**From Arranged to Online: A Study of Courtship Culture in India**

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**Introduction**

This chapter is a result of an ethnographic study conducted between January and March 2014 for three online matrimonial sites. It studied the factors responsible for the online culture prevalent in Indian marriages. Nothing much has been changed in marriages and promises across cultures in India. Earlier they were arranged now they are arranged online, too. Traditionally, Indian families had a great deal of involvement in the marriage processes. Those marriages were popularly known as ‘*arranged marriages’.* Now this culture has been supported by an online courtship culture where two online searchers initiate on commercial matrimonial sites. Table 2 compares the offline generation to the online generation in partner search. The goal of this study, began in 2013, was to provide reliable and sound information with which to identify how modern technology corresponds to societal traditions. This research studies three sites, namely *shadi.com, jeevansahti.com* and *bharatmatrimony.com* in India*,* and seeks to examine how these matrimonial sites in the process of arranging marriages interact with the partner seekers. Since the marriage processes and traditions are closely associated with each other, there would be an exploration of how modern technologies confront and consequently change societal traditions. The study is informed by the ethnographic approach, and the information is analyzed by feedback and content analysis. This study does not promote or reject online or offline ways of selecting a prospective partner but it gives an insight where technology is changing complex social process.

Matrimonial sites that assist in arranging marriages were founded by the young Indian entrepreneurs a couple of decades ago. In 1996, Anupam Mittal pioneered online matrimonial by founding *Shaadi.com* and he claims that this website has affected the lives of 20 million people and 3.2 million people found their life partners on this site.[[1]](#footnote-1) *Bharat Matrimony*, founded in 1997, holds the *Limca Book of World Record* for the highest number of online documented marriages and also set a *Guinness World Record* for creating the Largest Wedding Photo Album on April 14, 2012.[[2]](#footnote-2) *Jeevansahti.com*, a recent establishment, has 850,000 members, and it finds a match primarily on the basis of community, religion, caste, and profession.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In India every state has its own type of wedding ceremonies with mostly diverse customs and traditions. Some typical Indian weddings include the Punjabi wedding, Hindu wedding, Indian Muslim wedding and Christian wedding. The ways marriages are organized keep changing in India. Earlier there were only arranged marriages in the same caste and religion. Now there is love, love-arranged, arranged-love, inter-caste, inter-religion, court-marriage and live-in relationship. Moreover, most of these marriages are arranged online.

The chapter addressed the following research questions: (1) What is the magnitude of modern technology against the societal traditions in India? Especially, on these three online matrimonial sites, how do they penetrate in the complex social practices confrontational or supplementary to old traditional searching practices?

(2) How do family and individual differ in their opinions for searching a partner?

(3) What technological, individual, and family factors are associated with the online searching practices?

This study has three components: a. Assessing trends and patterns of online marriages by studying three matrimonial sites and analyzing existing data sets; b. Conducting interview-based surveys to increase the understanding of changing behaviors of the users of the matrimonial sites; and c. Distilling findings from an analysis of participant-observation and telephone interviews.

This chapter actively admits that though online searching environment complements the traditional offline markets, it seeks to explore how the change and difference related to the online activities in the marriages is carried out, and recounts how the knowledge of the technology and social action go together. The remainder of the chapter is organized under the following headings: “Arranged Marriages” describes the historical background of marriages in India, “Online Searchers” specifies participants of this study, under the “Theoretical Foundation” a brief account of previous studies conducted is presented and the impact of technology on searching partners is discussed, the next section “How Matrimonial Sites Work” provides an overview of the matrimonial sites, “Facilities on Matrimonial Sites” enumerates the technical reasons for the success of these sites in India, “Methodology” discusses various methods used for the study, the heading “Analysis” indicates the behavior of the users and abusers on these sites, and the heading “Conclusion” concludes the paper, finally the “Limitations” enumerates a few limitations of this research.

