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THE RELEVANCE OF MATRIMONIAL ADVERTISEMENTS FOR THE STUDY OF MATE SELECTION IN INDIA

The matrimonial advertisements that appear in English-language Indian newspapers have attracted scholarly attention in recent years, and quite justifiably, for these items provide an abundance of factual information admirably adapted to statistical analysis of some of the variables determining mate selection. Yet the limitations of this material are also obvious. There is, first, the impossibility of verifying the accuracy of the contents. This is not necessarily a disadvantage, however, because sociologists are interested not in individual exaggerations and omissions but in the prevailing value system which causes such inaccuracies. The recurrent mention, for instance, of the beauty of a girl or the earnings of a boy may often be factual exaggeration, and therefore misleading to those who search the columns of matrimonials for an attractive candidate. To the sociologist, such frequent mention conveys the social importance of these attributes. His problem is not to find out whether or not the different attributes proffered are factually true, but to evaluate them in their context.

A more valid limitation is the anonymity of the persons who insert the ads, for this precludes additional inquiry into their background. It is possible, however, to infer this background from the data provided by the matrimonials concerning caste, education, profession and income. Clearly, the great majority of the advertisers belong to an elite of literates in English of high socio-economic status. Since only about 24 per cent of India's total population are literate, it is obvious that the social group of the advertisers represents a still smaller fraction of Indian society.

The reasons motivating the advertisers also require investigation. From the contents of the matrimonials, it is clear that people do not turn to them as a 'last resort' for difficult cases after the customary channels have failed. To a growing extent the usual channels of

matchmaking through the mediation of the traditional go-between are indeed failing for all those who have had to adjust to the anonymity of city life and the constant transfers of government servants. For that very reason this set of people is increasingly making use of matrimonials as a modern adaptation of the traditional means.

Yet these advertisers do not represent a progressive category of 'modernists' who, in bypassing the traditional go-between, ignore the standards set by their society. The general content of the matrimonials, which precludes the idea of 'last resort', at the same time excludes the potentiality of modernists.

The conclusion to be drawn from the content analysis set forth below is that the majority of the advertisers conform completely to the prevailing value system of their status group, implying that the adjustments of this group to changing situations are also reflected in the matrimonials. This analysis has been tested by investigations on changing family life and by inquiries into the views and attitudes of youth from similar social strata towards caste, marriage, family life, and the opposite sex — that is, by directly questioning the generation which matrimonial advertising is intended to benefit.

This leads to the question, by whom are these matrimonials inserted — by the parents or by their children? Such a question may seem irrelevant and superfluous to outsiders conversant with similar items only in European or American publications. In France, for instance, matrimonials are quite popular in the provinces, where contacts are scarcer than in the larger towns and cities. The French situation is the reverse of that in India, where social isolation arises from and within city life. The content of the French matrimonials clearly indicates that in the majority of cases the candidate himself or herself has advertised. Rarely do the parents take this step and in such cases it is stated explicitly. Some periodicals classify such ads according to age. If an analysis were to be made of them — especially of those placed by persons belonging to the higher age groups — it would undoubtedly show a far from negligible number of 'last resort' cases among both male and female advertisers.

To illustrate the differences between French and Indian matrimonial advertising, I reproduce in translation a few typical examples from the columns of the monthly *Le Chasseur Français* (1960), which has regular sections on shooting, fishing, agriculture and sports, and a special section for women. The matrimonials are an important part of the advertisements.

1. *inserted by the woman:*

Teacher, 42, 1 child, property, widow, would marry reliable civil servant, preferably teaching profession, 45-50, region immaterial.

2. *inserted by the parents of the girl:*

Parents liberal profession want to give in marriage daughter, 27, Roman Catholic, attractive, tall, sportswoman, morally irreproachable, dower and expectations, to serious young man, position and excellent milieu.

3. *inserted by the man:*

Young man, 26, 1 m. 65, reliable workman, with property, would like to correspond with a view to marriage, girl 22-25, agriculturist or workwoman, serious, loving country life.

4. *inserted by the man's parents:*

Parents, with a view to son's marriage, Roman Catholic, healthy, serious, educated, would like to correspond with parents girl, about 30, finished notarial studies. All qualities regarding liberal profession and country life.

