to pervasive ‘traditional’ understandings of marriage amongst young Indian couples, together with discourses of intimacy (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2008; Mody, 2008). For example, Fuller and Narasimhan (2008) conducted research amongst Brahmans in Tamil Nadu, south India. They observed that young people valued “personal compatibility” along with education and employment when choosing a future spouse, blurring the lines between arranged and love marriage (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2008).

My own research was conducted with Gujarati men and women who were of an age that they were likely to be considering marriage, or newly married (aged 20-30 years of age). I sought to explore their perspectives on marital relationships, their goals in finding a spouse, and to interrogate this phenomenon of ‘companionate marriage’ through a comparative perspective. Half of the participants had been brought up in Gujarat and half in England. The aims were twofold: First to understand the particularity of the ‘Gujarati’ experience, and second, using the UK-India comparison, to explore how and why understandings and practices of marriage change in particular ways in different contexts. As Padilla *et al* state: “cross-cultural examinations of love permit the analyst a privileged position from which to consider the power and function of cultural, economic, and social forces in shaping love” (Padilla et al., 2007:ix). Using a sample of Gujaratis from the same ethnic background, but having been brought up in two different contexts, supports this exploration focusing particularly on the socio-economic context. This study seeks to explore how the socio-economic and cultural context interacts with global and local understandings and practices of love, marriage, and relationships. In this paper I will focus particularly on the second aim,

comparing the narratives of Gujaratis born and brought up in India, with those born and brought up in the UK.

I conducted the fieldwork between 2007 and 2008 over a period of 18 months - nine in Baroda and nine in London. The principal method of data collection was repeat in-depth interviews with two groups of newly married and unmarried middle class Gujarati men and women. I recruited the participants through a range of means, including university societies and notice boards, community organisations, key informants and snowballing. Full details on the methods can be found elsewhere (Author, Forthcoming). To facilitate comparison, participants in India and the UK were alike in age (20-30 years), religion, and socio-economic background. In addition to repeat interviews I conducted observations, group discussions and individual interviews with key participants. These contextualised the narratives I collected, and created a broader understanding of courtship and gender in the two cities.

Relationship narratives in Baroda and London

There were both commonalities and differences between the relationship ideals and experiences of participants in India and the UK. In particular, participants from both cities valued love and intimacy in forming marital relationships, but the form of this love and indeed of the marital relationships differed according to the context. Below I narrate two couples' stories – one from Baroda and one from London – which exemplify some of the key differences between the relationship stories related to me.

Seeta and Ajay, Baroda

I came to know Seeta when she moved into the boarding house ('paying guest house') where I was living in Baroda. The boarding house was a family-run establishment for students and young working women of which the parents of the household took responsibility. Seeta came to live there while she was preparing for entrance exams to a university in the United States where she wanted to pursue a second master's degree, having already obtained her first master's degree from the UK. Her parents lived in a nearby city which did not have the same access to such a school.

Nonetheless, as gradually emerged, she spent the majority of her days, not at the preparatory school, but with her 'friend'² Ajay. Seeta and Ajay had met while studying

² There is a strong reluctance amongst young Gujarati men and women to 'name' a relationship until confirmation of marriage, so 'friend' is frequently used to describe a boy or girlfriend.

together in the UK, and now they were planning to again study together in the US. Seeta had convinced her parents to let her do the university preparatory course in Baroda where Ajay and his family live, though they knew nothing of Ajay.

Since the boarding house would not allow boys, there were limited options for Seeta and Ajay to meet one another. She complained about how much money they spent in order to be alone, sometimes attending the same film over and over again at the local cinema, too fearful even to hold hands in case someone somehow saw them together. Their fear of being seen together was heightened by the fact that Seeta and Ajay come from two different castes. In fact, Seeta's parents were at that time trying to arrange her marriage to a recently migrated Indian living in the US.