**Arranged Marriages**

Ancient Indian text *Manusmriti,* or *The Writings of Manu*,identifies the marriage ceremony as a rite of initiation for women, by which they became the members of Hindu society.[[4]](#footnote-4) Manu says that “the nuptial ceremony is considered as the complete institution of women, ordained for them in the Veda, together with the reference to their husbands.”[[5]](#footnote-5) No traditional Indian text prescribes requisite to be in love first before marriage as it is against the constitution of the marriage institution in ancient India[[6]](#footnote-6). However, there were instances when marriages followed love, or at times a child was born out of the wedlock in love.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The compound lexeme ‘arranged marriages’ gives a vague picture of obedient sons and daughters who cannot select a partner for themselves and therefore their parents generally arrange their marriages. But fairly this can be seen as men and women seek each other and their parents endorse the wedding, and in some cases the “groom’s family may ask for a dowry of cash and other items.”[[8]](#footnote-8) The stamp provided by the parents also approves only such arranged marriages where traditional ideologies pertaining to female chastity, prohibition of inter-caste and inter-religion marriages are maintained, and issues of elopements, conversions and remarriages are properly taken care of.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Arranging marriages are a socio-economic decision for the parents of the brides and grooms. Both the parties who participate in this transactional institution try to secure their profits in this social investment. With or without dowry after *Kanyadan*,*[[10]](#footnote-10)* where the father of the bride gives the hand of her daughter to the groom, the woman becomes the life-partner and responsibility of the man. This important decision of marriage is made after matching the social, economic, cultural, and educational equality. The major critique of love marriages crops up from the fact that it promotes inter-caste marriages and consequently weakens the society. The caste system restores its equilibrium even in the arranged online marriages where matrimonial sites are classified under the headings of castes and sub-castes.

Generally, love follows marriage in arranged marriages.[[11]](#footnote-11) The pragmatic considerations for such marriages are that it will outlast the quickly fading infatuation and romantic love.[[12]](#footnote-12) In the colonial period, the radical supporters of English culture, language and ideology who were disgusted by the evil practices of Indian society, for example, *Sati,* or self-immolation of a widow, child marriages, the prohibition of widow remarriage, and questioning female chastity supported and promoted the idea to be in love first and then to go for a marriage. The Constitution of India provides various acts to regulate marriages in this country with many religions. Muslim Personal Law Application Act XXVI of 1937 and Indian Christian Marriage Act XV of 1872 regulate Muslim and Christian marriages in modern India respectively. Post-independence India witnessed Marriage Act of 1955 to curb child marriages and dowry system, and Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists come under this law.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**Online Searchers**

The online searchers largely consist of relatively computer-literate, working middle class men and women who believe in finding their own life-partners. They approve of the idea that though marriages are made in heaven, they can be arranged online. Most of the eligible partner seekers are single and some of them are migrated from their country, states, cities, and towns in the search of jobs and better livelihood. Their days are busy and nights are lonely, and they are quite assured that they can find a better partner than their parents’ traditional methods. The information age has impacted their psyche as much as they want to be informed about everything related to their prospective partners before they tie a knot. They want a confidential environment to maximize their searches for the competent partner. Wagner says that “people choose to use online dating services because they create opportunities to meet people they would not have otherwise met.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

Online partner searchers on matrimonial sites are of six types: married, divorced, single, widowed, awaiting divorce, and annulled.

**Figure 1** Online partner searchers

Type-1 Type-2

Type-3 Type-4

Type-5 Type-6

The online matrimonial sites work as a bridge in their search to place them from a stage without a partner to where they have a partner. The term divorced in Type 1, widowed in Type 2, annulled in Type 5, and awaiting divorce in Type 6 are people who have experienced failure in their previous marriages which was either love or arranged, offline or online. The single in Type 3, generally refers to individuals who are never married in their lives, and married in Type 4 consists of a mixed group; they are either unhappy couples, couples living in distant places, or boring couples interested in extra-marital relationships or in a physical relationship. All six types are in search of love and companionship which they have been lacking in their lives and relationships.

The technology has advanced and changed the ways of selection, choice, and consent for both brides and grooms. A study conducted by Bellou shows that consumer broadband adaptation “has significantly contributed to increased marriages rates among 21-30 year olds,” and the online users search their partners until “a partner is found whose quality equals or exceeds an endogenously determined reservation value.”[[15]](#footnote-15) These users are also the type of people who prefer to move in a relationship from the virtual to the real world. In this process, they enhance and invest their feelings by a gradual progress of self-disclosure.