These matrimonials leave no doubt as to the identity of the inserters. But this cannot be said of the Indian matrimonials, which are generally quite vague and lend themselves to conjecture. In my first analysis of Indian matrimonials, I myself took it for granted that parents had placed them and stated so accordingly in two articles which appeared, in 1961 and 1966, in the Dutch sociological journal *Mens en Maatschappij* (Man and Society). This analysis was based on two sets of advertisements, one from the January and February, 1957 issues of *The Hindu Weekly* (hereafter HW) and the other from the *Hindustan Times Weekly* (1959) (hereafter HTW). A few casual remarks on the identity of inserters, made in articles on the same subject in the *Sociological Bulletin* which came to my notice afterwards, cautioned me and induced me to reconsider my opinion. In his 1965 article, K. Anand writes: "The sample consists of a total number of 1,000 advertisements out of which 500 are from *bachelors or their parents* and another 500 from *girls or their parents*" (my italics). And Amelia Reyes-Hockings states in her 1966 article: "Both males and females advertise for partners, and in most instances, the parents for either the bride or the groom place the advertisements" (italics again mine).

It seems to me of decisive importance to know whether the ads are placed by those immediately concerned or not, in other words, whether the contents of the ads express the views and anticipations of the generation of the brides- and bridegrooms-to-be, or of the generation of their parents. I have therefore worked through yet a third sample,

consisting of 569 items, the total number of matrimonials published in HTW during the month of February 1964. Except in a few cases, I have found it impossible to 'prove' *from the content* of these ads that they were placed by the parents. The following examples may elucidate my dilemma:

1. *inserters not identified:*

- a. man's side:
Beautiful girl for Gaur Brahmin, handsome, graduate boy, 25. Government job 250.—.
- b. girl's side:
Match for beautiful Bisa Agarwal Tayal gotra girl, twenty, graduate Delhi University. Father industrialist, well-known family. Details first instance.

2. *inserters identified as family:*

- a. man's side:
A pretty girl for Agarwal rich family. Boy intermediate. Settled in business, Meerut. Main consideration girl's merits.
- b. girl's side:
Wanted well-settled Punjabi Brahman match for my sister's daughter settled in Delhi, age 21, matriculate, holding sewing diploma.

3. *inserters identified as male candidate:*

- a. Brahmin bachelor of 26 years, from U.P., working as a welfare officer in private concern, seeks a bride.
- b. Punjabi Arora, foreign qualified engineer, aged 28, drawing four figure salary, employed in reputed concern. Interested in simple early marriage.

Of these various categories I have found the first to be by far the largest, with 531 items. The second category produced 26 items, while the third contained only 12, all coming from the man's side. I could not detect a single matrimonial explicitly placed by a girl.

If, then, we *assume* that the majority of advertisers are parents of the candidates and not the candidates themselves, we shall have to validate this assumption with the help of other studies and investigations. It may be remarked in passing, however, that the 1964 sample reveals a trend for male — but not female — candidates to advertise personally. For when I compared this sample with that of 1959 from the same HTW, I found that in the latter only one out of 374 ads was explicitly placed by a male candidate.

Before proceeding to the content analysis proper, there is one further remark to be made about the distribution of matrimonials according to the sex of the candidates offered. Amelia Reyes-Hockings' sample from *The Hindu* covered a span of twenty-five years on a one-day-

per-month basis for six years, with an interval of five years between each sample year. This yielded 512 advertisements, of which those "placed for males and for females . . . were almost equal in number." This outcome corresponds with mine in my sample of 305 HW matrimonials, representing the total of two consecutive months (January and February) of 1957. There were 156 offers placed on behalf of girls and 153 on behalf of men. A much larger discrepancy existed between the two categories in my 1959 and 1964 samples from the HTW, comprising 374 and 569 matrimonials, respectively. The category of girls offered consisted of 136 and 220 items, that of men offered 268 and 351, respectively.¹

K. Anand's sample, consisting, as noted above, of 1000 matrimonials from North Indian papers, shows no such discrepancy, balancing out evenly at 500 each for boys and girls. Most probably, therefore, our process of selection differed. I presume that Anand selected with the intention of comparing equal numbers of the two categories, whereas my concern was to collect *all* the matrimonials of a particular period. Our outcomes, therefore, are not comparable in this respect. I have no explanation for the discrepancy in my two HTW samples.