Soon after she started having telephone calls with the American suitor, Seeta told her mother, Mrs Patel, that she had doubts about this man and would rather marry someone she knew. She told her mother about her friend Ajay who, although he was of a different caste, was a good person with a good (and wealthy) family background. Her mother, who had met Ajay briefly before, enquired more about his family and whether his parents might accept such a match. Seeta told her she felt they would as they were an 'open minded' family. Mrs Patel then told Seeta she would broach the subject with her father, but in slightly different terms. She told her husband that Ajay's mother had enquired about whether Seeta was available for marriage. She told Mr Patel that even though Seeta and Ajay were different castes, the mother liked Seeta and felt they would make a good match.³ Seeta told me there had never been a marriage with someone of a different caste in their family before, and thus she felt pessimistic about her father's answer. But despite Seeta's fears her father did agree to allow her to marry Ajay. She felt this was based on Ajay's family's wealth and his parents' high education, as well as a concern for her feelings, since she had been crying constantly for a week after they suggested she should marry the "American boy".

Seeta later told me that both her mother and her father knew she was in a relationship with Ajay. This had gone unspoken, but it was clear through hints they had both dropped to her. All three of them in their own way emphasise the 'arranged' aspect of this marriage, and downplay the 'love' aspect – even while talking amongst themselves.

Darsha and Pretak, London

I first met Darsha, a solicitor, and Pretak, an IT consultant, on a cold winter's night in their

³ Seeta's mother eventually got in touch with Ajay's mother who I understand brokered a similar arrangement with her husband.

flat in East London. They had been recommended to me by another UK based participant who himself was related to one of the participants in Baroda. At the time of the interview, Darsha and Pretak had been living together for two years, and had been engaged for around six months. They were excited about my research and began talking animatedly even before I had a chance to sit down.

They told me about how they had first met one another about ten years ago through a common friend when they were studying in school. They dated briefly but Darsha broke off the relationship saying she was concerned with her studies. Nevertheless she often thought about Pretak after the break-up; she says he was “*devastatingly handsome*” and she wondered wistfully if he was “*the one that got away*”.

Over the next five years Darsha and Pretak dated other people. Darsha had one serious relationship with a second generation Gujarati man, while Pretak had several partners, both Indian and non-Indian. But in 2003, he was single and realised that he ultimately preferred to marry someone Gujarati:

I mean it would be nicer to have that [a partner who is Gujarati] because then you have that common cultural understanding and you know, there is lot less conversation needed, and it's just intuitive. But I just still, well, if you love each other, doesn't matter, you will work that out. **Pretak, UK**

At this point he asked his mother to introduce him to a Gujarati woman who he might potentially marry. He describes this experience as difficult. In particular, he found the participation of parents ‘stressful’ and related stories of parents quizzing him about his decision to marry after only one or two dates. On top of this, he was concerned that meeting someone through such an introduction would mean that he would be unable to live with his partner before marriage since, he explained, parents are unlikely to agree to such an arrangement.

Around this time, Darsha and Pretak met one another again by chance. They started dating one another, and eventually they moved in together. Last year Pretak proposed to Darsha. He told me:

There was something holding me there with Darsha. I don't know what it is, but there is something there that is keeping me together with her and, you know, I guess that's just the love [...] You know, there is nothing going to stop us from being with each other.

Despite living together for over a year, at the time of their engagement Darsha's parents had no knowledge of their relationship. She told me this was because “*the decision of being*

married would have been forced upon us as opposed to it being our decision.” That is, she felt that if she told her parents about the relationship, they would have exerted pressure on her to decide for marriage. They also would not have allowed them to live together before marriage.

When Darsha finally tells her parents, she is surprised to discover that her parents have some doubts about the suitability of Pretak as a match. This is due to his caste background and because his parents were divorced. Up until this moment, Darsha and Pretak had not really considered their caste backgrounds, rather they felt secure that a marriage to another Gujarati would be enough to satisfy their parents. In the end, Darsha’s father, who she describes as the ‘head of the household’, told Darsha that he is satisfied as long as Pretak is not a Muslim. Here Darsha describes how she felt when her parents finally approved her marriage to Pretak:

D: I think probably when Pretak met my parents at Christmas, my Mum and she smiled, and just gave her approval. There must be something, I don’t know, that you grew up with that’s innate but when your Mum gives an approval or maybe it was just me, it made me accept Pretak more. It made me think --

P: Really?!