**Theoretical Foundation**

The early research in the study of marriage was initiated by Becker’s *A Theory of Marriage* in which he said that “marriage is compelling additional evidence on the unifying power of economic analysis” and “a market in marriages can be presumed to exist.”[[16]](#footnote-16) His demand and supply (D & C) model and optimal sorting models make an analogy between marriages and firms. Since then D & C has been applied to the study of dating, extra-marital affairs, and marriages. Bellou compares “the market for romantic partners” with “the labor market”, and further claims that both functions in a similar way.[[17]](#footnote-17) Her study shows that broadband diffusion has a measurable impact on the online search process.

Information Systems and Information Technology[[18]](#footnote-18) (IS/IT) have been fused in our day- to-day life and the expectations, promises, myths and consequences birthed from this adopted wave have presented challenges to the people, society and organization.[[19]](#footnote-19) What the professional matrimonial sites are doing today is a transformed version of match searching which was earlier carried out by print media and the ‘family pundits’ in the towns, villages, and cities of India. However, the effects of new IS/IT are on its usage by the people rather than on the technology itself, and the major challenge is whether to use it or leave it. But the use of new technology depends on the interaction between the technology, the user and the organizational environment. Communication theorists argue that the use of technology is a process of social definition. This, in turn, is related to the concept of reinvention.[[20]](#footnote-20) The new online technology of searching partners has reinvented the themes of marriage, selection, choice, and companionship.

Wagner, in a qualitative study, investigates the communication phenomena of deception as it occurs in the online dating, and concludes that generally online daters are honest and a slight exaggeration and dishonesty is mostly overlooked.[[21]](#footnote-21) Besides this, the websites are affecting more people. It is more popular in cities and metropolises. It has redefined the complex social process of arranged marriages. Whitty emphasizes that social scientists should not develop one grand theory to explain how online users and searchers present themselves in the cyber space, on the contrary, it is rather important to find how cyber space is constructed.[[22]](#footnote-22)

**How Matrimonial Sites Work?**

The online matrimonial sites generally work on the selective dissemination of the information (SDI)**.** An individual becomes an information seeker and provider in the process of partner search. Seth and Ravi suggest that “the use of matrimonial web sites have implications for family disintermediation, cultural convergence, continuous information flows, and ease of disengagement, virtual dating and reduced stigma in arranged marriages in India.”[[23]](#footnote-23)

The focus of the present study is the top-three matrimonial sites in India, namely *Shaadi.com*, *Bharatmatrimony.com*, and *Jeevansahti.com*. All three sites provide free registration, and have common attributes like community specific search, online chat, email and SMS services, horoscope matching, highlighted profile, time-bound subscription, and personalized services.

The difference between a free registration and a paid membership lies in the services and information the website provides. The significant contacts and matches are always in the paid packages, and the customer care executives give care and attention to any paid customer. It is always advised and directed to the users to provide the correct and complete information to attract better matches. The user provides his/her basic information appertaining to age, sex, place and country of birth, marital status, permanent and contact address, landline and mobile phone numbers, email, etc. and the information related to complexion, height, weight, and disorder if any. The user next fills the information about job, education, life-style, and food preferences - vegetarian or non-vegetarian.

**Facilities on Matrimonial Sites**

The offline ways of searching partners are limited in scopes, while the online matrimonial sites, assisted with the information dissemination technology, facilities the online partner search. It penetrates the complex Indian social structure, and makes the partner search a success. Numerous matrimonial sites are operative in twenty-eight states and seven union territories in India. Pal provides the list of such twenty-two web sites and their global and Indian traffic ranks, sites-linking and when they were founded.[[24]](#footnote-24) The popularity of the top-three matrimonial sites can be observed from the data on Alexa that Shaadi.com’s traffic rank is No. 52 and each user spends at least 4.5 minutes on this site. While the traffic rank of Jeevansathi.com is 3,552 but each user spends more than 8 minutes per day. Table 1 indicates the popularity of matrimonial sites in India as a potential partner searcher.

