

# SWIM Report

International Relations and Language Department

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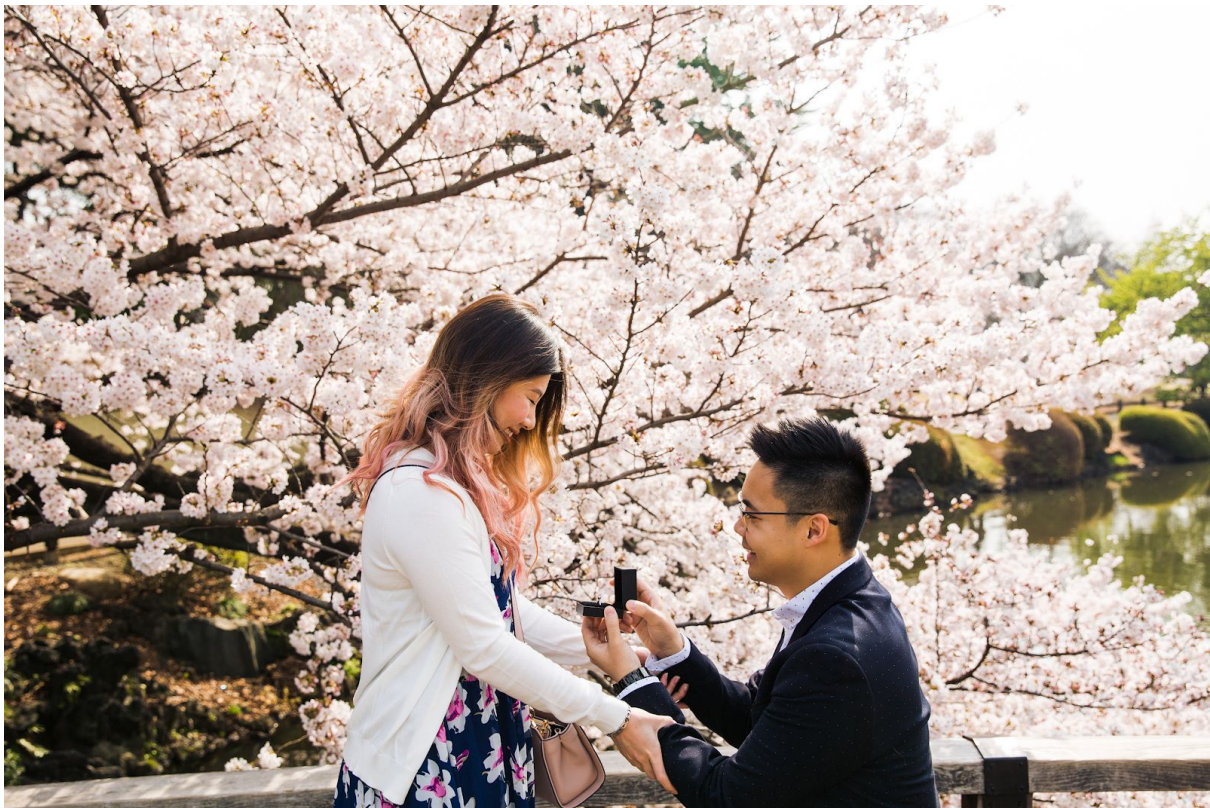
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## *Love rituals in Japan and India*



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## Copy of four visual documents







## **Copy of three articles for the synthesis**

### **Article 1 : “The couples on the run for love in India”**

Most Indian families still prefer marriages arranged within their religion and caste. Marriages outside these rigid boundaries have often led to violent consequences, including "honour" killings. But some young Indians are still willing to defy their families and communities for love, reports the BBC's Divya Arya.

Ravindra Parmar knew that pursuing a relationship with an upper-caste woman would be dangerous.

He is a Dalit (formerly known as "untouchable"), a caste that sits at the lowest rung of India's social ladder. The woman he fell in love with, Shilpaba Upendrasinh Vala, is a Rajput - a Hindu warrior caste near the apex of the system.

The yawning gap between his position and hers is something rarely bridged in Indian society. "We are not even allowed to walk past their area and I had dared to marry into their family," he says.

"Those who marry inter-caste are seen as aliens. The perception is that they are terrorists who revolt in society."

Ravindra and Shilpaba were born and brought up in two villages separated by more than 100km (62 miles) in the western state of Gujarat.

They met on Facebook and would spend hours taking digs at each other.

But all that friendly banter had a deep impact on Shilpaba.

"I was like any other village girl limited to home and college, but he broadened my horizon, made me realise that my life has more meaning," she says.

Social media has opened a space that did not exist a few decades ago. Rigid caste and

religious divides meant that the possibility of meeting, interacting and striking friendships in public places was neither possible nor encouraged.

The caste system is hereditary, and the practice of marrying within the caste ensures that the hierarchy is perpetuated. Caste divisions have deep roots in history and Dalit men who have married women from upper castes have been killed.

Marriages across caste or religion in India are uncommon. According to the India Human Development Survey, only about 5% of Indian marriages are inter-caste.

The onus of upholding tradition, culture and "purity" falls on the woman and if she marries outside traditional boundaries, she is seen as besmirching the honour of the community and her family.

The anger and backlash can lead to violent attacks and killings.

Shilpaba had to flee from her village to marry Ravindra. But the threat of violence has continued to hang over them: they have moved between houses and cities a dozen times in the past three years. Ravindra is a trained engineer but had to leave his job and has had to do daily-wage labour wherever they have lived to make ends meet.

Shilpaba says the stress became unbearable. They started blaming each other for their situation and she even contemplated taking her own life.

"Ravindra convinced me out of it, as that was no solution," she says. "Now we are both studying law with a vision to take up human rights cases and make our parents proud through our work.

"Maybe then they will see that we didn't take this decision to just have fun and they will accept us."

## 'Shocking' level of prejudice

The latest data available from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that 77 murder cases in 2016 were reported with "honour killing" as the motive.

Such violence is highly under-reported and these numbers do not accurately reflect social attitudes that may be growing more conservative.

A 2016 survey, Social Attitudes Research for India (Sari), conducted across Delhi, Mumbai, and the states of Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan found the majority of respondents opposed to inter-caste and inter-religious marriages.

In fact they were in favour of a law banning such marriages.

"It is quite shocking that despite rising levels of literacy and education, prejudicial beliefs do not reduce. In fact, they are worryingly high," says Professor Amit Thorat of Jawaharlal Nehru University, who worked on the Sari survey.

"Religious and traditional values around hierarchies, around the notion of purity and pollution seem to be more sacrosanct and valuable than human rights, the right to live or the right to marry by choice."

## Feeling unsafe

Bibi Ayisha and Aditya Verma were 17 years old when they fell in love. They too found each other on Facebook. That they were born into different religions - she is Muslim, he is Hindu - did not matter to them. But their families fiercely opposed the relationship.

Aditya was born and grew up in Delhi. After finishing school, he enrolled in a college in the southern Indian city of Bangalore only because Ayisha lived there. But that sign of his dedication couldn't win her parents over: he was still a Hindu.

Madly in love, and after waiting for two years, Ayisha ran away with Aditya. They moved to Delhi but, like Ravindra and Shilpaba, they still did not feel safe.

"We were so scared that for five months we stayed in a room. Neither of us was working at that time. I thought if I stepped out, I would be killed, because I was Muslim and he was Hindu," says Ayisha.

In February 2018, 23-year old Ankit Saxena was murdered in broad daylight in the capital Delhi for having a relationship with a Muslim woman.

The woman's parents and two others were arrested and the trial is ongoing.

Ayisha says that after that incident, the fear of a possible honour killing started feeling very real.

"Even if we went out briefly, I was constantly looking around and if I saw anyone with a beard, I thought that they were members of my family coming to kill me."

## Spreading awareness

Her fears have been set against the backdrop of an India where religious polarisation is increasing. A Hindu nationalist government has been in power since 2014 and is accused of normalising anti-Muslim sentiment.

"I think the present environment is such that rather than bringing people and religions together, it is trying to fan the fires of division," says Prof Thorat.

He is quick to point to the violent partition of India to underscore that such beliefs have existed for more than half a century, but believes that efforts to bridge divides are lacking.

Ayisha's parents like Aditya but are not ready to accept him into their family unless he converts to Islam. Aditya's parents are equally unwilling for the marriage unless Ayisha adopts Hinduism.

Both of them are opposed to adopting the other's religion - and losing their own.



"When we fell in love, I knew she was a Muslim and she knew I was Hindu. We don't want that any of us should lose our identity," Aditya says.

India passed a law in 1872 that enables legal registration of a marriage between a man and woman of different religions or caste without any conversion.

Aditya found out about the Special Marriage Act through Asif Iqbal and Ranu Kulshreshtha, a couple who married inter-faith back in 2000.

Soon after their marriage - in the aftermath of the anti-Muslim riots in Gujarat in 2002 - they witnessed targeting of couples like themselves and a lack of any support mechanisms.