D: Yeah, obviously. Pretak and I haven’t talked about this, it made me think “definitely this is my husband, I have made the right choice” because it sounds silly but when – until my Mum gives her sort of approval I /probably

P: /I guess you know, you are right because when Mom met you for the first time, you know, Mum and [sister], their approval was important.

Pretak seems to also feel that family approval is important. But significantly, above he says that “*there is nothing going to stop*” their relationship. They seek approval, not permission from their parents.

One year later, Darsha and Pretak were married.

Similarities

Love before marriage

As can be seen in the stories above, participants expressed a strong desire to marry someone they love. Seeta and Ajay and Darsha and Pretak described feeling this attachment *before*

marriage, in fact it was a primary part of the spouse selection or courtship period.⁴ This was the case for all participants, whatever kind of marriage they had or planned to have. For example, in Baroda, Hiren and Swati, a married couple who met through an arranged marriage process, told me that their ‘sixth sense’ guided them through the selection process, and soon after their first meeting they told one another they were in love. Several other arranged marriage couples described romantic engagement periods, filled with ‘dates’, love notes, and flowers.

The pre-requisite of love for marriage has received considerable recent attention in studies conducted in India and other non-Western contexts, as outlined in the introduction. The importance of love and affection in marriage amongst second generation Indians has only been reported in studies from the last ten years (e.g. Prinjha, 1999; Raj, 2003) suggesting that this is either a new phenomenon or that it has only recently received scholarly interest. Previous studies tended to focus on the particular customs of arranged marriage (Gell, 1994), although Brah noted that love after marriage was important for some of her respondents (Brah, 1977). But for my UK participants, the *entire* point of marriage was described as a means to solidify the love of a couple. Even those who were going through an introduced marriage told me that they intended to only marry someone if, or after, they fell in love with them.

Endogamy – locally defined

Another similarity between participants in India and the UK is the importance of endogamy – although small differences over what this means emerged in the two contexts. In India, participants were very open about their preference to marry someone Gujarati, and preferably someone of the same or a similar caste and class. Yet many of the people I met ultimately married or were preparing to marry someone of a different caste background. As we saw above, Seeta, a Gujarati Patel, wants to marry Ajay, a Punjabi Rajput. She is concerned about the difference in caste and accepts that this is not ideal, but she defends their relationship on the basis of Ajay’s family’s wealth and educational background. She spoke disapprovingly of other couples who she feels have attempted to make ‘inappropriate’ matches. For example, she told me a story about an affluent young girl who ran away with a rickshaw driver. The girl eloped to Mumbai but her parents eventually found her, kidnapped her back, and married

⁴ In arranged marriages, the ‘courtship’ happens after engagement but before marriage. In self-selected marriages, the courtship is developed over time, often in secret – such as with Seeta and Ajay. This is described further below, but for a full description of courtship in London and Baroda see Author (Forthcoming).

her off to someone of their choosing. Far from sympathising with this girl, Seeta berated her for being so foolish and selfish. She felt the girl's parents were justified in kidnapping her back and marrying her off to someone more suitable. Seeta did not apparently make the connection between her own situation and that of this girl's. For Seeta, the large status gap was a key difference. Her boyfriend came from a wealthy, well-educated family. Apparently her parents ultimately agreed, granting her permission to marry Ajay.

I came across other similar examples in Baroda of marriages arranged before and after the couple's courtship between men and women coming from different caste backgrounds. For example, Swati has an arranged marriage to Hiren but they are from two different castes - Swati is a Patel and Hiren a Khadayata. She explained:

The Patel, Bania, Jains all they are considered as same only so it is not like intercaste marriage, that is the Gujarati getting married to Gujarati. It is the same caste only but individual small group it doesn't make much difference it is all considered the same.

Swati (F), India

That is, for her and her family there is a pool of acceptable castes from which a potential spouse can be selected (see also Corwin, 1977; Pache Huber, 2004). As we can see with Seeta, this was balanced against the socio-economic status of the family. But Hindu-Muslim marriages remain forbidden.