The Peoples Interactive (I) Private Limited Company pioneered Shaadi.com in 1996. This website develops its brand awareness by providing a YouTube link of Indian best- seller *Chetan Bhagat’s* Marriage Tips for Anupam Mittal, CEO of the company, and also trends videos showing a superior matchmaking experience on Shaadi.com. It has 1.4 million likes on Facebook and 42.2 thousand followers on Twitter in 2014/2013/1996? It caters the increasing demand for matches by introducing and supplementing Non-Residential Indians (NRI) matrimonial to the traditional community and popular matrimonial. This service seems to promote more security, transparency, and a complete control to customers with a match guarantee challenge in 30 days otherwise they promise to pay the refund of entire fee without question. The customers can also follow the CEO on Twitter and on his blog. The SSL[[25]](#footnote-25) encryption technology secures the payment transactions and makes the customer’s buying experience easier and more enjoyable. The plans start from three months for $ 62 to one year for $ 170.

BharatMatrimony.com was probably the first to provide community-specific searching experience in regional languages. Established in 1997, *BharatMatrimony* believes to build a better *Bharat* (India) through happy marriages. The company thinks that public relations can be more effective if the native tongue of the online searchers is used.[[26]](#footnote-26) The website displays trendy advertisements in major regional languages, namely Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Malayalam, Oriya, Tamil, and Telugu. It has 1.1 million likes on Facebook and 16.5 thousand followers on Twitter 2014 again, specify the time here. This is most trusted matrimony brand according to the Brand Trust Report 2014.[[27]](#footnote-27) It has launched two new sections, namely assisted matrimony, a personalized match making service, and elite matrimony, for the rich and affluent, to serve and cover all types of online searchers. There are various paid packages ranging from $ 62 to $ 615 with duration from three to nine months. The website directs various payment options, for example, credit card, debit card, net banking, and free door step collection. This matrimonial site provides free SMS alerts and voice messages.

It is a recent venture of a job searching site *Naukari.com,* initiated in September 2004, to serve northern and western Indian communities. Jeevansathi.com provides up to one-yearpaid packages services starting from US$ 50 to US$ 500. The company, along with regular registered account, also advertizes the profiles of HIV positives, Thalassemia Major, physically handicapped, and cancer survivors, for whom searching a life partner is a challenge. This indicates how deeply technology penetrates in the complex social structures.

**Table 1 Popularity of Matrimonial Sites in India[[28]](#footnote-28)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Matrimony sites** | **Traffic ranking** | | **Traffic from countries (%)** | | | **Daily pages views per user** | **Time on sites (in minutes)** |
| **India** | **Global** | **India** | **USA** | **Others** |
| Shaadi.com | 52 | 546 | 90.7 | 6.0 | 3.3 | 5.27 | 4:30 |
| BharatMatrimony.com | 13, 261 | 1, 092 | 92.7 | 4.0 | 3.3 | 1.58 | 1:47 |
| Jeevansathi.com | 3, 552 | 319 | 91.5 | 4.5 | 4.0 | 12.40 | 8:19 |

**Methodology**

The data for the study were collected through mixed methods, including telephonic survey, face-to-face interview, analyzing Facebook messages, and feedback and content available on the matrimonial sites. Feedback included the real-life practices and experiences of the searchers which were used to evaluate and analyze the various aspects of events. The content analysis enabled the author to identify and examine themes and trends in information gathered through the matrimonial sites. The objectivity of this study is well-balanced as all the real participants were not able to observe and influence the author.

The telephone survey conducted in Hindi and English in six states, namely Jammu, Punjab, Delhi, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh, in northern India from 5 January to 5 March 2014, among a random representative sample of 100 respondents 24 years of age and older. However, face-to-face communication[[29]](#footnote-29) was very limited, and it covered only the regions of Jammu and Kashmir with 20 respondents where the author resides. This research also makes use of participant-observation[[30]](#footnote-30) method in the study. The data were collected through 150 feedbacks, mostly testimonies of the users; and content, such as 50 personal profiles, and 50 language samples on matrimonial sites. The participants in the study had income between US$ 1, 500 and US$ 5, 000 per month. The interpretation of data was based on how the use of new technology depends on the interaction between the technology, the user and the organizational environment.