They set up an organisation called Dhanak, which spreads legal awareness and provides counselling as well as safe houses to couples who want to marry inter-faith or inter-caste.

But awareness about the Special Marriage Act is very low. It also has a rule that requires a notice about the intended marriage to be displayed at a public place for a month, giving opportunity to anyone to place an objection.

"This provision is often misused by fanatic Hindu groups like Bajrang Dal, Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and Muslim organisations like Nizam-e-Mustafa, who would approach the families and pressure them to stop their daughters as daughters are easy targets," explains Asif Iqbal. According to him, the local police also do not encourage such marriages and instead play an active role in stopping them, especially in smaller towns.

Rekha Sharma, chairperson of the government's advisory body, the National Commission for Women, agrees.

"The government needs to do more in sensitising the police and legal officers about this, as the law helps in stopping conversion yet still enabling inter-faith marriage," she says.

But she adds that lasting change cannot come only by enforcing laws, but by changing social mindsets.

Acceptance is key for the survival of such couples as they deal with severe social and economic isolation.

## 'Trust and love'

The Dhanak network has helped Ayisha feel safe. She has now met many couples like her and Aditya, and it gives her immense hope.

"If you trust your partner and love them very much, then nothing else should matter. You should not waste time worrying about family and society. They will come around eventually," she says.

After their marriage, Ravindra and Shilpaba decided to change their surname to Bharatiya, which means Indian.

They decided to drop their original surname since it revealed their respective castes.

Ravindra is an idealist - he believes that more inter-caste marriages will lead to a future in India where caste divisions will cease to be an issue.

## **Article 2 : “Arranged Marriage”**

In India, arranged marriages still remain the majorly preferred way for Indians to enter into matrimony. In case of an arranged marriage, parents and other relatives decide on a life partner that they deem suitable for their child. They keep in mind various factors, different for boys and girls, while searching for a suitable match to attach their names with. It's a tradition Indians find hard to part with. Even in the 21st Century, around 85 percent Indians prefer to marry the boy or girl chosen by their families, rather than choosing their life partners themselves. This statistics was reveled in a survey conducted by the Taj Group of Hotels. Another survey by IPSOS in 2013, revealed that 74% of young Indians, aged between 18-35 years said that they would rather let their parents choose their life partners, than choosing themselves. The success rates of these arranged marriages when compared to the figures concerning love marriages, we might just realize that sticking to traditions and listening to your parents is not always an uncool thing to do.

### **History & Evolution**

Historically speaking, weddings during the Vedic times took place by a variety of methods. While arranged marriages were preferred, the consent of the bride was generally taken into consideration. In case of royal families, parents arranged a Swayamvar, a ceremony where suitable matches from all over the country were invited. Thereafter, either these suitors had to prove their prowess to win over the girl, or the girl herself will choose one of them, by offering him a flower garland. Even love marriages and elopements were quite common. The couple in love will elope and undergo what is known as ‘Gandharva’ type of marriage.

From around 500 BC, the Vedic Hindu culture gave rise to what we have come to known as Hinduism. The Manu Smriti, a religious discourse that outlined the do's and don'ts for

regarding duties, rights, laws, code of conduct, and virtues to be practiced by people practicing family life, if they want to lead a life of sanctified dharma. These rules were steeped in patriarchal tones and advocated stripping women of their basic independence, from a belief that independent women spread promiscuity. The women from this time on were put under the shackles of forced patriarchy, having to live under the guardianship of a man in all stages of life: Father when she is unmarried, Husband when she is married and son when she is old/widowed.

As position of women in the society degraded, the concept of marriage and her role in it also changed. Previous custom of asking for her consent was abolished and rituals like dowry, child marriages, exchange marriage and other derogatory customs began to rise. Arranged marriages became the most prevalent way of marriage in the country and among Hindus especially.

### **Process of Arranged Marriage**

Arranged marriages in India are long drawn out processes, where finalizing the perfect match may take months and even years. In typical arranged marriages, the parents decide every facet of the process and the prospective bride and groom just show up at the prearranged date of marriage. The parents send out words through that they are looking for a match for their child through their social circle (neighbors and relatives). They might also employ the services of the local matchmaker. Traditionally the matchmaker is an individual who keeps a database of marriageable individual from the neighboring area. Once a match is established, the elders of the family first meet at a neutral place to talk and also to figure out the suitability of the match firsthand. In these meetings, the families try to judge the financial and cultural barometer of each other through direct or indirect talks.



## **Criteria for Suitable Match**

The suitability of a match is determined after taking into account several factors. While some are common for the boy's and girl's sides, certain others are tailored to suit either side. Some of these criteria are:

**Religion:** Religion tops the list of criteria while fixing a marriage match. The boy and girl going for an arranged marriage have to belong to the same religion. Hindus will marry Hindus, while Muslims will look for a match within the Muslim community and Christian families will prefer their children getting married to a Christian. This is probably to preserve the culture and heritage of their religion as customs and rituals vary greatly between religions.

**Caste:** Caste is another important criterion in the list. Hindu religion is divided and subdivided into several castes, which are again branched out into sub-castes. While seeking a match, the parents prefer to choose a candidate belonging to same or compatible caste and sub-caste. This is probably done to preserve the ethnicity of the caste and to seek a match with people having similar customs as one.

**Culture:** The cultural background of the two families is also taken into consideration while fixing a match. Orthodox families do not prefer to initiate alliances with families who seem permissive and open-minded and vice versa. Educational background of the families is also seen to impact a marriage match. Their moral backgrounds are also scrutinized while considering a match.

**Horoscope:** Horoscope matching is an indispensable part of the arranged marriage process and it is generally the cinching criterion for finalizing the talks. Horoscope refers to the birth chart or natal chart of an individual, based upon the positions of astrological

luminaries like the Sun, the Moon, the Planets and other stars at the time of the individual's marriage. It generally holds important life predictions as well as describes the individual's character based on the positions of astrological bodies in specific positions. In India, it is believed that the horoscope holds the key to every important events of an individual's life and Vedic Astrology is followed as the preferred method. The horoscope matching according to Vedic Astrology is based on nakshatras or Lunar constellation and the process is known as Guna Milap or Ashtakoot Milan. This assesses the compatibility of the two people in focus based on thirty six points or guna. To be deemed a good match at least eighteen out of thirty six gunas need to be matching. Other astrological conditions also needs to be determines such as Mangalik Dosha which occurs when the planet mars is positioned in 1st, 4th, 8th and 12th house of the birth chart. The priest, who is matching the kundalis or birth charts, then prescribes some remedies to counteract the negative effects.

**Professional Stature:** This criterion is almost exclusively considered by the girl's side while looking for a match. The prospective groom needs to have a stable job or business and earn enough money so that he can comfortably support his future family. The higher the professional stature of the boy is, the more in demand he enjoys in the marriage field.

**Physical Appearance:** This is the prime criterion of suitability for a girl when being considered for marriage. The color of skin still plays one of the most important deciding factors when it comes to arranged marriage and fair-skinned girls are always preferred over wheatish or dark-skinned girls. Height, weight and other physical aspects are also scrutinized. While the physical appearance of the boy is important to some extent, not much stress is placed on the concept as long as he is not suffering from any serious

problem. Apart from physical appearance, the girl is also judged based upon her efficiency in domestic chores such as cooking, stitching, and cleaning.

### **Meeting Between Families/Prospective Spouses**

After horoscopes have been matched, and the priest has given his blessing to go ahead owing to pre-determined compatibility of their birth charts, the groom's family visits the bride family to see the bride and finalize the marriage. Elders of both the families are seated and the bride-to-be is brought in, properly decked up in fine clothes and jewelry. The bride is seated in the middle of the room and is scrutinized by the boy's family members, often interviewed to judge her domestic knowledge. The groom may or may not accompany the elders in this first visit. If he is, the bride and the groom may be allowed to converse or even meet in private, although such meetings will be heavily chaperoned. If the groom's family considers the girl suitable for their son, they will intimate the girl's family through the matchmaker. Sometimes, there are investigations around the neighborhood to absolutely determine suitability of the match. If all goes well, the marriage talks proceed, solidify, and move towards formalization of the match.

### **Engagement**

Engagement marks the formalization of the marriage match. This happens only after both the parties have agreed that this is the best match possible for their child from all aspects. Depending on the ethnicity and customs of the two families, a date is fixed where the formal announcement of the match and impending wedding is to happen. There might or might not be a formal ring exchange, but usually the date of marriage is fixed on that day. Usually a priest is consulted, and depending on the groom's and bride's horoscope a marriage date is set. The two families exchange gifts and sweets.

