

Deciding to spend the rest of your life with someone is definitely no easy feat of commitment. Most of us are lucky enough to pick who that special someone is, but what if we didn't? What if you promised to spend your life with a complete stranger? Seems unreal, right?

This is the basis behind the concept of an arranged marriage. Typically, in an arranged marriage, the families pick someone for their child to marry. The two families meet soon after and decide whether or not they want their children to get married to each other. Usually, the would-be couple has the final say on whether or not they'll get married to said person, but even then they don't get time to find out if their partner likes long walks on the beach or what their favorite color is. Love isn't a huge factor in this type of marriage. Typically, financial and economic stability are the deciding factors.

It might sound pretty sketchy, but in all reality, arranged marriages are usually pretty successful. That's not to say that arranged marriages don't have downsides; however, a properly arranged marriage can reap bountiful results.

Global divorce rates back this up too. In a 2012 study done by Statistic Brain, around 6% of arranged marriages end in divorce, while 53.25% of marriages around the world are arranged. In the US where most people pick who they marry, the divorce rate is about 32%. That's a huge difference.

Many countries who also have arranged marriages as part of their culture such as India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have low divorce rates. Take India for example. According to the U.S. News and World Report, about 95% of India's marriages are arranged. Yet India has the *lowest* divorce rate in the world. And to top it all off in a survey done by IPSOS done in 2013, 74% of young Indians prefer an arranged marriage even though they are exposed to Western ideas and culture.

Not only do the global divorce rates back up the success of arranged marriages, but psychology does as well. For starters, since you're marrying someone you know next to nothing about, it's not a huge jump to say you have low expectations to begin with. A page on *Psychology Today*, done by Utpal M. Dholakia, author of *The Science Behind Behavior*, talks about the success of arranged marriages he says, "...in-depth knowledge is crucial to forming accurate expectations, and more knowledge produces higher expectations...As research on satisfaction judgments shows, when expectations are low, they are more likely to be met or exceeded..." In short, whenever you know less and have a reason to expect less, you are easily satisfied with the results. This can allow for many to be satisfied and happy with their arranged marriages.

Typically if someone agrees to an arranged marriage what they really want is financial security, stability, and commitment. When these are the couple's ideals they're naturally going to try harder to work out their problems and solve them. Both sides will be willing to put in the effort to make the relationship work for the sake of longevity. Since economic stability plays a role in the arranged marriage as well, chances are that the couple won't have to be worried about their financial situation and how well off they are.

In countries where arranged marriages are part of the culture another added factor is family pressure to make the marriage work. In this case, if the marriage doesn't work not only is bad for you, your family also suffers from the bad match. Because of this couples will try even harder to have a happy marriage for their families' sake not just their's. All of these factors cause the couple to be easily satisfied and work hard to keep the marriage happy and fulfilling.

However, that's not to say that all arranged marriages are fairy tales. Forced marriages are a harsh and cruel reality. By definition a forced marriage is one where one or more of the parties involved in the marriage do not give their consent and are forced to marry the other party. The government considers to

be a human rights abuse and it is. In many cases, people are promised to someone at a very young age and can be forced to marry them usually at 14 or 15. Child marriage is a huge problem due to this, with rates for child marriage in South Asia being around 45% according to the UNICEF. Around 1 in every 5 girls are married in South Asia before the age of 15. Marriage is a huge decision and to be forced to give yourself to someone at such a young age is just wrong.

Usually, the victim suffers violence towards their family from the other party in the form of honor killings if they try to refuse. In most cases, the bride/groom face disownment from their family seemingly 'dead in their eyes' for refusing to submit to the marriage. They have protection under the government, but in most cases, they can't reach out for help in the first place. In a lot of stories, if the child goes through with the forced marriage they suffer abusive husbands and households as well.

There can be a couple of cons as well in a properly arranged marriage. In many arranged marriages it can be more about the family's social status or friends. This can cause the kid to feel unnecessary pressure to go through with the marriage to please their parents even if they aren't comfortable with their bride/groom. It can also cause families to hide the bride/groom's faults for the sake of the match. In one such case, a woman walked out of her marriage after asking the would-be groom a simple addition problem which he answered wrong.

It's important not to overlook the huge problems associated and caused by arranged marriages, but all in all, when an arranged marriage is done properly, with two consenting adults agreeing to the match it can end beautifully.