The success stories on websites are testimonials. They not only promote the websites but also provide additional information such as the role of family members, and the context of their selection of the website. The investigation focused on the formation of profiles, the development of the relationship during the courtship period, and the roles of relatives and parents.

**Analysis: Users and Abusers**

**Users**

The changing trend of the Indian men and women in marriages has been reflected from these matrimonial sites. Marriage is now not a closed affair of a family where only a few members are included and aware of the searching process. It has become a business of multinational corporations. However, whether an individual should register an account or not is still a family concern but many individuals open an account without informing their parents. The family members and close friends influence the selection process by providing their views, suggestions, and opinions on looks, age, income, caste, community, complexion, and horoscopes.

As soon as an account is open, it is virtually available to the world unless the user has posed restrictions on the website. It proclaims that an individual has registered himself/herself into the marriage market. Anyone who has opened a paid account can view other users’ profile and send messages either by an SMS, mail or in the chat box. However, the elders (60 plus in age) of family still believe that online marriage should be the last option available for men and women. They disapprove it by saying that “only a person who is not getting married goes for it”, “how do you know that your prospective partner is a virgin”, “company is making a fool of you”, “how can you rely on a machine”, “how can you make your personal bio-data public”, “we are still alive to find a partner for you”, “don’t become so modern and western if anything goes wrong company won’t interfere or solve”, alike.[[31]](#footnote-31) Ironically, Indian marriages depend on a “middleman.” This person (a relative, friend, family-pundit, etc.) recommends the marriage and he/she is largely responsible for the success of the relationship. If any conflict or dispute occurs it is his/her responsibility to solve it tactfully.

But despite these subjective criticisms the fact remains that the online matrimonial sites are indeed cheaper, faster and more interactive. They provide better conduits to the users for disseminating information. Its updating option never allows the information shared by the users to become obsolete. The searchers can get more detailed information about the prospective partner.

*I got his request, saw the profile … … … Our families met and by the end of our third meeting we did roka[[32]](#footnote-32) … … … on 27th feb 2014. Very happy to have found him.*

Another profile says:

*… … … Then the family interacted to each other to materialize things and plan for the final day. In less than 2 months we got married.*

And the other says:

*At the first meeting itself we knew there was no looking around anymore and decided to talk to our parents … … … even our kundali's* (horoscope) *matched.*

Even with the online technology the customs and traditions remain intact. Though the online matrimonial sites have transformed the searching process yet arranging a match for oneself is no way a self-arranged marriage. The role of family members or parents has not been marginalized. The online searchers only find a partner for themselves and they convince their parents about their selection. The parents meet each other and they did ‘*roka’* (a promise) that they will not search further. The interaction between family members has many directions. It finds whether the family of prospective bride and groom is religious, courteous, prosperous, good-looking, and healthy. The “*kundali’* horoscope match is more important than love. It ensures the mutual compatibility, future lifestyle, nature, behavior, preferences, and the longevity of the relationship between the prospective bride and groom.

Who is making a profile is again a socio-cultural decision. It is generally considered indecent for a woman to create her own account. Many times if the account indicates that it is opened by a woman searching for a partner then men do not take that woman seriously and consider her easy-going.[[33]](#footnote-33) Mostly, the women’s accounts provide information that they are created by friends, parents, and relatives irrespective of the fact that they have created it. “*How can I indicate that I have opened an account for myself… … … men will consider me ‘Chaalu’ (indecent)”* - replied a woman respondent.

