Is an arranged marriage an unhappy marriage?

By Srishti and Lucy

An arranged marriage is a type of marital union in which the bride and groom are selected by a third party (usually parents, relatives or close friends) rather than by having fallen in love with each other and deciding together to marry, however it is not a forced marriage, which is an entirely different matter entirely. Arranged marriage was common worldwide until the 18th century. In recent times many people are opposed to the idea of it, however arranged marriage is very common in South Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, Southeast Asia and parts of East Asia; The main motivation factor in these types of marriages is the happiness of the son or daughter, but the main viewpoint is that parents know best.

In the UK, it is expected that 42% of marriages will end in divorce but only 6% of arranged marriages end in a divorce. However, many cultures that are accustomed to arrange marriages do not usually support the thought of divorces. According to data from the UNICEF, Human Rights Council, over half of the marriages in the world are arranged. India is one of the many countries where arranged marriages are common, 90% of marriages there are arranged and the divorce rate is only 1.1%.

There are many pros of having an arranged marriage. First of all, arranged marriages are not forced marriages, according to recent research from the Asia-Pacific Economics blog, couples from an arranged marriage’s love will grow stronger creating a strong foundation of understand and trust which is one reason why their relationships last for a longer period of time.

Stability and financial securities are other advantages of having an arranged marriage; the two families will ensure that there would be a steady income for the couple. Also, because your family would have chosen your partner, you can know that they would be compatible with you- if there were any significant flaws, your parents can weed them out while being unbiased.

Finally, you will have the complete support of your family through the entire process. Many families also ask the girl to stay with her in-laws, because they have already approved of her, they will make her feel more comfortable.
The main disadvantage of Arranged marriages in Hinduism (especially in India) is the dowry system. It has been said that the dowry system has been completely eradicated from the social views around the country, but it doesn’t seem like it. The dowry system is a situation where the girl’s family pays enormous amounts of money or gives other expensive things such as gold, cars etc. to the groom’s family, just because they are on the ‘superior’ side of the relationship.

Additionally, arranged marriages may sometimes raise a hard situation of choosing the right partner. This occurs when there is a lot of pressure on the unwed individual from the family member.

Furthermore, the couple might experience a lack of privacy in their relationship due to the family closeness and interference by other relatives. It calls for an awkward situation if the couple is in an argument, and hence the entire family might get involved even if they don’t tend to. Once a couple chosen through arranged system of marriage get married, family future, financial planning and other relative tasks take the first priority. Hence the main feeling of love between the couple ends up being the “second thing” in the relationship.

Arranged marriages are actively debated between scholars. The questions debated include whether arranged marriages are being used to abuse international immigration system; whether arranged marriages inherently violate human rights, particularly women’s rights; whether they yield more stable marriages for raising children, the next generation; and whether there is more or less loving, respectful relationship for the married couple. In multiple western countries arranged marriage is looked upon badly, however the majority of countries that support it the people participating in arranged marriages are content.

At the age of 16, Thangam Venkateswaran was married. The idea of arranged marriage was very common at the time so she knew what was coming from a very early age. The concept of any other marriage was unheard of and so was refusing or disagreeing with your elders. This is because many believed that because your elders are so important in your life, they know what’s best for you-therefor you must accept what they say.

For Thangam, moving to live with an unknown family after a marriage to a boy she hardly knew seemed daunting. However, because the both families had a similar lifestyle, the change was not much of a shock. Nevertheless she did have to adjust, but with all the support from her new big family, she was treated like their own child.

Married life at this time gave you a lot of responsibilities. Although her husband was the only one with a job, she had plenty to do at home. As her responsibilities increased, her free time
decreased meaning she had less time for hobbies. Nevertheless she was given the opportunity to learn new things like sewing, cooking and socialising from her new family, it allowed her to broaden her horizons.

To this day she is happily married with two children and four grandchildren, living comfortably in India.