## **Arranged Marriage in Modern Times**

Although the practice of arranged marriage has remained favored in the country, the whole procedure has seen some major modernizing changes. For instance, computers, websites and portals have taken over the job of traditional matchmakers, with computer programs predicting matches for individuals. Several marriage portals have sprung up over the last decade or so and while organizations like Bharat Matrimony, and Shaadi have been in the arena for quite some time, upcoming platforms like SimplyMarry are also proving to be worthy contenders. Nowadays, the criteria for matches have also changed - for example in urban areas, working women are often preferred as better matches and their professional stature is considered similarly to the grooms. Emphasis is put on education and values, rather than just efficiency in the domestic arena. Criteria like blood tests are also gaining more and more favor among the urban community. The prospective partners are allowed to interact more freely nowadays, over the phone or even face to face. The concept of courtship has gained favors with the couple getting the opportunity to know each other, sometimes for as long a year between the actual marriage dates. While not much have changed in the rural areas, there still is a general increase in awareness when it comes to issues like child marriages and dowry.

## **Significance and Success Rate**

The fact that sticking to traditions and placing one's faith on the judgment of one's parents is not such a bad thing, has been proved by the low divorce rates among arranged marriage couples. The divorce rate is about 1 in every 100 incidences. That and the evidences of long term stability of the alliance make the phenomenon as a go to for Indians. While the concepts like 'seeing' and scrutinizing the bride by the groom's family



seem derogatory to feminist sensibilities, an arranged marriage, unlike love marriages, provide a complete clean slate for the couple, where they can set expectations according to the partner's after marriage temperament. The tradition is built more in terms of commitment and duty rather than love and passion. Some would say the former is a much stronger base to build a marriage on as at the end of everything, a marriage boils down to exactly those two factors. So, despite much judgment from all of modern world, this may be the secret of strong Indian values.

### **Article 3 : “Craving Freedom, Japan’s Women Opt Out of Marriage”**

TOKYO — The bride wore a birthday cake of a dress, with a scalloped-edge bodice and a large hoop skirt. A veil sprouted from her black bob. Moments before the wedding began, she stood quietly on a staircase, waiting to descend to the ceremony.

“Wow,” she thought. “I’m really doing this.”

This was no conventional wedding to join two people in matrimony. Instead, a group of nearly 30 friends gathered in a banquet room in one of Tokyo’s most fashionable districts last year to witness Sanae Hanaoka, 31, as she performed a public declaration of her love — for her single self.

“I wanted to figure out how to live on my own,” Ms. Hanaoka told the group, standing alone on a stage as she thanked them for attending her solo wedding. “I want to rely on my own strength.”

Not so long ago, Japanese women who remained unmarried after the age of 25 were referred to as “Christmas cake,” a slur comparing them to old holiday pastries that cannot be sold after Dec. 25.

Today, such outright insults have faded as a growing number of Japanese women are postponing or forgoing marriage, rejecting the traditional path that leads to what many now regard as a life of domestic drudgery.

The percentage of women who work in Japan is higher than ever, yet cultural norms have not caught up: Japanese wives and mothers are still typically expected to bear the brunt of the housework, child care and help for their aging relatives, a factor that stymies many of their careers.

Fed up with the double standard, Japanese women are increasingly opting out of marriage altogether, focusing on their work and newfound freedoms, but also alarming politicians preoccupied with trying to reverse Japan's declining population.

As recently as the mid-1990s, only one in 20 women in Japan had never been married by the time they turned 50, according to government census figures. But by 2015, the most recent year for which statistics are available, that had changed drastically, with one in seven women remaining unmarried by that age.

And for women ages 35 to 39, the percentage was even higher: Nearly a quarter had never been married, compared with only about 10 percent two decades earlier.

The change is so striking that a growing number of businesses now cater to singles, and to single women in particular. There are single karaoke salons featuring women-only zones, restaurants designed for solo diners, and apartment complexes that target women looking to buy or rent homes on their own. Travel companies book tours for single women, and photo studios offer sessions in which women can don wedding dresses and pose for solo bridal portraits.

"I thought, 'If I get married, I will just have to do more housework,'" said Kayoko Masuda, 49, a single cartoonist who stopped by to croon in private at a One Kara solo karaoke salon in Tokyo. A separate section is cordoned off for women, behind sliding doors marked "Ladies Only."

"I loved my job, and I wanted to be free to do it," Ms. Masuda said of her unmarried status. Last year, the number of couples getting married hit the lowest level since the end of World War II, according to government estimates. It was the sixth straight year of decline in the

nation's marriage rate, which is falling at a much faster clip than the drop in Japan's population over all.

Not surprisingly, the number of births in Japan — a country where few people have children out of wedlock — is also tumbling. Last year, the number of babies born in the country fell to the lowest level since at least 1899, when record-keeping began.

Local governments, eager to encourage marriage and raise fertility, have started campaigns to bring couples together. “We are working on fostering a mind for marriage,” reads an ad for matchmaking tours and seminars for singles sponsored by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government.

But for more and more Japanese women — who have traditionally been circumscribed by their relationships with men, children and other family members — singlehood represents a form of liberation.

“When they marry, they have to give up so many things,” said Mari Miura, a professor of political science at Sophia University in Tokyo, “so many freedoms and so much independence.”

The shift is tied to the changing Japanese work force. Close to 70 percent of women ages 15 to 64 now have jobs — a record. But their careers are often held back by a relentless tide of domestic burdens, like filling out the meticulous daily logs required by their children's day-care centers, preparing the intricate meals often expected of Japanese women, supervising and signing off on homework from school and afterschool tutoring sessions, or hanging rounds of laundry — because few households have electric dryers.



While some men say they want to pitch in more and the government has urged businesses to reform the crushing work culture, employees are still expected to devote most of their waking hours to the company, making it difficult for many husbands to participate much on the home front.

“It’s so obvious for a lot of women who have jobs that it’s very difficult to find a man who is available to be a caretaker in the family,” said Kumiko Nemoto, a professor of sociology at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies.

Japan’s consumption-oriented culture also means that single women with careers and money have a wide range of activities and emotional outlets that their mothers or grandmothers did not, Ms. Nemoto added. And, notably, Japanese women no longer need husbands to ensure their economic security.

“One reason to get married for a woman is to have a stable financial life,” said Miki Matsui, 49, a director at a Tokyo publishing house. “I don’t have any worries about being alone with myself or any financial worries. So I did not have to chase myself into a corner and choose marriage for financial reasons.”

For some single women, their married friends with children serve as cautionary tales.

Shigeko Shirota, 48, who works as an administrator at a preschool and lives in a condominium she bought herself, says many of her married friends stay home with their children and get little help from their husbands.

“It’s not fair for women to have to be stuck in their homes as housewives,” Ms. Shirota said.

“They are happy as long as they are with their kids, but some of them just describe their husbands as a big baby. They don’t really like having to take care of their husbands.”

Singlehood has freed Ms. Shiota to travel extensively and pursue her hobbies. She has enrolled in jewelry-making classes and is an avid Irish dancer. Last summer she competed as a dancer in Ireland and then took her mother on a trip to China. A couple of years ago, she went on a luxury cruise on the Queen Elizabeth line and booked a stateroom for herself.

“We don’t have to rely on men anymore,” Ms. Shiota said.

On a recent evening, she joined five other women at an Irish dancing lesson in a studio tucked on an upper floor of a department store in a Tokyo suburb. As the group practiced jigs and reels, Ms. Shiota glided across the wood floor with piston-sharp kicks and precise steps. After class, the women ordered tea and sandwiches at a restaurant a few floors down. Ms. Shiota pulled out her phone to show pictures of her summer trip to Ireland. One classmate, a married mother of three teenagers, reminisced about a family trip there years earlier, lamenting how she had not returned because of the prohibitive cost of airline tickets for a family of five.

Some men are reacting to Japan’s economic realities by shying away from marriage as well. Ever since Japan’s speculative stock and property bubble burst in the early 1990s, wages have flatlined. The long-held social compact between employers and workers — in which few people were ever laid off and employees were guaranteed lifelong employment — has diminished. About one-fifth of men are now consigned to irregular contract jobs that offer little stability or potential for advancement.

With the social expectation that men should be the primary breadwinners, many men worry they will struggle to support a household financially. Just over a third of men ages 35 to 39 have never been married, up from less than a quarter 20 years ago.

“Nowadays, men’s wages are not growing, so they don’t make enough to support their own families,” said Kazuhisa Arakawa, a senior director at a marketing firm who wrote “Super-Solo Society” and “The Rise of the Solo Economy.”

Mr. Arakawa, who came of age in the late-bubble years and is single himself, says that many of his male peers view marriage as an encumbrance.

Of course, matters of the heart do not strictly conform to economic conditions. Remaining single is often less of a deliberate stance than a reflection that the urgency to get married has diminished in today’s society, experts say.

“The data suggests very few women look at the lay of the land and say ‘I’m not going to marry,’” said James Raymo, a professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison who has written extensively about marriage in Japan. Rather, he said, they “postpone and postpone and wait for the right circumstances, and then those circumstances never quite align and they drift into lifelong singlehood.”