In the UK, participants professed to know very little about caste, but they did express a preference to marry a Gujarati, or at least another Indian, as Pretak explained above. There may have been some reluctance on the part of young people to admit to caste prejudices, however. Naveen, who is a member of the mochi caste⁵, told me he felt it was a factor even for some young people. More often parents were likely to be particular about caste and some were quite vocal about it, such as Darsha's parents. One participant told me that her father insisted that her future husband should come from a set of seven villages in rural Guajrat which his descendants traditionally married from. But a matchmaker I interviewed in London told me that while some parents and young people started looking for a spouse from the same caste, they soon changed their mind when they realised how small the pool was. Rather they prioritised the 'community' – i.e. the future spouse should be Gujarati.

For Pretak, the preference for someone from the same community was based on the 'ease' of marrying someone Gujarati or Indian. This was repeated by several participants. Prity, who is going out with an Indian-born Indian, explained to me how upset she felt when

⁵ Mochi is classified as a lower or 'backward' caste.

her brother married a non-Indian. She says that the role of the daughter-in-law is very special, and that her new English sister-in-law was unable to fulfil it due to her ignorance of Indian culture and traditions. She felt this was particularly difficult for her parents, and felt under considerable pressure to ensure that she married someone Indian or Gujarati. Then it is clear that there is a desire to marry 'endogamously' both because it will be more acceptable to parents, and because of young people's own preferences.

Differences

India: Preference for arranged marriage

Despite these similarities, it might come as a surprise that participants in Baroda had a strong preference for an arranged marriage, and in the UK participants had a strong preference for a self-selected 'love marriage'. At this point, it is necessary to explain how participants used these terms. In Baroda, an arranged marriage was where introductions were facilitated by parents. After normally two or three meetings between the young potential couple, the couple decide whether to go forward for marriage or not. The level of choice and the number of potential partners which a person can meet depends upon the parents. A love marriage in Baroda was where a young couple meet themselves and decide upon marriage without the involvement or permission of their parents. The couple are likely to come from differing castes or religions. The latter kind of marriage shows a disregard for parental authority and tradition. The exception to this norm was found amongst families where love marriage appears to have developed as a family tradition over generations, i.e. parents, grandparents and so on, have all self-selected their spouses and expect their son or daughter to do the same. This appears to be a very rare occurrence.

In general love marriage in Baroda was described as an 'impermissible' marriage, as Tarun explains below:

*Love marriage is not a permissible marriage, so if any problem arise you cannot go to your father and mother that 'I have a problem in affair so what I can do'. [...] Now in our society some people will do but society will not agree with him. [...] Permission is the main thing and if any problem, main thing is problem. I have seen two three examples that after love marriage so many problems occur, I don't know why but problems occur. **Tarun (M), Married, India***

Love marriage couples and their families in Baroda can be criticized or even ostracized by society. This is likely to be most severe in the case of a Hindu-Muslim marriage, or in a marriage with large differences in status between the spouses. Love marriage is considered

socially unacceptable since it breaks caste/religious boundaries and notions of family cohesion and filial duty. These findings are reflected in survey research conducted in India which consistently finds young people expressing a preference for arranged marriage (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, 2007; Chandak & Sprecher, 1992).

Seeta describes her marriage to Ajay as a ‘love-arranged marriage’. She made the *suggestion* of Ajay after a relationship of one year, but only proceeded to marriage with her parents’ permission. She considered it neither an elopement type ‘love marriage’, nor a traditional ‘arranged marriage’ but rather a combination of the two (see Grover, 2009; Mody, 2008; Uberoi, 1998 for similar findings).