A profile said:

*I am searching a partner for my friend Shruti… … …she is charming and well-educated.*

And:

*My daughter Rama is a software Engineer. She is 27, and she works for an MNC.*

One woman stated in her desired partner profile: “*Govt Job IAS IES IFS IRS PCS ALL India”[[34]](#footnote-34)* and another wanted “*preferably an NRI or from All India Services - IAS/ IPS / Indian Foreign Service. UP MP Rajasthan in India.”*

Perceptions are changing in the Indian patriarchal society. Earlier annulled, divorced, awaiting divorce, widowed, and single middle-aged women were only taking an initiative to open an account and search for a partner. Now young single women are also going online for a partner of a specific profession, qualification, and location. Inter-state migration and living away from the family have brought changes in their perception. However, men’s profiles are largely created and posted by them. They generally prefer beautiful, fair-complexioned and educated wife, but in some cases they want a working wife to support the family.

**Abusers**

Incidentally online matrimonial sites technology is not free from abuse. Online Matrimonial Abusers (OMA) are of three types: blackmailers, frauds, and maniacs.[[35]](#footnote-35) They register an account for neither love nor for marriage but only for abusing other users.

***Blackmailers, Frauds, and Maniacs***

There are many fake accounts generated by the OMA on matrimonial sites. The blackmailers and frauds work in a gang where they create many profiles and their targets are emotionally weak, unworldly, inexperienced, gullible people. Since the matrimonial sites are based on the SDI (selective dissemination of information) technology, they trick men and women of different ages, religion and profession by showing keen interest in their profiles, and employing a wide range of false projections.

Blackmailers work in three stages. First, they become the friend of a targeted user. Then, they record a video and conversation with the user (for example, on *Skype,* etc.). Finally, they threaten to expose and make it public if the user does not provide money. Frauds, on the other hand, use different tactics to get money, first, by showing interest and becoming friendly, and then narrating a false story. For example,they met with an accident, and need money, they were robbed in a strange city so transfer money urgently, they have lost their wallet and they need to pay the hotel bills in a new place, etc. The genuine users who have been chatting and talking to these frauds and blackmailers for months generally do not understand their tricks and may easily be trapped and abused.

Maniacs are sexual perverts and nymphomaniacs.[[36]](#footnote-36) They create an account to seduce the genuine online users. They get pleasure by talking, chatting, engaging and involving with someone without any serious engagement. They abuse the technology and person for months and then they shift to a different target.

**Conclusion**

Online matrimonial sites are influencing the searching practices. The partner seekers are recognizing it as a potential search engine for a prospective partner. New relationships have been formed and sustained on the basis of selective dissemination of information by the users and service providers. These sites are converting the traditional concept of “love after marriage” into a more rational concept of “first understand each other then marriage.”

The so-called “obedience” of sons and daughters to marry a person whom their parents’ select is now influenced and directed by the matrimonial sites. These “grown-up” children are expressing their needs of a prospective partner by creating an account on the matrimonial sites. Even before their parents had realized the need of a partner for them, they would have spent a considerable amount of time on deciding, discussing and desiring for a partner.

The rigid societal norms for dating are weakening, and men and women are meeting more frequently with each other without parental permission and supervision. The socializing among opposite sex has increased, and parents are allowing them to spend some time with each other before they tie a knot for life. However, the maintenance of the order of the caste and religion on these sites is possibly the most interesting factor which describes the adaptation and appropriation of technology in a socially complex institution. These sites have brought a change in the searching process only but they have not made a social change in the society. The tradition and cultural values pertaining to Indian marriages in the society remain intact.

In traditional methods of searching a partner, the background of the women and men and their families is cross-checked by the word of mouth mostly accomplished by the parents or the relatives. But in online arranged marriages the users initiate the search by focusing on the background of the prospective partner only. Moreover, this online process leads fast results and it opens many options at the same time. Introduction to new technologies in searching a partner has been working as a medium of pressure release for young adults. The virtually smart communicators who shy away from making any type of physical communication at an early stage of courtship period generally find matrimonial sites beneficial and effective to initiate a search for a partner.

These matrimonial sites are bridging the gap between the traditional offline culture and modern online system of finding a partner. The association of the two practices is complementing each other by providing more varied options and results to their searches. The social construction of technology in the Indian traditional set-up can be well defined and understood by these sites. The interaction between the matrimonial sites and the potential partner seekers is relatively fruitful. This metaphor describes that the matrimonial sites have grown popular among youths, and the partner-seekers have got the prospective partners. There were only 5 cases noted out of 370 mixed samples where the users of the matrimonial sites were not satisfied. Table 2 summarizes the differences between online and offline partner search practices.