Kaori Shibuya, 42, had a long-term relationship in her 20s that didn’t work out, and then met a marriage prospect through a matchmaker in her 30s. But there was no chemistry. She has dated occasionally since then.

“I don’t think I have chosen a path,” she said. “But I have had all these chances along the way.”

Ms. Shibuya, who lives with her widowed mother, said some women choose marriage because they feel vulnerable on their own. But she started her own business two years ago — a cafe — and is confident she can support herself.

As a child, Ms. Shibuya said, her parents' relationship looked idyllic. "But now as an adult, I look back and realize maybe she had to bear many burdens," she said. "In the older generations, husbands were the bosses of the family and the wives were obedient and in a weaker position."

Women who are not interested in having children often see little point in marriage. Though single motherhood is on the rise in Japan, it is largely due to divorce rather than women choosing to have children on their own.

"It's not too much of an exaggeration to say that people in Japan get married because they want to have kids," said Mary C. Brinton, a professor of sociology at Harvard University who focuses on contemporary Japan. "If you're not going to have kids, there are fewer reasons to get married in Japan."

Being single comes with trade-offs, too. Ms. Hanaoka, the woman who held a solo wedding last year, shares a ramshackle house on the outskirts of Tokyo with two roommates. When loneliness creeps in, she pulls up the video of her ceremony to remind her of the people who support and love her.

Ms. Hanaoka also recalls that, when she was growing up, her mother often seemed unhappy. Then, after college, she taught kindergarten, giving her a firsthand look at how many mothers seemed to be "trying too hard to take care of their own children, but not taking care of themselves."

"If I become a mother," Ms. Hanaoka said, "I am afraid that I will be expected to act in the mother role that is demanded by Japanese society, rather than being myself."



She has dated on and off, lives frugally and, relishing her freedom, took a trip to Mexico last fall.

“I would rather do what I want to do right now,” she said.

## **Copy of three articles for the argumentative essay**

**Article 1 : “Swipe Right for Matrimony: The Evolution of Indian Arranged Marriages”**

How the tradition of arranged marriage in India has evolved in the age of Tinder, OkCupid, and "ghosting."

A week after my mother's wedding, my mother and her strange, new husband headed to the Madras airport to pick up a visa. They were moving to America together; my mother had met him only once, ten days before the wedding. When he went to ask someone for directions—taking their luggage and all of my mother's money with him—my mother stood petrified and unmoving, afraid that this man she didn't know had abandoned and robbed her. That man was my father, and they have been married for 34 years.

I've been hearing this story my whole life: They laugh about it now. Their marriage was arranged by their families when my mother was 22 and my father was 28. During their wedding, my mother wore a bright red sari, a temporary gold ring in her nose, and dark eyeliner drawn on by her friends from high school. A thousand people attended. Terrified to leave her family and start a new one, she cried the whole time.

The first few weeks were awkward and strange, and the 34 years have been bad and good. Like any marriage, they've had fights and still do. Eventually, though, they grew to love each other. Even though their marriage is no better or worse than the marriages of my American friends' parents, to this day, my mother espouses the virtues of arranged marriage.

It's easy to do so. Divorce rates in India—though increasing—are among the lowest in the world. My mother reasons that, when families are involved with marriages and parents or older relatives ensure that the match is a good one, there's a decreased chance that the couple

will encounter differences serious enough to lead to divorce.

As someone who grew up watching American sitcoms and rom coms though, I've always thought of the road to marriage as a fumbling journey, sometimes awkward but always emotionally rewarding. Arranged marriages, on the other hand, seemed phony and foreign to me. However, my mother may have a point—rom coms don't take the twenty-first century phenomenon of "ghosting" into account, for one. Arranged marriages give you less choice, but they also give you little room for rejection. And, along the way, your family is there to provide support.

Arranged marriages give you less choice, but they also give you little room for rejection.

On the subject of arranged marriage, my father stressed the importance of family involvement as well. He explained that, for his marriage, there was little room for doubt because "I knew she was educated, I knew what she looked like, and I knew I trusted my parents to make the right decision." As Madhu Kishwar told the *New York Times*, arranged marriages work because India's youth experience less angst or hostility towards their parents.

Moreover, the passionless, pragmatic marriages of my parents' generation are not as common as they once were. As technology has changed, traditions have evolved along with it—arranged marriages have morphed into a culturally appropriate alternative to online dating and hooking up. A new practice, known as a "semi-arranged marriage," allows family members to still steadfastly hold onto more traditional notions of marriage and a woman's role within it while allowing for more individual choice.

My cousin experienced this type of marriage when he got matched up at 26. His wife, Prerana Uday, is an educated, modern, and sharply-dressed woman. When her parents approached her about a nice young man they wanted her to marry, she was shocked. But she gave in, met him for coffee, and they ended up dating for a while with the assumption that it would lead to a wedding. After a year and a half, they got married.

Arranged marriages have morphed into a culturally appropriate alternative to online dating and hooking up.

While Uday explains that dating is still somewhat of a taboo in India, she says that in most urban households, it is gaining acceptance. According to one survey from International Institute for Population Sciences and the Population Council, semi-arranged marriages like hers compose a quarter of marriages. Among her peers, Uday was the first to get married, and while some of her friends had an arranged marriage or a hybrid, others have dated and others are happily single with no plans to get married in the near future.

It's not farfetched, then, to think that the whole idea of marriage in India could transform in time. Uday explains that, as incomes increase and the population is exposed to varied outlooks and trends, the process of arranged marriage has adapted. Rising education, urbanization, and the use of matrimonial sites have indeed given young Indians increasing efficacy when choosing a partner.

In fact, there are now over 1,500 matrimonial websites in India, providing people with even more choices. Dr. Jagdish Khubchandani, who has been married for two years, told me in a phone interview that he met his wife on a website called Shaadi.com. Unlike a typical

American Tinder date, though, his future wife's brother was managing her account, and she thoroughly vetted Khubchandani before he was allowed to meet her.

Dating apps like Tinder and Hinge are also gaining popularity for young, urban adults. One app, TrulyMadly, adapts modern dating specifically for Indians, allowing women to feel safe talking to unknown men online by verifying its users through social networks, phone numbers, and photo IDs. Its algorithm even ensures that you're single.

But the process still has a long way to go if it wants to modernize, as women still do not have complete agency. Despite what Bollywood might have you believe, today, only around 5 percent of marriages in India are "love" marriages. And the marriages themselves leave much room for progress. Child marriage is illegal, but India has a third of the world's child brides, according to UNICEF. Marital rape in India is still not criminalized, which means that, if a woman marries a man she doesn't know, she has no legal recourse if things turn violent.

As long as the tradition of obligation (from the girl's side) and rightful-demand (from the man's side) doesn't vanish, abuse will continue to thrive.

There are few methods of escape, too. The divorce rate may be low (1 in 1000 according to some studies), but that doesn't necessarily mean that arranged marriages are more successful. One 21-year-old woman I spoke to, Kalyani Salgame, explained that while divorce is more accepted in younger generations, her parents' generation "speak about it in hushed whispers, often associating the woman with pity."

Purnima Madhivanan is an infectious disease epidemiologist at Florida International

University who grew up in India and has studied Indian marital relationships in the context of public health. She explained in an interview that since arranged marriages are largely an agreement between families, not individuals, a woman holds less clout. Madhivanan said that when a woman gets married and leaves her house, she leaves "her family, her belongings, her identity, and takes on a new identity." That's a powerful loss. According to Madhivanan, some women do not have a say in "when and how they're going to have sex."

One San Francisco-based nonprofit I spoke to, Maitri, serves domestic violence survivors and victims of human trafficking in the South Asian community. Their outreach coordinator, Nandini Ray, told Broadly that they see no connection between India's culture of arranged marriages and domestic violence. "Domestic violence can happen to anyone regardless of culture, race, education, financial background, and gender," she said. Pearl Choragudi, a senior counselor at another domestic violence nonprofit, My Choices, agrees, saying that the method of marriage makes no difference. "As long as the tradition of obligation (from the girl's side) and rightful-demand (from the man's side) doesn't vanish, abuse will continue to thrive."

Because of this, India must prioritize increased modernization of marriages across India. Giving both women and men more choice in both who they marry and how it happens means they get more choice after their wedding day, too, allowing for increased happiness and—if that's not possible—eventual divorce.

## Article 2 : The Secrets of 'Gokon'

If you've spent enough time around single Japanese people, you've probably heard the term *gokon* (合コン). These mysterious *gokon* quickly take on the image of a sort of regulated speed dating ritual that all Japanese people know. However, looking beneath the surface, it's actually much, much simpler.

What's a 'Gokon'?

The term *gokon* is a contraction of *godo konpa* (合同コンパ), where *godo* means "joint" or "combined," and *konpa* itself is a contraction of either the German "Kompanie" or the English "company" (same meaning).