Some researchers have suggested that the ‘love-arranged’ marriage, such as Seeta and Ajay’s, is the new ideal for young people (Mody, 2008), but this can be fraught with difficulties, in particular around secret courtships. Since a woman’s reputation is easily soiled by a premarital relationship (and a man’s too to a lesser degree), young couples describe convoluted means of hiding their relationship – such as in Seeta and Ajay’s case. If the family find out about the relationship before any attempt to ‘arrange’ it with them, this can create problems. For example, Anita (now married) was in a relationship which she hoped to ‘arrange’ with her parents. Unfortunately her parents discovered her relationship before she had a chance to negotiate with them. Upset and disturbed by the fact that she had had a relationship without their knowing, her parents quickly arranged a marriage for her with another boy, without giving her any choice or say in the matter. Anita now tells me that she is ‘impure’, even as her premarital relationship was non-physical. She worries that someday someone will find out about her relationship, and in particular that her husband will find out about it and end their marriage.⁶

Additionally, many parents feel the ‘cool head’ of the parent is more appropriate to choose a spouse for their son or daughter (see also Donner 2008). While some parents were willing to accept their son or daughter’s marriage to a member of another caste (within certain limits), others were less open. After marriage the couple may also receive less support from parents who argue that their son or daughter must take responsibility for a marriage of their own choosing (Grover, 2009).⁷ Given the pitfalls and misunderstandings which are rife in a love-arranged marriage, many young people expressed a preference to have a ‘proper’

⁶ For further discussion on the implications of gender for intimate practices and how intimate practices shaped gender relations amongst participants in the UK and India, see **Author** (In press), ‘Kept anonymous for review’.

⁷ Despite conducting a study among working class women in Delhi, Grover’s findings (2009) are strikingly similar to my own, suggesting that transformations in the meaning of marriage are pervasive across socio-economic groups.

arranged marriage, even as they want to marry for love. As one participant told me *“I want love to be arranged!”*

Having an arranged marriage did not stop participants from viewing their marriage, or future marriage as romantic or companionate. In particular, I argue that the period between introduction and marriage fulfils the need or desire for romantic ‘courtship’ by creating a ‘safe’ parent-sanctioned space for women with an approved beau. Hence even those couples that do not have relationships before marriage paint a very romantic picture of their engagement and being in love at the point of marriage. For example, Aditya and Geet have, as they describe it, an ‘arranged marriage’. After describing the processes through which a common family friend facilitated their introduction, Aditya described his decision to marry Geet:

I had drawn some parameters because you cannot get everything, you just have to draw parameters and then choose from that which one suits you. That’s how I put down certain things and if these things comes I will go ahead... she was more or less fitting into that parameters, and I decided to go further with her.

As with other participants, Aditya’s portrayal of his decision to marry Geet is far from romantic and seems, in fact, much more strategic.

But even as the selection is described in quite pragmatic terms, the period directly *after* choosing the future spouse, from selection to early marriage, was in contrast described as a time of romantic love-making. Aditya and Geet warmly related their dating experiences between the introduction and marriage. Indeed Geet told me *“I do not feel it was an arranged marriage, it was like a love marriage.”*

Despite my scepticism, my participants saw no contradiction in this rapid move from pragmatism to romance. As Rebhun comments ‘Western’ researchers “tend to believe that sentiment is genuine only if it is spontaneous; conventional, required, manipulated sentiment seems false... and its falseness morally reprehensible... but deliberation and requirement are as much a part of emotion as spontaneity” (Rebhun 1999: 29-30). That is, choosing to fall in love does not negate the emotion. Similar findings on ‘manipulated’ emotion have been uncovered by research in Brazil, South India, Micronesia, and Iran (Abu-Lughod, 1987; Lutz, 1988; Rebhun, 1999; Trawick, 1990).

In understanding participants ‘decision’ to love, I have drawn on the work of sociologist Arlie Hochschild who has worked extensively on the cultural construction of emotion. She proposes that, not only do individuals experience emotion differently, but that they apply cultural and ideological standards in order to gauge the suitability of emotions

occurring during a social interaction (Hochschild, 1983:24). Through ‘deep acting’ an individual will push herself to actually experience the appropriate emotions at the appropriate time. It seemed to me that participants were creating love for their partner during the engagement period, so that the contemporary ideal of modern marriage as loving is met. From my understanding young people in Baroda are deliberately choosing to ‘fall in love’ with their fiancé(e), creating a temporal space for the courtship and romance they so desire without breaking any societal taboos. As Swati told me, “*Love marriage, love is there before you get married, before you decide, arranged marriage is after you decide love comes.*” After the decision to marry love comes; participants choose a partner according to certain criteria and then expect (or perhaps provoke) a love for their spouse.