**Table 2** Comparing offline generation to online generation in partner search

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristics** | **Offline Generation** | **Online Generation** |
| Perception of marriage | Made in heaven | Arranged online/solemnized on earth |
| Orientation/Beliefs | Love follows marriage | Marriage follows love |
| Major initiators | Parents and relatives | Self |
| Objective of marriage for man | To find a house-wife | A loveable partner |
| Objective of marriage for woman | To gain economic stability | To gain equality in the relationship |
| Process of searching | Slow | Fast |
| Direction | Linear | Multi-directional |
| Process control (in terms of progress in relationship) | On man’s side | Both can control |
| Options available | Few | Many |
| Expenditure on searching | More | Less |
| Decision-making | Parents or elders | Self |
| Method | Face-to-face | Online |
| Role of outside consultant | Major | Minor |
| Ties (Caste and Religion) | Rigid | Flexible |
| Chances of understanding each other before marriage | Less | More |
| Participation | Less | More |

**Limitations**

The research collected data from the states of northern India where people spoke Hindi, or a dialect of Hindi, and understood English. There are other 16 regional languages spoken in the various states of India which were not included due to the limited exposure of the author with the other states and considering the paucity of time for the research.

The spatio-temporal constraint obstructed the author to collect face-to-face data from the other five states, including Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Punjab.

The data could not include the feedback from the users in term of: how can the matrimonial sites make this overall experience more interactive and beneficial? Similarly, it could not incorporate the feedback and experiences of the respondents who had got a partner offline.

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5. Rev. J. E. Padfield, The Hindu at Home. Delhi: B. R. Publishing Company, ([1895] 2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Hinduism recognizes eight types of marriages. *Gandharva vivah* (love marriages) and *Bhrama vivah* (arranged marriages) are presently found in Indian society. See *Atharvavedh* for more detail. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The ancient story of “Dushyant and Shakuntala” in Shakuntalam written by Sanskrit poet Kalidas. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
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10. Translated by the author. Donating daughter, a ritual popular in Hindu marriages. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. While acquaintances and friendship between prospective partners develop after marriage, this generalization is based on the replies given by many online users when interviewed telephonically. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
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16. S. Gary Becker, ‘A Theory of Marrage: Part I’, Journal of Political Economy 81 (1973): 813-846. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
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18. An information system is a social system which has embedded in it information technology (see Land, 1985: 215). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
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25. Secure Sockets Layer [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Bharat Matrimony, 2014. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Trust Advisory, ‘All India Brand Trust Ranking (Top 1200 Brands)’,2014, http://www.trustadvisory.info/allindia\_2014.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Alexa.com, 3 June 2014, www.alexa.com. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. I would like to thank Gargi for telephonically contacted people for the data. My special thanks go to Mr. Ganga Swarup and Ms. Uma Rani for interviewing the parents of the partner seekers in the cities of Jammu and Katra. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. The author opened a free account on the matrimonial sites to observe the trends and patterns of the online users. The identity of the author as a researcher was not disclosed. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Various comments recorded during face-to-face interviews. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Roka is a small but important function which marks the beginning of relationship between the two families. It includes the family members and close relatives of the prospective bride and groom. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. A connotation in Indian English means ‘not virtuous.’ [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Women generally go for economically secure groom while men want a beautiful wife. Women want a groom working in either Indian Administrative Services (IAS), or Indian Engineering Services (IES), or India Forest Services (IFS), or Indian Reserve Services (IRS), or Public Service Commission (PSCS). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. The author categorizes the abusers based on the negative feedback provided by few respondents. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Two respondents narrated interesting incidences with maniacs. In the first case, the father of the prospective groom was chatting with the girl, only realized it might be … when she persisted in meeting face-to-face. In the second situation, a male acquaintance reported that the already married elder sister of the prospective bride became so friendly that they ended up in telephone-sex. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)