*Konpa* came into use during the Meiji Period (1868-1912), when it described a meal where university students would get together to strengthen mutual bonds and share the cost of food between them. It's believed the variant term *gokon* was coined in the 1970s.

Despite all the mystery, *gokon* are actually little more than group blind (or semi-blind) dates. There isn't any kind of *gokon* association or Facebook page you sign up for, or even a fee for participating; it's just a group date that a friend or mutual acquaintance might happen to put together. It may be something as simple as three guy friends deciding to meet up with three girl friends for a drink.

If you've got a bigger group, somebody will likely be asked to act as the organizer (幹事・*kanji*) for the event—but just on a casual basis. The *kanji* will get the ball rolling by



separating the men and women into groups of equal size (3:3 and 4:4 are common). You're supposed to be single as a prerequisite for *gokon*, though sometimes the *kanji* will be a married "neutral" party—though, as everywhere in the world, people aren't always entirely honest about their own situations.

After the standard *kampai* (cheers), everyone offers a brief self-introduction. Then you simply talk freely, usually about topics of common knowledge. Sometimes people will initiate simple trivia or drinking-style games, but it's not a prerequisite. You'll share contact details at the end, and if you liked someone, you'll typically contact them the next day and pick things up from there. If people particularly enjoyed the meal, you might all head out for karaoke after, but that's about it.

If you're looking for an experience that's a little more elaborate, you can look into *machi-kon* (街コン), where *machi* means "city" or "town." These may even be organized by regional committees to get people engaged in the local community.

In a *machi-kon*, you'll typically start by choosing a drinking buddy of the same gender, and then head through various drinking and dining spots in a prescribed area. The goal in this case is to meet as many people as possible—though the sheer number of people means you probably won't remember anyone's faces.

So that's it: mystery solved. *Gokon* are just slightly more organized versions of a night out at the pub. And if you'd like to participate in one, all you need is to make a few friends!

### **Article 3 : “For Japan’s ‘stranded singles’, virtual love beats the real thing”**

Japan’s apparently waning interest in true love is creating not just a marriage crisis but a relationship crisis, leading young people to forgo finding a partner and resort to falling for fictional characters in online and video games.

New figures show that more than 70% of unmarried Japanese men and 75% of women have never had any sexual experience by the time they reach 20, though that drops to almost 50% for each gender by the time they reach 25.

According to Professor Masahiro Yamada, a sociologist at Chuo University in Tokyo, who has coined the phrase “stranded singles” for the phenomenon, the rise in virginity rates is matched by a rise in the lack of interest in having any kind of “real” relationship.

Recent research by the Japanese government showed that about 30% of single women and 15% of single men aged between 20 and 29 admitted to having fallen in love with a meme or character in a game – higher than the 24% of those women and 11% of men who admitted to falling in love with a pop star or actor.

The development of the multimillion-pound virtual romance industry in Japan reflects the existence of a growing number of people who don’t have a real-life partner, said Yamada.

There is even a slang term, “moe”, for those who fall in love with fictional computer characters, while dating sims allow users to adjust the mood and character of online partners and are aimed at women as much as men. A whole subculture, including hotel rooms where a guest can take their console partner for a romantic break, has been springing up in Japan over the past six or seven years.

But Yamada says this is only a small part of the problem, which has its roots in traditional culture. Young people want conventional marriage and will wait for it. They don't want to cohabit or have children outside marriage – Japan has the lowest rate of babies born outside marriage in the world at 2.2%, compared with Britain's 47%.

Yamada labels as the “parasitics” those young people forced for economic reasons to live at home with their parents, and says that the phenomenon explains this year's population fall in Japan as the birthrate drops. “Children are not likely to be born if men and women fail to bond in couples. Not just marriage but even the formation of couples has weakened in modern Japan.

“For daughters in particular, the family home is a place where they can wait under their parents' wing until an ideal marriage partner comes along,” he added. “Instead of having to get hooked up with a man whose income is unstable, they can adopt a strategy of remaining at home in the expectation that sooner or later they will meet a man with sufficient income for a marriage partner. This is probably one reason why young Japanese are not very sexually active.

“Of course, a certain percentage of the daughters eventually meet and marry men with good income prospects. But most daughters end up staying with their parents.

“Sons who do not enjoy income stability also opt to remain in the family home. They, too, can be expected to get married and move out if their wages rise enough, or if they come across a woman who thinks their income is sufficient. But this is not the way life ordinarily turns out. As a result, the number of sons who continue to live with parents is on the rise.”

Yamada said there was now an expectation gap, with many young people giving up hope in the real world and turning to their computer world, where they could control their “lives”.

Professor Adrian Favell, a sociologist at the University of Leeds, who recently shared a speaking stage with Yamada in London, cautioned against the idea of a dysfunctional generation in Japan, saying that the west liked to exaggerate the “oddness” of young Japanese people. He said that a declining population was not necessarily “bad news”.

“Is it unique to Japan for young people to obsess over pop, film stars, and the rest? Or to ‘fall in love’ on the internet? I don’t think so,” he said.

## **Part 1 : Visual document commentary**

“One day, I will find my charming prince”. This sentence may be what most of young girls think while growing up. Indeed, love is what we are all looking for. Love is such an exciting feeling because it brings us happiness and joy. Since our youngest age, human culture pushes us to find the special one, to give love and by the same way, to ensure our reproduction.

Nowadays, happiness is needed more than ever. Every day, the social networks broadcast images of happy people, surrounded by friends, making amazing travels,... Media, television and series also play a role in the process, just think about the Disney movies we all watched as kids. Society also puts pressure on us. We can see that through the rise of dating apps and websites...

We usually think that love is linked to the feeling of happiness. Hence, in our occidental culture, being in love and being loved means being happy. But what about the rest of the world? In this report, we will focus on the feeling of love especially in India (commonwealth country) and in Japan. How is love perceived in both cultures? What is the state of the art? What are the specific traditions ? In this part, we will analyse the four visual documents. First, we will present both documents and make an analysis of them. We will then compare them together in order to confront the Japanese and Indian culture. We will finish by a conclusion.

### **a) Documents**

The first document is a painting realized by Kitagawa Utamaro and published in the book Poem of the Pillow (1788). He is an artist of the Japanese art movement called Ukiyo-e. This

movement flourished from 17th to 19th century. Paintings were generally financed by rich people. Main themes of the Ukiyo-e paintings are young and beautiful women, flowers, theatre, landscapes. This painting is an erotic scene also called “shunga”. In Japanese, “shunga” means “spring pictures”, which is in fact an euphemism to describe the sexual theme behind. Another reason is because most of the paintings depicted scenes during spring. Main function of those paintings was to teach about physical love, and educate young girls and boys about love. Shunga were not just pornographic content. Men as well as women liked this form of art. Japanese people would expose those in their house, because they thought it was a lucky charm, protecting them from death. Moreover, shunga were traditionally given to young couples as a gift after their wedding. Usually, the painter would put some precise details to help young couple understand about sexuality and how to perform in bed. There are lots of evidences that shunga were largely distributed in books and prints. Even if there were some censorship, their distribution still remained during Meiji period. Hence, shunga were part of the popular culture.

In this painting, we can see half-dressed man and woman embracing passionately. They are obviously kissing, lying down on the ground. Her back is turned to us. The clothes are twisty and curvy, which created an harmonious image. We can also see vegetal details in the background, represented by the plant and the flowers, on the woman’s clothes. Indeed, spring was a largely used theme in shunga, because this is the season of planting, thus fertility. The scene remains chaste, because the rest of the bodies of the two people are hidden under clothes, which is not the case in most of shunga paintings, where the painting is centered on the characters’ genital parts. However, this painting is erotic, since we can see the woman’s backside. She also has her legs around the man and she puts her hands around his face in a sensual manner.

Moreover, this painting also teach us about beauty standards for Japanese in 19th century. For example, elegant clothings for the woman, who is wearing a floral kimono. Her hair are attached in a sophisticated way, her hands are small and delicate and both man and woman have pale and white bodies. Unfortunately we don't see their face, but the painting gives us important information though.

The second document is a photography part of an advertising campaign of Gatebox. It is a virtual girl-looking character named Azuma Hikari, just like a hologram. It is used as a domotic assistant, and also as a virtual girlfriend for single men, needing love affection. It is commercialized in Japan since 2018 for 150000 yens (1150 €). In fact, an advertising movie were also released. In this video, we can see a man (the one on the picture) working in his office. Then, he receives a message from a girl saying that she is excited that he comes back home. We may think she is his girlfriend. Afterwards, we see the young man coming back home, he looks excited as well and keeps chatting with the girl via his smartphone, saying they are excited to meet each other at home. When the man finally enters his apartment, we understand that the girl is actually a virtual blue haired animation character, in a Gatebox. The girl character says “missed you darling!” and she notices the man that it is their 3 months anniversary, and they start enjoying and celebrating with champagne (see previous image). Gatebox is actually a totally new AI device which works with speech recognition. The device is equipped with sensors and cameras so that the character can recognize the master's face and movement. It also uses Wifi, Bluetooth technologies to stay connected to the user, and it is connected to various IoT (internet of things) devices, such as smartphones, so that it can manage the home. For example, in the video, we can see the character turning on the light in the man's flat.