Then we can see that young people in Baroda are putting a strong emphasis on intimacy in marriage, but there is little evidence of a ‘transformation’ of marital forms (i.e. away from arranged marriage). Young people are in effect re-interpreting arranged marriage in terms which suit their ‘modern’ middle class prerogative.

UK: Preference for love marriage

A love marriage in the UK was defined differently from in Baroda. Primarily it refers to a self-chosen marriage without recourse to introductions or family participation. There is no negative connotation with ‘love marriage’, such as there is in Baroda. On the other hand, public stories of the ‘backwardness’ of arranged marriage appear to have impacted on how young second generation Gujaratis view or speak about arranged marriage, which was often associated with ‘forced marriage’. Here Prity explains:

I don't want to have the word 'arranged' because I think that's changed so much. It's not, even in my parents' day there was – it was an introduction. I think it varies from culture to culture, community to community. And like my parents met only a few times and they were engaged a week after but it was their choice. It wasn't 'you have to marry this guy'. Meet him, if you like and you know, get to know him better, if not, move on. **Prity, UK**

While the term ‘arranged marriage’ is often used in the media and scholarly texts on marriage amongst South Asians in Britain, on the whole my participants felt that it was an outdated term that did not represent their or their peers’ experiences (see also Prinjha, 1999). As we can see from Prity above, a student in a relationship with a first generation Indian, arranged marriage for her is associated with a lack of participation from the couple.

Prity refers to ‘introductions’ instead of ‘arranging’. An ‘introduced marriage’ then was described as the following: When a man or woman is deemed ready for marriage, their parents send out their details to eligible suitors, and in turn draw up a list of suitors for their son or daughter. This list may have some extensive information, such as the ‘biographies’ passed around in India, or may simply contain names and contact details. The criteria of eligibility for couples within introductions are more or less the same as those found in India, such as education and height, but caste seems to be of less importance. The man (usually) then calls the woman to arrange a meeting separate from the family, in a restaurant, café or bar. From there the couple can decide to continue into a relationship, which may or may not ultimately lead to marriage – though of course they are meeting with the idea of marriage in mind. Participants tended to stress the lack of parental participation in these marriages, in fact the ‘arranged’ aspect is virtually disregarded, and rather the possibility of a couple falling in love through an introduction is emphasised.

Yet, as we see from Pretak, many referred to an introduction as a ‘last resort’ and preferred to meet their future spouse outside of the introductions process. The implication was that those who meet through introductions were people who cannot find someone through the ‘normal’ way i.e., through the conventional ways that English⁸ people meet. Here Sohan, who has a ‘love marriage’ tells me his views on introduced marriage:

Yeah I mean at the time [of my marriage] there’s no way I would have done that [introduced marriage]. I wouldn’t even entertain the thought but maybe if I got to say my age or a couple of years older and most of my friends were married .. I might, I probably, I guess I probably would have considered it. Sohan, UK

As with other participants, Sohan suggests that only after failing to meet someone by himself would he resort to introductions. Even those who were going through introductions seemed to feel ambivalent about it; while they described the advantages, they also told me they felt arranged or introduced marriages were ‘strange’. To some degree this might have to do with the association of introductions with the ‘last resort’, or to who they were talking to (a non-Indian) but primarily the introduction process interrupts the dominant romantic story to which UK based Indians subscribe.