To return to the question, by whom are these matrimonials inserted. In answering this, one factor of importance is the age of the candidates. Amelia Reyes-Hockings' analysis, permitting chronological comparison over a period of twenty-five years, makes it clear that the median age at which marriage takes place has risen. In pre-Independence years (that is before 1947) the median age of girls to be married was 16-19, whereas since Independence it has climbed to 20-23-age level corresponding with the male preference in both periods. Her figures and statements for post-Independence accord with my findings for the 1957 HW sample. The same is true of the male median age of her sample, which in the post-Independence periode had risen to 28-31 (from 24-27 before), roughly corresponding with the male median age of 26-31 of my sample.

The median age groups in my 1959 and 1964 HTW samples, namely 21-25 for girls and 26-31 for men, again correspond roughly with those mentioned by Anand. In my samples the age level of girls offered was, however, slightly higher than desired by the men.

¹ The total of the combined offers of 309 in HW 1957, 404 in HTW 1959, and 571 in HTW 1964, exceeding the respective totals of matrimonials, is explained by the fact that some advertisers include more than one candidate (up to three, brothers and sisters) in the matrimonials they place.

Quite evidently there is no question of 'child marriage' in these matrimonials, and the trend is toward later marriage for both males and females.

This trend in the rise of age at marriage, especially of girls, has previously been mentioned in several studies on marriage in changing India. For the purpose of this article I shall compare the results given above with those obtained by K. M. Kapadia from his inquiries in various parts of former Bombay State, published in 1955 (page 150). The recent marriages of some of his samples (1941 and thereafter) drawn from educated women and graduate teachers, show a gradual rise in the age of girls as compared with earlier studies. Three-quarters of the marriages occurred after the girl was seventeen. This upward trend in the age of marriage has been supported by the figures given by Aileen D. Ross in her 1961 study of educated high-caste urban families. At least 59 per cent of the older women had been married before they were sixteen, whereas this percentage had fallen to 21 for the younger recently married women, 36 per cent of whom had married between sixteen and eighteen, and 42 per cent at nineteen or later.

The rise in the age at marriage has been rightly attributed to the increasing spread of education. Many more children are now receiving education than did their parents, and their education is far more advanced than was deemed necessary for the older generation when it was young. The trend is especially marked for women, in the sense that the education of the generation of mothers had often been informal or neglected, whereas the number of the daughters receiving formal education, often advancing to vocational training or university study, is increasing rapidly in these higher status groups.

This phenomenon has far-reaching effects on the whole pattern of family relationships and mate selection. In reconsidering the question to what extent young people may be expected to place their own matrimonial advertisement, it seems more than unlikely that girls below the age of eighteen with little or no schooling would ever take this initiative. But there is some ground for expecting highly educated girls and men above eighteen to take their marriage arrangements in their own hands. The evidence of the matrimonial advertisements, however, indicates that this assumption is more theoretical than actual.

The ever-recurring mention of traditional attributes — such as caste and gotra, virginity and horoscope — strongly indicate that the customary pattern of selection has not been discarded. For the attention paid to these ascriptive attributes, pertaining to a closed marriage

system, implies that parents are expected to arrange the marriages of their children.

All the analyses of matrimonials show that caste and gotra are mentioned frequently as prerequisites of a marriage arrangement. Of my HW sample and my two HTW samples, 96, 83, and 72 per cent respectively mentioned caste with or without gotra. Amelia Reyes-Hockings gives a percentage of 78.9 for the whole period of her sample, while Anand qualifies by stating that 63 per cent of ads from girls as against 65 per cent from men mentioned caste requirements.

Those emphasizing that caste considerations were immaterial constituted almost 4 per cent in my HW sample, compared with a percentage of 6.8 given by Amelia Reyes-Hockings for the whole span of her combined periods. It is regrettable that she includes no detailed figures from which to detect a trend in her sample.