On Gatebox website, we can read “The reason why we made Gatebox was is not only for amusement and efficiency. It was to also to enjoy such natural moments when characters merge into everyday life.”

Azuma Hikari is like the Japanese version of Alexa. However, her creators wanted to give her a real personality, hobbies, etc... just to make her as real as possible. She is not only an assistant, she is a friend. She can texts the user throughout the day, just like a human partner does.

We can move the analysis further. Even if women are trying to emancipate, people in Japan may still believe that the real place of the women are at home, and that their duty is to take care of the house. This is what we can see with Gatebox character Azuma Hikari. In the video spot, the man seems to work hard during to day, and the character created by Gatebox in a submissive girl, calling the user “master”, wearing an apron and taking care of the house as a domotic assistant. There is no male version of Gatebox.

To put it in a nutshell, Japanese people actually struggle with love, because of their culture and the evolution of their society, which is pushing them to work hard, even if they have to neglect their social and love relationships. In addition to this phenomenon, loneliness appears in Japanese youth. Gatebox proposed a solution to make the young people feel less lonely. Their product really shows a problem in Japanese culture and their point of view with love.

The third document is a cartoon published on the website toonhole.com. In this cartoon, we can see a young Indian girl who is introducing her fiancé to her parents. Her boyfriend is actually a Westerner. For the Indian parents, who are wearing traditional Indian clothes, tradition and culture are more important so they first chase the boyfriend. In the second cell, we see the boyfriend leaving. On the third cell, he says “i’m calling up my private jet” so we



understand that he is actually a rich man. Finally, on the last cell, we see the parents suddenly changing their minds and calling the white man to come back.

We understand that the artist wanted to denounce the fact that for many Indian families, arranged marriage are still the first solution. It is part of the Indian culture even nowadays.

Young people in traditional family usually don't have the choice when it comes to wedding and parents generally want their child to marry an Indian person of the same culture.

Note that in India, there are plenty of culture. People usually tend to marry person of the same religion, the same caste, the same social status... Tradition is then an important part of Indian identity.

However, when the parents find out that the white man is rich, even if he is not part of the same culture, they accept him in their family. We understand that money is more important than culture. For the artist, the perfect son-in-law in India has to follow the tradition, unless he is rich.

The last visual document is a cover from the book called "Sex and romance in modern India" written by Rachel Dwyer. On this cover, we can see a couple of young Indian. The man is wearing a suit, and he is holding up a girl wearing traditional Indian clothings. We can understand through their clothing that the girl symbolizes tradition, and the man represents wealth. However, they look happy. The girl is surely from a good family because she can wear jewels and beautiful clothes. The man is probably a rich business man.

Next to them, we can read "all you want is money, all you need is love". This sentence is a parody of the Beatles' song "All you need is love", which highlights the fact that we should learn to love and live in peace. Hence, according to the publisher (or the person who made this cover), Indian people are actually craving for love, but arranged marriage have always

and are still playing an important role in the culture. Moreover, those mean doing a selection, finding the best partner for the children, because it is a way to ensure a good future for them, and to show the family achievement to others. For the publisher, money is sadly more important than amorous feelings for many Indian couples.

### **b) Comparison of the documents**

Those four documents surely show a lot of thing about love culture and concept of marriage and relationship in India and Japan.

The two documents about Indian culture illustrate the same ideas. They are highlighting the fact that in India, arranged marriage are still widespread. For many Indians, tradition is the most important when it comes to marriage. Parents want to choose a person that respects the same culture as their family. However, money plays an important role in the decision. Indeed, as we see on the satirical cartoon, Indian family would accept to pass by their tradition because money can sometimes be more attractive. The document D illustrates the same idea, with the parody of the Beatles song “all you need is love”. It undertone the fact that in modern India, money is the first parameter when it comes to arranged marriage.

The two documents about Japan are totally different style but one shows the concept of love in the 19th century, the other one shows a reality of the 21th century Japan. On the first document, we saw a Japanese traditional painting called Shunga. Those painting represented love scene and where intended to teach love to young married couples. It shows us that during the 19th century, Japanese culture about love was more open, less taboo. People could find those kind of paintings freely, it was certainly great to be able to find such documents for people, since it contributed to the diversity of the popular culture. On the contrary, the

advertising poster of Gatebox shows that the Japanese society nowadays is stressed out concerning love and relationship, and alerts about loneliness. In fact, for many Japanese, loneliness is a real problem and source of depression. In Japan, youth can sometimes feel like nobody cares about them, that they are isolated. This product makes them feel like someone is waiting for them at home, just like a companion, and it provides them with emotional support. According to a South China Morning Post, “One in four adult men in Japan and one in seven adult women were unmarried in 2015, a record low according to census data post-Second World War. Among those who had not been down the aisle, more than 60 per cent were not in a current relationship either.”

In Asia, loneliness particularly affects young people, notably because of the long working days, they just don't have enough time to enjoy social interactions and love. According to Statista, in 2018, average working time in Japan was of 142 hours per month. Indeed, working hard is a sign of devotion and is part of their culture, that may be why some Japanese people put so much pressure on themselves.

Another problem might be difficulties to find love. Even though shunga were largely distributed during the 19th century, for many Japanese, love and relationships are a real struggle. According to The Guardian, “45% of Japanese women aged 16-24 are not interested in or despise sexual contact.”, showing the phenomenon of “celibacy syndrome”, a term invented by Japanese Media.

Marriage and love relationships have become an unattractive choice. Japanese men have become less career-driven, and Japanese women have become more independent and ambitious. Hence, having a job and family has become impossible to achieve, and having children is said to be unaffordable when only 1 parent works.

On the other hand, the Japanese shunga can inspire us to think of Kamasutra book, which was not just a text on sexuality, but also a philosophical content. It seems like love culture and relationships were less repressed and that emotions now are pent-up.

All in all, the two documents about India show us a society deeply attached to tradition.

There may be some popular romance in India, broadcasted by Bollywood, but the reality is arranged marriage... and money. However, marriages are associated to social achievement and are still attractive in modern India. On the contrary, in Japan, society tended to be less taboo about feelings during the 19th century, but now, marriage and relationships are unattractive. Many Japanese choose to live single.

### **c) conclusion**

To conclude, we can say the four documents show aspects of love culture in India and Japan, especially the “being in relationship” part. For Indians, being in a relationship means being married to someone we choose for numerous criteria such as money, tradition, culture... but not really for love. In Japan, society tended to be less complexed about love in marriage, but today, relationships are not an attractive choice for people.

## Part 2 : article synthesis

From our Western viewpoint, after falling in love, we usually move in together. We then plan to marry our beloved one and found a family. In France for example, it is totally possible to marry who we want, regardless of religion, gender, of social status. This is not the case in every countries in the world. The 3 articles that we are going to present give us a state of the art of marriage in Japan and India. The first article is entitled “craving freedom, Japan’s women opt out of marriage” published in the New York Times on the 3rd of August 2019 and written by Mokoto Rich. This article explains how Japanese women are becoming independent in modern Japan. The second one is entitled “The couples on the run for love in India” published on BBC News website and published on the 14th of April 2019, written by Divya Arya. This article explains how new generation see arranged marriage. The third one is entitled “Arranged Marriage“ written by the website culturalindia.net, the date is unknown. In this article, we learn about the concept of arranged marriage and the tradition behind. What are the marriages issues in Japan and India and what are the consequences in both countries? First, we will present the main marriage rituals and traditions in both countries. Then, we will focus on the problems arisen by the articles. Afterwards, we will see the consequences of those problems on society. To finish, we will see how people are adapting their mentalities.

First of all, there are specific traditional marriage rituals in Japan and India. In India, as you may know, the most used way of getting married is arranged marriage by the family.

Actually, marriage used to be free in India, people could marry who they want and practice love marriage. However, with time, independence of women was seen as promiscuous.

Consequently, women began forced to live under guardianship of a man: either her father or

her husband. How does it work? Basically, as we can see in the article from [culturalindia.net](http://culturalindia.net), a matchmaker “is an individual who keeps a database of marriageable individual from the neighboring area”. It is the person in charge of finding a match for a family that wants its boy or its girl to get married. Then, the two families elders meet each other. They would talk about the key criteria such as culture, religion, caste, social status, horoscope, maybe even blood test ! Then, if the families are ok, the boy’s family and himself would come to the house of the girl, in order to meet her. The boy and the girl actually have no say. They are compelled to marry each other. Finally, the wedding would take place. In Japan, the traditions are less restrictive. Men and women are free to love and marry who they want. However, the article from New York Times explains that for many couples, the women actually end up being a kind of slave at home, since she has to take care of the house, as well as the children, and even her husband. In the past, women used to marry men because of financial reason: “One reason to get married for a woman is to have a stable financial life,” said Miki Matsui in the article. In India, money is also one of the top criteria for the girls to select their future husband. According to the article, “The prospective groom needs to have a stable job or business and earn enough money so that he can comfortably support his future family”. In both tradition, women tended to marry because of financial situation. Nowadays, it is still the case in India, but not anymore in Japan. In the next part, we are going to see why.