UK participants described love and desire as an irrational and overpowering force, linking love with ideals of ‘fate’ such as the “*universe throwing two people together*” (Darsha). The ‘premeditated nature’ of the introduction process clashed with this ideology by

⁸ Participants referred to the white majority population in the UK as ‘English’ (and to themselves as British Asians).

taking a more rational and considered approach to marriage and relationships. Participants felt this rational ‘premeditated’ approach inhibited the natural development of emotions and attraction between a couple. As Mahendra, who is in a ‘love marriage’ explains:

I don't think ... I don't feel like a premeditated .. process allows for a complete expression of of yourself. You you know it's like a, like a job interview [...] If you meet enough people you're going to find somebody and even find somebody you'll have a wonderful relationship with I'm sure. Millions of people have done it so .. I certainly can't be well that's proven but .. you've, I think you've got to meet a lot of people .. to find, to get that right rather than being able to .. just let natural attraction take you to somebody. **Mahendra (M), Married, UK**

Mahendra conjures up the image of a “*job interview*” in referring to marriage introductions, emphasising the formal nature of the meeting in which the two suitors ‘interview’ one another for suitability. He further suggests that couples in an introduced marriage might have a “*wonderful*” relationship, but it might not be a “*natural attraction*” –implying that the couple get on well, have things in common but are not *really* in love. Rather they have prioritised more ‘rational’ aspects of choosing a spouse over irrational spontaneous ‘natural’ love.

While in India participants openly talked about the importance of finding a spouse that earns enough money or has a sufficiently good education, in the UK such concerns were largely ‘taboo’ and jolted with the romantic narrative participants created around their relationships. For example, Yogesh, who was going through introductions, told me that he received a list of eligible women from his mother which included specifications such as height, age and education. He rejected the list and told his mother that he would prefer to meet someone himself, finding the list too ‘weird’. Later his aunt gave him a list of names and telephone numbers of ‘girls she thought he would like’ and he proceeded to meet them. In retrospect he realised that the two lists were the same, but the latter one didn’t include any ‘specifications’. Yogesh laughed at his own inconsistency, but to me this story points to the ambivalent feelings participants had towards the introduction process, in particular those aspects which suggest more ‘superficial’ concerns than love.

Of course, as is apparent in the Darsha and Pretak’s story, the context of the UK – in particular of living in London – is very different to living in a small city such as Baroda. Darsha and Pretak were in a relationship for five years before they told their parents they even lived together without their knowledge. A live-in relationship is facilitated by several factors. First, the city is large enough for them to live together without their parents, relatives

or parents' friends likely to bump into them. Second, they were both financially independent and were living in a flat which Darsha had bought with her own money. Third, living together before marriage is the norm in London, and unlikely to create any social or other kinds of difficulties. In contrast, most of my participants in Baroda lived with their parents, both before and after marriage. But even when Baroda participants lived separately from parents – such as Seeta in the boarding house – they felt the presence of prying eyes when they went out together on dates.

Global ideologies and local variations

Participants in the UK and India are exposed to similar ideologies of companionate marriage and romantic love through global media and travel. In addition, 'transnational subjectivity' (Dahinden, 2009) or ideologies and beliefs of what constitutes 'Indianness' or 'Gujaratianness' underpin their links to one another as 'Indian' and 'Non Resident Indian'. Yet even as participants in both contexts share transnational ideologies, their experiences and understandings of relationships and marriage diverge in significant ways. In this section I attempt to explain these diverse trajectories by referring to the historical, cultural, and socio-economic contexts in which my participants grew up.

In Baroda new discourses are emerging around what it means to be a modern middle class Indian, but these interact with older ideas of appropriate and successful marriage. The system of arranged marriage has historically been heralded as a superior system of controlled and civilised sexuality amongst middle class Indians in comparison to the British system of 'love marriages' (Dell, 2005). Arranged marriage, premarital chastity and a stress on family values are perceived as particularly middle class virtues (Donner, 2008). Additionally, participants in Baroda are concerned with their status as middle class citizens. With increased social mobility, the perceived need to marry someone of similar or higher wealth may in fact be exacerbated. Furthermore, premarital relationships, in particular ones that involve sexual relations, are typified as 'lower caste' and 'cheap' (Author, 2011) and self-selected intercaste marriages associated with non-Hindu populations and the lower-castes (Caplan, 1998; Sangari, 1995). Heterosexual monogamous marriage arranged with parental consent emerges as the only legitimate modern form of intimate relations due to a complex conjunction of global romantic ideologies and Indian hegemonic discourses on 'respectable' marriage. As such participants embrace love as an ideology, within systems of arrangement.