The same category is larger in the HTW: I found that 17 per cent of my 1959 sample and 13 per cent of my 1964 sample had explicitly stated that caste was immaterial. The statement that "girl's merits" were the "main consideration" may imply that caste was no bar, but the number of advertisers who made such a statement is negligible. I have no explanation for the surprisingly low figure in the latter sample, unless it be that fewer people than before find it necessary to state explicitly that they are not opposed to intercaste marriage (15 per cent). Anand's findings show higher figures, with 33 per cent of the advertisements for men and 13 per cent of those for women, stating that caste is immaterial.

The conclusion must be that caste is still a prominent issue to those who attempt to arrange marriages by means of advertisements. Whether it reflects a similar attitude on the part of those directly concerned — the young people themselves — is answered to some extent by the various inquiries about the attitudes of educated youth towards caste and caste marriage.

Progress in the legal sanction of intercaste marriage was achieved with the Hindu Marriages Validity Act of 1949. The extent to which intercaste marriage is being regarded favourably by society may be inferred from the following studies.

When B. Kuppuswamy asked the South Indian male and female college students of his 1956 sample (591 in total) their opinion of whether they approved of intercaste marriage, about 22 per cent replied that they wanted marriages to take place within the caste, while about

33 per cent approved of intercaste marriages, although they excluded the scheduled castes, and nearly 45 per cent of marriages without restriction of caste or religion (pages 187 ff.).

In her 1961 study about changing urban family life, Aileen D. Ross states that roughly two-thirds of the men and nearly half of the women of her sample were in favour of intercaste marriage (page 270).

B. V. Shah (1964) interviewed two hundred Gujarati male college students, 65 per cent of whom showed a tendency to adhere to caste endogamy. While stating that the other 35 per cent said they might marry outside their caste, Shah specifies that a large number (about 22 per cent) meant marrying only "in case of similar or higher status level than one's own"; and that in most of these cases (17 per cent) they would do so only if their parents gave their approval (pages 130 and 412).

As for girl students, let me take my own investigations in Jaipur. Of a sample of 203 (undergraduate and post-graduate) girl students of Rajasthan University that I interviewed in 1964, 28 per cent were in favour of caste marriage, 43 per cent were not against intercaste marriage, and 10 per cent made it clear that they were only against marriages with members of the scheduled castes. The rest had no pronounced opinion. Those girls who were in favour of caste marriage rationalized their preference by saying they would find the same atmosphere in their in-laws' family as in their own. In case of intercaste marriage they feared adjustment difficulties and problems for the children to be born.

My case UG 97, for example, stated:

I don't say that intercaste marriage is a bad thing to do, but I don't believe that it will be successful. Adjustment is difficult. The girl has to learn new habits and the contacts with the older members of the in-laws' family will become difficult. Then we have the problem of the children to be born. It will be difficult to find a marriage partner for them. Their only choice will be from amongst children of mixed marriages.

These are exactly the same reasons mentioned by Aileen D. Ross' interviewees who were against intercaste marriage (page 271).

Now, Shah's study shows that few students would act against their parent's wish, even if they personally were in favour of intercaste marriage. And once it is accepted that parents have the final say in the matter of the marriage arrangement of their children, all such considerations as caste, dowry and social status inevitably will play a decisive role.

When Shah observes that practically all the male students he interviewed (199 out of 200) considered marriage a personal affair,

he adds that this meant that "the boy's voice also must be considered". On this basis a very large proportion (72 per cent) thought that greater weight should be given to the boy's voice. But when it came to selecting their own brides, Shah found that the number of those giving equal weight to the parents' voice increased at the opinion level from 28 per cent to 67 per cent, and that the number of those regarding their own voice as more important decreased from 72 per cent to almost 33 per cent.

His observation is corroborated by those of Ross, who states that of the nineteen unmarried girls she interviewed, more than one third were in favour of "complete choice", while the same number thought that "some choice" should be left to the young people in the conclusion of marriages. For the 42 boys of her sample these figures amounted to almost 43 per cent and 50 per cent, respectively. She warns us, on page 243, however, that

even though single men and women say they want complete choice in their marriage partners, they may not be able to achieve it. Therefore Table VII should be seen as an indication of a desire for more choice rather than being interpreted as a trend to more actual freedom of choice.