Furthermore, we can say that the two countries are facing problems concerning marriage. In Japan, for many women, marriage is unattractive. Indeed, being married means that they will lose their independence, and that they will have to restrict themselves. In other words, they want to stay who they are, and they fear someone would force them to change. Another reason why groom life is struggling is because women are becoming more and more

independant. In the first part, we saw that women used to marry to have a financial support. However, nowadays, “Close to 70 percent of women ages 15 to 64 now have jobs — a record”, according to the article. The number of women working is higher that ever. Hence, they might feel as they don’t need to rely on a man anymore to have what they want and to be happy. The marriage issues are not quite the same in India. In this commonwealth country, where arranged marriages are as strong as ever, young couples are craving for mentality change. According to reporter Divya Arya, arranged marriages are still considered seriously and if the children disobey to marry someone they love, but do not satisfy the criteria, the love story can end up in violence and blood. In this article, we learn about the story of a girl, named Ayisha, who is Muslim, and a boy named Aditya, who is Hindu. They met on Facebook and though they knew about they cultural differences, they still fled in order to live together. She explains : “ I thought if I stepped out, I would be killed, because I was Muslim and he was Hindu”. This testimony shows the fear and anxiety of the young couple.

On the other hand, those problems actually have consequences on the society. In Japan, unattractive marriage make the society suffer of a drop of the population. According to the article, “Last year, the number of babies born in the country fell to the lowest level since at least 1899, when record-keeping began” (note that the article was written in 2019). The situation is so alarming that the Japanese government in taking measures in order to encourage people getting married and having children, in order to counter the decline of the population. Indeed, a decline in population means that in the future, there will be less active people working while there will be more retired persons. That could lead to economic problems for the country if there is not enough people to ensure the country’s affairs. As for India, pressure of the family and the society is so high that it can lead to violent

confrontations and murders. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, “77 murder cases in 2016 were reported with "honour killing" as the motive”. For many traditional Indian families, having to accept a sub cast person, or even someone of another religion in the family is inconceivable and seen as dishonour.

Last but not least, both articles show that mentality are changing. But do they change in the right way? Funny fact revealed in the New York Times article is that in Japan, new mentalities are changing the consumer society. For example, travel agencies are offering single trip for women only, in pubs and karaoke, women can now enjoy a party with no men,... Women can even organize their wedding with themselves, with a real reception and solo bridal portraits. In India, some associations are emerging, in order to allow couples to marry who they want, regardless of the religion or social status, and to protect them from threats. According to BBC News, Asif Iqbal and Ranu Kulshreshtha are two Indians that founded the organisation Dhanal , which aims to provide “safe houses to couples who want to marry inter-faith or inter-caste”. The creation of such organisation shows that mentalities are currently changing. Sadly, the inter-cultural marriages can also create a form of racism and persecution regarding some groups of people. Indeed, unmixed marriages are an important part of the Indian culture, that is so important that even police officers are taking part of the repressions, in order to discourage the mixed couples to marry together. In the BBC article, it is explained that the Hindu nationalist government, in power since 2014, is taking advantage of the situation to spread anti-muslim sentiments. However, arranged marriage is still the favourite solution for young people to get married. According to IPSOS, in 2013, “74% of young Indians, aged between 18-35 years said that they would rather let their parents choose their life partners, than choosing themselves”.



To conclude, we can say that those articles teach us about marriage and love rituals in Japan and India. In India, the tradition is the first criteria, as we can see through the arranged marriage. Most of young people let their parents choose their partner for them, and most of them agree with that. Indeed, this practice is existing since several centuries, and it is a way to contain the purity of the culture, ethnicity, even if money can sometimes buy love. So in both countries, marriage is not seen as a romantic act. In Japan, it is seen as an enslavement of women, since they usually have to take the responsibility for the children and the house. It is interesting to see this point of view, totally different from our Western culture, where our society encourages men to take part in household works. In both countries, the struggles of marriage have consequences on society and economy. In India, this can be a source of violence, because inter-cultural marriages are seen as a discreditable behaviour by the family. It can also create the sentiment of racism and persecute some group of people, due to their caste or religion. In Japan, marriage is not appealing, which is leading to the decline of the population, hence, economic slowdown. As Westerners, those facts may seem far from our mentalities. However, we can't judge it, because every country has its own culture, which makes the beauty and diversity of the world.

## **Part 3 : articles summaries**

### **article 1 : “Swipe Right for Matrimony: The Evolution of Indian Arranged Marriages”**

**original article size : 1347 words**

**summary size : 257 words**

Arranged marriages in India are the most widespread type of marriage, very few are love marriages. Indeed, when the family is involved in the marriage, there are fewer risk to divorce. Family support is also well rooted. For the older generations, arranged marriages gave little room for doubt, because behind the scene was the parent’s choice.

However, today, semi-arranged marriages are a new type of marriage emerging in India. Families still get the traditional part and women’s roles are still framed, but individual choices are more respected. Typically, a women subscribes to an online dating app but her family actually handles her account. If they find a matching profile, the girl and the boy start chatting and meet. If they get along well, they finally marry. In India, dating is still a taboo. But mentalities are evolving, since level of education, urbanization and online dating apps and websites have emerged, which increases the efficiency while choosing a partner. Moreover, dating apps such as Tinder, are more and more popular in India, and provide safety for women who want to date.

On the other hand, if society gives people more freedom with marriages, that means they would have more freedom after the marriage too, in other words, divorce. Divorces are still seen as incorrect in Indian society and very few couples split up. When a woman leaves the

house, it is a dishonour for all the family. Another dark side of arranged marriages are domestic violence. Sometimes, women are so oppressed that they end up bitten and raped.

## **article 2 : “The secret of Gokon”**

**original article size: 488 words**

**summary size: 94 words**

Gokon are typical speed dating rituals in Japan. It comes from the contraction of godo, which means joint, combined and konpa, which means company. Traditionally, during Meiji era, students used to meet, eat and share the cost of food together.

Gokon are the occasion to make new friends or find a partner. Typically, participants must be single. There must be equal number of boys and girls, and they don't mix together while sitting. Then, an organizer initiates a drink game and they start enjoying.

After the date, people can share contact and meet again.

## **article 3 : “For Japan's ‘stranded singles’, virtual love beats the real thing”**

**original article size: 703 words**

**summary size: 135 words**

In Japan, one reason of marriage crisis could be relationship crisis. A big majority of the Japanese youth never had sex before they reach 20 years old. The virginity rate is also climbing. This could be due to the lack of interest in real life relationships. Indeed, young people tend to withdraw in their virtual world and to be more attracted by pop star celebrities, or even video games and animation characters. The Japanese term “moe” refers to that kind of people.

Actually, Japanese youth believe in marriage, they just keep waiting at their parent's house for the perfect partner to show up and to make a wedding proposal. Relationship and sex outside marriage is not attractive.

This fact is weakening the country. Since formation of couples decreases, marriages too, and so does to birthrates.

## Part 4 : Argumentative essay

In this report, I chose the theme Life Rituals, and the subject of love. I wanted to analyze all aspects of this subject. How do people see love in their culture, from then to now ? How do they date and meet ? How is marriage seen ? What are the traditions ? I chose this subject because love is what we are all looking for. For all humans, this is an universal feeling. We are chemically programmed to fall in love. When meeting someone that physically attracts us, our brain starts producing molecules such as dopamine and norepinephrine. Both together, those molecules create a sensation of bliss and excitement, in other words the cocktail of love. Originally, this was a way for us to approach a partner, and ensure the sustainability of our species. All humans in every countries of the world can basically fall in love. Moreover, for many of us, love is the starting point of our lives. We first fall in love with somebody, then we eventually marry, form a family and make children. Some philosopher agreed to say that love is part of happiness: "Of all forms of caution, caution in love is perhaps the most fatal to true happiness", said Bertrand Russell, a British philosopher and mathematician who lived in early 1800s. The concept of love however, may be different according to each person in this world, and particularly different from one country to another. If love is a feeling that is chemically programmed in our bodies, that means that we can't really control ourselves. People sometimes say, love is just coming to us. In French, we even say "être foudroyé" or "coup de foudre" when talking about falling in love passionately. It is just as if we couldn't control it, and we can't choose the person we are going to love, and marry. However, this vision of love and marriage is different from one country to another.