In contrast, in the UK participants show a strong preference for love marriage and downplayed the 'arranged' aspect of introduced marriage in their discussions with me. This

seems to be in part influenced by the perception of arranged marriage as ‘too traditional’. As de Munck has noted, in Western media love marriages have symbolised “democracy, freedom of choice and individuality” whereas arranged marriages “parental authority, calculation, and subjugation to the group” (de Munck, 1998:287). British Asians in Britain have been vilified for being ‘too traditional’, and Indian Hindus, in particular those of the middle classes, praised for their ‘adaptation’ to the ‘British’ way of life (Uberoi & Modood, 2010). UK-born participants have a strong desire to position themselves as modern integrated citizens, distancing themselves from ‘other’ Asian communities which arrange or even force marriages upon young men and women.

In addition, in the UK there is a strong discourse of romantic love and the ‘pure relationship’ (Jamieson, 1999). As Jamieson has shown, while there is little empirical evidence of the ‘pure relationship’ it is an ideology which permeates people’s imaginations and interpretations of their relationships. It is a common goal portrayed by the media and aspired to by couples (Jamieson, 1998; 1999). In particular, there is a strong emphasis on the intimacy between the couple as the central focus of married couple’s life. Although not discussed here, participants in the UK critically assessed their parents’ marriages which they broadly deemed marriages of convenience, rather than of love. In contrast young people in Baroda saw their parents’ marriages as an ideal to which they aspired (even if the selection of a spouse was not sufficiently ‘modern’). It seems that participants in the UK have different expectations of marriage and the marital relationship from their counterparts in Baroda, with UK participants putting more emphasis on the intimacy and love between a couple than on wider family networks.

The context of Britain also *facilitates* love marriage amongst young Indian people. The strictures which are in place in India, such as a community which looks down on pre-marital relationships, lack of privacy, lack of economic independence and so on, are not in place in the UK. In contrast, Mody (2008) has shown that while the law in India protects love marriage couples, in practice the courts privilege family and community concerns often annulling love marriages in favour of the parents’ preference. In short, the society in which young Gujaratis find themselves in the UK both favours and supports love marriage, while discouraging arranged marriage which is associated with sexist and ‘backward’ behaviour. Nonetheless, there is also a division in terms of what is seen as ‘right’. In India participants disapprovingly related stories of young couples who married against their parents’ wishes, while in the UK participants disparagingly told me about parents who refused to accept cross

community or cross religious marriage. The moral right in the UK ultimately lies with the couple.

Conclusion

There is a wide array of diverse marriage forms and patterns in India (Uberoi, 1993). Increasing research, however, shows that among the urban middle classes, marriage practices are largely similar, even while some particular ceremony rituals may differ (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2008). In this paper I have focused particularly on the practices of a group of middle class urban Gujaratis in the UK and India. I have found that global ideologies of romantic love and companionate marriage hold salience for participants in both contexts, but the desire for companionate marriage is realised in two very different ways. I have attempted to explain these differences through considering the local cultural and socio-economic contexts in which young Gujaratis live. In India there is a high attachment to the discourse of love, *and* the ongoing maintenance of more ‘traditional’ criteria of a good match. On the other hand, in the UK, media hype against ‘traditional’ Asians (in particular Muslims) encouraged participants to portray their relationships as ‘modern’ love marriages, and to demonstrate a strong attachment to ideals of romantic love.

As popular as the global ideal of companionate marriage and modern intimacy might be, in practice local cultural norms and socio-economic circumstances shape its local realisation. In particular I have shown that amongst Gujaratis there is a continued emphasis on parental authority and ‘culture’, and that the importance of class is integral in understanding how individuals interpret and enact global ideologies of love. This paper, then, highlights the impact of globalisation from the perspective of relationships, marriage and intimacy, but it also shows that globalisation does not necessarily lead to global homogenisation, ‘even’ amongst members of a similar cultural background. Rather global ideologies are more likely to be “indigenised” to create multiple *local* cultural forms (Appadurai, 1994).

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