Of my own sample of girl students in Jaipur, the majority, 64 per cent, considered marriage arranged by the parents the best solution. Almost 16 per cent thought that marriage should be based on the choice of those immediately concerned. Another 12 per cent were married or engaged students who declared themselves satisfied with their parents' choice within their own caste, saying that their consent had been asked before definite steps had been taken. About 7 per cent had no pronounced opinion on the subject. These figures reveal that at least three quarters of these educated girls and young women declared themselves in favour of marriage arranged by the parents, or had been willing to accept their parents' choice.

How did these girls rationalize their attitude? Half of the 64 per cent in favour of arranged marriage qualified their option by adding that parents should inform their children before taking a final decision, and that the children should be enabled to meet their prospective partners before they were asked to give their consent. The reasons why they saw no acceptable alternative for this type of marriage arrangement were inspired by the fact that they felt entirely dependent on their family with its strictly defined roles corresponding to the prevailing hierarchical relationships. As my Case UG 51 put it:

Till we marry we are entirely dependent on our parents. So let them arrange our marriages. They have experience. If I had to make my own choice, I would fear an uncertain future.

This very anxiety about taking their fate into their own hands betrays the subordinate position of these privileged girls, who in many other respects were free to develop their own personalities. Case UG 44 said:

If something goes wrong in an arranged marriage, the family is responsible for it. But in case the girl has made her own choice, her family is no longer responsible for what happens.

The most solid argument adduced by them in support of their preference for marriage arranged by the parents, however, was the fact that they were not allowed free social intercourse with boys — other than brothers and near cousins — of their own age. Here we arrive at the crux of the problem.

In 1935 K. T. Merchant stated that more than 75 per cent of his sample of 598 male and female college students in Bombay and surroundings were in favour of self-choice (page 88). On the basis of this high percentage, Merchant concluded optimistically:

If the views given by the Modern Hindu Youth are sincere and are going to be put into practice, marriages in future will mostly be 'self-choice' marriages (page 90).

Today it has to be acknowledged that his optimism is belied by subsequent studies showing that the measure of individual freedom, necessary to put such views into practice, has not increased.

Merchant tempered his optimism by a condition in predicting the future trend, thereby pointing to circumstances that might prevent youth from 'putting their views into practice'. In his conclusion (page 228), he is more explicit, mentioning as 'one of the problems impeding 'self-choice' this very lack of social contact:

Real "self-choice" is not possible without a wide field of choice and "personal contact", and these are dependent upon the freedom of "free social intercourse" between men and women.

His solution is co-education, a matter of much controversy at the time of his research. Since then co-education has made large strides. But one may doubt whether it has also improved in quality and effectiveness since one of Merchant's female interviewees qualified the kind of co-education found in many institutions as

no co-education, merely co-existence with separate places and differentiations between the two sexes (page 232).

Restrictions preventing free social intercourse were acutely felt by the girl students I interviewed in Jaipur. Although their college education not only postponed their marriage to a later age but also widened their intellectual horizons, these girls had little contact with boys, and then only in a chaperoned form. The position of the post-graduate students,

who sat with members of the opposite sex on the same benches in lecture halls and libraries on the university campus, was even more ambiguous than that of the undergraduates who went to girls' colleges. Besides occasional group contacts at picnics, debating evenings, sports and the like — all chaperoned by members of the teaching staff — the members of the two sexes had no liberty of mixing freely and openly. It is precisely to this persistent segregation of the sexes that Amelia Reyes-Hockings attributes the frequency of arranged marriages in present-day India, and the increased use of matrimonial advertisements as a modern adaptation to traditional match-making. She writes:

There are few avenues open to social interaction between the sexes, the widest being those found while in school. There is little co-education before college, and even in college it is not always in evidence. Outside school, contacts with proper marital prospects become even more restricted.