Now, I am going to situate the theme and the subject in each country. For this study, I chose India, as commonwealth country, and Japan. Indian culture is particularly known for the arranged marriage. On the contrary, Bollywood movies broadcast a romantic vision of love. People may actually feel torn apart, when they have to choose between freedom and tradition. I wanted to focus on this country to understand more about this paradox, and get the actual vision of the new generation. Japan also has a special representation of love. For example, people usually don't show their feelings in public. Indeed, the Japanese people don't say, "I love you", in contrast to what people in the West do. This is due to cultural differences. Instead, love is expressed by manners or gestures. When the Japanese people do put their feelings into words, they usually use the phrase "suki desu", which literally means "to like." Hence, the vision of love is very different in Japan and in our Western culture, and I wanted to understand the relationship between Japanese population and love.

The focus of this paper is to understand the weight of society and its influence on love relationships. For this essay, I will focus on three articles. The first one was published on the Guardian's website, written by Tracy McVeigh on the 20th of November 2016, entitled "For Japan's 'stranded singles', virtual love beats the real thing". It tackles the issue of a new phenomenon in Japan, when people fall in love with virtual characters. The second one is "The Secrets of 'Gokon'" written by Michael Kanert for website All About Japan website and published on February 15, 2017, which explains a traditional dating concept in Japan. The last one was written by Nandita Raghuram on the 18th of February 2019 for Vice, entitled "Swipe Right for Matrimony: The Evolution of Indian Arranged Marriages". This article addresses the question of arranged marriage in modern India. In our Western culture, love is

such a great feeling that makes us happy. We typically fall in love with whoever we want, and eventually we get married and found a family. However, love relationships and marriage are totally different in Japan and India. In India, arranged marriage is a strong basis of the family and tradition. In modern Japan, love relationships are complicated. Those can be seen as serious issues due to the pressure of the society. However, in those countries, love and relationships are not in crisis because of the weight of the society.

First of all, society and tradition are playing an important role in love and relationships. In the articles, we understand that this can be the cause of relationship crisis. For example, in Japan, even the young generation seems to be still attached to the family and tradition : “Young people want conventional marriage and will wait for it. They don’t want to cohabit or have children outside marriage”, as we can read in the first article. This shows that the Japanese mentality is based on this cultural aspect of the family: no relationship if no marriage. In Japan, you don’t just date to feel love, you start dating because you are going to marry and have children with this person. Hence, tradition, culture and society are stressing the vision of relationships. Moreover, in India, “only around 5 percent of marriages in India are "love" marriages” according to Nadita Raghuram. This shows how Indian people are still attached to the tradition of arranged marriage and that love seems to be a modern concept. In India, arranged marriages have strong basis in the culture. Every family practice that, so that it is difficult for love couples to follow their own way. Consequently, society is generating a crisis, because it prevents people from marrying and sharing their lives with who they want. However, this argument is not always true. Even if the countries are still attached to the tradition, the culture of love is more and more opening. Indeed, Indian movie industry

contains a lot of love stories. In Japan, dramas and animation series also broadcast an exciting vision of love and relationship. Hence, even if those countries are still attached to their tradition, the society doesn't actually force them to follow the elders way.

On the other hand, we can say that there could be actually a crisis, and that the pressure of society is creating problems in both countries. For example, in Japan, the lack of relationships has a serious consequence : "Japan has the lowest rate of babies born outside marriage in the world at 2.2%, compared with Britain's 47%" according to Tracy McVeigh. That could be because people tend to date less, and to be more isolated. Indeed, Japanese society expects people to work a lot, it is a way to reach social achievement, which means less time for leisure and social interactions. According to the article, those poor numbers are also due to the new phenomenon of "stranded singles", which describes the new tendency of young people to fall in love with virtual character and thus, to neglect real relations. Another reason in Japan is explained in the article : "Sons who do not enjoy income stability also opt to remain in the family home." We understand that for financial reasons, young people tend to stay at their parent's home, which is like a comfort zone, where they don't have to take responsibility for themselves and for a partner. Similarly in India, people started arranged marriage mostly because families wanted to ensure a better financial situation, especially for women. However, young people are now willing for more freedom. Hence, there is a crisis because they have to choose between tradition and freedom. However, sometimes it can just be a matter of personal choices, not only the pressure of the society. Especially in Japan, women tend to desire more and more independence. In India, love marriage are legal, but an important part of the young people still prefer to trust their family and opt for an arranged marriage. Thus, we can't just say that this crisis is due to the weight of society.



Furthermore, there seems to be a disillusionment caused by the society. Due to simplicity, people may tend to do what others expect them to do, or just because they lose hope. According to the sociologist Tamada, interviewed by McVeigh, there is an “expectation gap, with many young people giving up hope in the real world and turning to their computer world”. Society seems to put a real pressure on people so that they just cut off with the real world, and prefer their virtual ones, meaning they would spend less time having social interactions, and less chance to meet people, and find a partner. In India, young people also seem resigned when it comes to marriage. According to Nandita’s father in the article, “I knew she was educated, I knew what she looked like, and I knew I trusted my parents to make the right decision”. Moreover, according to the article, arranged marriage have fewer risk of divorce because the family is involved in the marriage. Thus, people seem to give up on change and to withdraw in their comfort zone. However, as we said earlier, this can just be a personal decision. As Westerners, we might find it surprising to give up on our freedom and independence just to let our family decide for us, or live with our parents until we get married. In Asian culture, living in respect with the family and the elders is very important and quite common. Hence, this might not be only the consequence of a disillusionment, but also a particular lifestyle, or a personal decision.

I will now give my arguments. In my opinion, love and relationships are not in crisis because of the weight of the society. All the countries have their own culture of dating. From our Western point of view, we have many ways to date, such as night club, hanging out with friends, online dating apps... This dating culture is different from a country to another and we

can't judge it. For example, in Japan, a typical concept is called Gokon. According to Michael Kanert, those are Japanese speed dating that exist since Meiji Period (1868-1912). It is a kind of meeting with equal gender mix, where people decide to hang out together to share a lunch, or to go to karaoke, or to take a tour in the city... He explains in his article : "You'll share contact details at the end, and if you liked someone, you'll typically contact them the next day and pick things up from there." It is a good way to make friends, but also find a partner. Consequently, love and relationships are not in crisis because it actually exists good ways to create bonds with people. It is also part of the popular culture, so society doesn't stress people's relationships. In modern India, new generation now tend to practice "semi-arranged marriage", instead of arranged marriage totally controlled by the families. According to Nandita Raghuram, it "allows family members to still steadfastly hold onto more traditional notions of marriage and a woman's role within it while allowing for more individual choice." People are no more forced to marry a stranger. They now have the possibility to interact with the person, and eventually marry. Society doesn't stress people's relationships, it just makes it evolve. Moreover, according to a survey from International Institute for Population Sciences and the Population Council, semi-arranged marriages represent a quarter of all marriages in India. This shows that society actually makes the relationships and the concept of love evolves in India. It is not a crisis, it is just an evolution.

Furthermore, sometimes, relationships and love are just a matter of personal choice, it is not a pressure of the society. Indeed, in Japan, if many young people seem to lose interest in relationships and dates, it can just be the consequence of personal decisions. For example, Japanese women in modern Japan are willing for more freedom and independence, when the elder generation women tried to find financial support through marriage. Hence, many

Japanese business women now decide to stay single so that they don't have to depend on anybody. Since they are financially independent, they can afford to live alone, without having to worry about their family. Moreover, in the article, we understand that many young people actually choose to stay at home. According to McKeigh, young men leave the family's house "if they come across a woman who thinks their income is sufficient" otherwise, they would stay at home. People used to marry just for financial reasons, even if they didn't want to. However, they now have the choice, that's why some of them choose to stay single. In the article, we don't have exact numbers of people who totally refuse to date in Japan, so we can't say that there is a crisis. As for India, we know through the article that some people actually choose the arranged marriage solution because they know the marriage is more stable when the family is involved. In addition, it gives little room for divorce and struggle to find the ideal partner, that is why arranged marriages are still attractive in India.

To finish, new mentalities are creating new habits. Society doesn't stress people into something they don't want, instead, it makes habits evolve, creating a new diversity of love rituals. According to Raghuram: "rising education, urbanization, and the use of matrimonial sites have indeed given young Indians increasing efficacy when choosing a partner". People now want to have more decision in who they are going to marry. Moreover, dating apps like Tinder are also more and more popular in young generation. In those apps, Indian women can date while benefiting more security protection. I think that mentalities in India are evolving and that society is adapting to that change. There are no crisis, only new emerging lifestyles. In Japan, we can say the same thing. Maybe Japanese people see marriage as a prison and an unattractive choice, but love is an universal feeling that makes us happy, and it would be

grotesque to say that Japanese people definitely reject love and relationships. Maybe this relationship crisis concerns a little number of person and that mentalities will still evolve.

To summarize, mentalities and vision about love and relationships are evolving in Japan and India. People are willing for more freedom and independence. This is creating new life rituals. Society is not stressing people into something they don't want, instead it is adapting to the changes.

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