A far from imaginary fear of a ruined reputation if they did not conform to the prevailing *mores* prevented the girl students in Jaipur from regarding their freedom to study and therefore to marry at a later age, as a means to decide for themselves whom they would marry. Segregation of the sexes seems to be the main factor causing grown-up, highly-educated young people (especially girls) still to prefer their parents to select their marriage partners.

The persistent segregation of the sexes in institutions where the two 'co-exist' and have numerous formal contacts often engenders an unhealthy sex-consciousness. Only genuine co-education would enable real companionship, which in its turn would be the channel to self-choice in marriage matters. Here a distinction must be made between self-choice marriage and love marriage. Students are more concerned with the former than with the latter. Falling in love before marriage is discredited in a society where love is connected with feelings that are born of the union of a man and his wife in wedlock, and deepened by their common experience of joys and afflictions.

Films, songs, novels and magazines have contributed greatly to equate love before marriage with flirtation and cheap erotic attraction, thus stimulating in the minds of boys and girls an awakening awareness of feelings and longings that go with their growing into adulthood, but that cannot find a natural outlet. This kind of sentimental daydreaming among the girl students in Jaipur did not interfere with their marriage expectations. As one girl put it: "Marriage is no dove courting; it is a life problem of vital importance."

As long as romantic love and marriage are still being separated in

the minds of the educated youth, they will more readily accept their parents' choice, and herewith the criteria their parents apply in the selection of a marriage partner. From the various studies on the attitudes of educating young people towards marriage, it is in fact evident that qualities and attributes expected in the future partner are in concordance with those mentioned in the matrimonials.

Which qualities do these matrimonials stress as most desirable? Like Amelia Reyes-Hockings and K. Anand, I have noticed that, apart from those pertaining to the ascribed status (caste, gotra); the qualities most frequently proffered by male advertisers are education, remunerative job or well-settled existence and good looks. These male advertisers expect the girl to be beautiful, accomplished and educated. The rise in the level of education for girls denotes a departure from the usual criteria of traditional accomplishments. Once school education was recognized as the main channel to well-paid, prestigious jobs for men, it logically developed that educational achievements of girls would be rewarded with better marriage chances, with a concomitant rise in the level of education for girls in order to compete successfully in the marriage market. Amelia Reyes-Hockings has noticed a gradual rise in the number of girl graduates and in the level of degrees. In my 1957 HW sample, 16 per cent of all the matrimonials mentioned educated girls, as against 41 per cent in the 1959 HTW sample, and 81 per cent in Anand's 1965 sample.

The marked difference in percentages between HW and HTW may be due to the difference in cultural background of the subscribers to these papers. The advertisers of HTW give the impression of being less caste conscious and more status conscious. This would also explain that, in the HTW, for men high qualifications are becoming so self-evident that they are often omitted. But the frequent mention (desired or proffered) of the man's occupation or function, implying a high level of specialized education, with the necessary information about income or salary, is indicative of the importance attached on the girl's part not only to his education but to the way in which he makes use of it. The following examples from the February 1964 issues of HTW illustrate this trend.

Proffered qualities on the part of male advertisers:

For handsome Khatri Engineer 27, Government service Delhi 800.— p.m. Well educated, accomplished match from respectable, well connected families.

Desired qualities from male candidates:

Wanted a suitable match, IAS, Class One Officer, engineer, doctor, businessman for Saxena Dusra graduate pretty girl 20. Owns property in Delhi.

Proffered qualities on the part of female advertisers:

Match for beautiful post-graduate Bisa Agarwal 25 years girl. Decent early marriage. Sub-caste no bar.

Desired qualities from female candidates:

Wanted suitable match preferably lady doctor or M.A. for Khatri Kapur engineer working in reputed firm. Age twenty-seven. Emoluments one thousand.

Among the types of employment desired on the girl's part, official-dom ranks highest (HW 1957: 21 per cent; HTW 1959: 26 per cent). Anand has differentiated between the occupations offered on the man's side and those preferred on the girl's side. Whereas 17 per cent of those who gave their occupation were in government service, 32 per cent of those advertising on the girl's part stated a preference for a civil servant. The supply obviously does not meet the demand.

When we compare these outcomes with those of the several attitude studies, we find that in her list of qualities desired in mates (page 258), Aileen D. Ross does not mention occupation for men. Margaret L. Cormack, on the contrary in her 1960 study, mentions fourth in the sequence of most important factors preferred for a husband his job (74 per cent), after character (94 per cent), education (90 per cent), and age (74 per cent); good looks (30 per cent), rank far lower (page 95, table 43). In her list of most important factors preferred for a wife, character (94 per cent) and education (84 per cent) rank above beauty (69 per cent) and age (68 per cent) (page 93, table 40).

These figures are roughly corroborated by my findings in Jaipur. To the girl students of Rajasthan University a good character was the most desired quality (almost 88 per cent), followed by occupation (51 per cent) and education (41 per cent); good health (35 per cent) and good looks (almost 33 per cent) ranked fourth and fifth.

I want a husband with good character, who has finished his university education and has a well-paid job. He should be of my own caste and belong to a well-known family. (Case UG 84)

I would prefer a good character, but one should never expect an "ideal husband"; this is unrealistic. Consider his qualifications. He need not earn thousands, but he should earn hundreds. (Case PG 46)

He should have a good character and be healthy. Any job will do, provided his income is sufficient to lead a decent life. (Case UG 28)

From the various studies on the attitudes of educated young people — belonging to a social stratum similar to that in which matrimonials circulate — we are now able to conclude that the advertisers conform to the prevalent value system of their status group. These matrimonials may, therefore, be considered useful for comparative studies on mate selection. Both the advertisers and the educated young people of an urban middle and upper middle class give evidence of still adhering to the criteria which pertain of a closed marriage system; both reflect a changing society in so far as they show a shift from the former stress on attributes of an ascriptive nature to a more equal distribution of both ascriptive and achievement attributes, with a concomitant upward trend in age and formal education, especially for girls. A preference pattern thus becomes discernible within the over-all framework of the normative system. With the rising age at marriage and higher education, the young people have gained more assurance than had their parents, married at an earlier age. The incidence of this new attitude is supported by the various studies mentioned. Yet these studies reveal at the same time that, even in the — relatively rare — cases when these young people select their own spouses, they hardly deviate from the general views prevailing in their family and in society.

The question, therefore, whether matrimonials are inserted by the parents or by those directly concerned loses relevance in so far as both parents and their children differ little as yet in their proclaimed ideals and aspirations. This conformity may be more apparent than real. Interviews reveal little more than verbal attitudes; but these may express ideals that cannot yet be put into practice — as in the case of Merchant's young advocates of self-choice in marriage. Verbal attitude may also conceal ideals. Much depends on the social and historical context. Merchant interviewed a generation of young people deeply stirred by Gandhi's appeal to the youth and the women of India to emancipate themselves from customs and habits unworthy of Hindu society. Their juvenile and feminine frustrations in matters of family and marriage could at last be openly expressed, because some one was listening, was making others listen, and had made of Civil Disobedience the touchstone of their ideals.

Today such idealism, if alive among the members of the younger generation, finds no outlet; their frustrations have no soundboard. Protest against marriage customs, so openly expressed in the thirties, is now silent. Today's interviewees must be carefully cross-examined and their verbal attitudes weighed in the balance before scholars can

detect the existence or nonexistence of even covert insurgence.

Most of the girl students I interviewed in Jaipur, for instance, were realistic enough to prefer that their parents select a husband for them, for, with their restricted freedom of movement, they were unable to choose themselves. This realism did not prevent a few girls from 'obstructing' when possible, by planning not to marry at all. But these same girls were perfectly willing to enumerate their preferences for an imaginary husband. Their stated intention not to marry may, therefore, be regarded as a means of escaping a parent-arranged marriage. As modern students, conscious that they could earn a living if necessary, these girls — who lacked the courage to oppose their family's expectations straightforwardly — took this roundabout way to express their hidden protest against being married off to a stranger.

Likewise, in their answers about the kind of husband they would prefer, their preference for a good character — a quality not mentioned in the matrimonials — is significant of their conscious or unconscious resistance against an exclusively rational matchmaking. Such instances of concealed protest against prevailing values may be detected through interviewing; they are not discernible in the matrimonial advertisements.

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