



## ARRANGED MARRIAGE AS AN INSTITUTIONAL DOMESTICITY: A NOTE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KAVITA DASWANI'S NOVELS

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper attempts to present Indian arranged marriages as an institutional domesticity. This paper draws examples from an Indian-American writer Kavita Daswani's heroines who stands against the preformed traditions of arranged marriages. However, they accepts the situation for the sake of their families and suffers a lot in their lives. This paper examines what arranged marriages gives to a women and how it was made into an institution by the society. Thus, by evaluating two powerful heroines of Kavita Daswani, this paper states arranged marriages as a pure institutional domesticity.*

**Key Words:** *arranged marriage, caste, society, economy, dowry, tradition, unacceptability.*

### INTRODUCTION

The tradition of Arranged marriages in India started from the years past. It was in believed to be in practice even before the birth of Christ precisely before 500 BCs. There are so many marriage practices held in ancient Indian history. India is known for its variety of traditional practices and different cultures. Though there are diversities in traditions, the arranged marriage system here is unique. Parents in the houses starts searching for the bride or groom for their son and daughter when they reach particular age fit to get married. They search for a good family for their daughter to live in and obviously a good house keeper for their son and

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their family to look after all the household responsibilities and also to support their son in every means.

Arranged marriages are purely like leaving a bride and a groom in an unknown island where everything is new to them. The kind of mental stress is more for the bride than the groom as she leaves her entire known world and steps into a place which she is unaware of. Indian arranged marriages gifts the bride a strong sense of agony, fear and a sense of joy that lies somewhere deep inside the mind. This fear is created even in the marriages arranged by themselves. Deeply analysing, every marriages that happens in the world is arranged marriages, it depends on who arranges the marriages. It could be arranged by the parents or arranged by themselves.

Marriages are actually the turning points in anybody's life. The idea of marriages are made to organize lives of people. In India, there are different kind of arranged marriages based on religion. Like varied cultures and traditions there are varied religion in India, Hindu marriages are totally different from Muslims and Christian marriages. There are different kinds of marriages even in Hinduism. That varies according to their castes. The caste system in India is very much complicated. There are numerous caste systems classified based on their professions identified in India. To safeguard the classified castes, arranged marriages are made as tools.

People in India believes that arranged marriages not only unites two people but the two families. Though arranged marriages destroys the choices of the bride or groom, it gets the fullest respect from the relatives of both the families. Arranged marriages are actually seen as the matter of pride for the parents. When an arranged marriage happens, the bride or the groom not only marries the partner but also the entire family. Parents of both the people arranges not only the marriage but also the future needs of the couples but setting a cultural background, making sure of educational qualifications, social status and also the minds of the people and looking at their ability to adjust to each other in everything.

The main Purpose of arranged marriages is to maintain social order, to have parents support over entire family, to keep ancestral lineage, to give opportunity to strengthen familial relationship, to pave way to maintain confidentiality over family properties and acts as a legal license to preserve private relationship between the couples.

*"Marriage is treated as alliance between two families rather than a union between two individuals" (Prakasa 15)*

Whereas, Muslim marriages ensure good education for their children and makes sure that they are happily married. Muslim marriages are commonly made in summer seasons. In

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Muslim marriages there was a ceremony called the "asking ceremony". This is to ensure that both the bride and the groom is interested to marry each other. But in Hindu marriages there are no such ceremonies. The bride and the groom are blindly made to accept the partner arranged by their parents. They were not given chance to state their opinion on the bride or groom or their family. Once the marriage is fixed between them, they has to accept the family and the partner and adjust to live with them throughout their life.

One more thing that is unavoidable in arranged marriages are the dowries. Dowries are the legally unlawful offences but culturally it was made necessary to present the pride of both the families. The main reason that the bride's family tells about dowries are that their daughter has to live in her husband's place after the marriage, where she must not face any discomfort to use the things present there. So, in order to make their daughter comfortable, they are sending her along with loads of dowries including the things from safety pins to diamonds. But, officially the dowry system was made illegal in India.

There are numerous defects in arranged marriages. In order to maintain social status, some parents arranges marriage to their children with someone who is totally unmatched for them. Mismatching the mental status of both the people, some parents forces them to live together and that relationship ends up in divorce. In some cases, to maintain the familial wealth, children of closely related elders are made to marry, this in turn creates genetic disorders for the children being born for them.

The system of arranged marriage in Indian society and the way by which they are made as institutions could be better understood with the stories of Kavita Daswani. Kavita is an Indian American novelist, journalist and a story writer. She have authored more than 5 novels including *For Marital purposes*, *Everything happens for a reason*, *The village bride of Beverly hills*, *Salaam Paris*, etc.. All her novels are based on arranged marriages that happens without the acceptance of the bride. The kind of mental oscillations that the brides has is the main theme of her novels. All the stories are based on this because, Kavita personally faced many hurdles due to her arranged marriage. So, every stories are just the reflection of her mentality towards her own marriage. She always presents the heroines who refuses to go along with the traditions. Anju from *For matrimonial purposes* and Priya from *Everything happens for a reason* stands as perfect examples for heroines who refuses to go along with the traditions.

Anju goes in search for love but she was forcefully made to reject her choices and satisfy for her family and tradition. Her marriage is arranged so fast and the other important formalities like looking for astrology matches are held too fast that she was not given any time to think about the happenings. She herself has an age limit to get married, which she confesses at the very beginning of this novel. She says thus,

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*"My grandmother was married of two days shy of her tenth birthday. My mother found a husband when she was twenty. I thus reckoned that if every generation increased by a decade the acceptable age for the marriage, I should have become a wife by thirty". (FMP 1)*

There are many instances in the novel where she remembers herself to get married soon but the kind of force which her parents gave her is so much. Even though she wanted to get married soon, she searched for pure live and care but all she got was an arranged marriage from the society. But she accepted the situation and started making contact with the one whom her parents arranged. But that too ended up hilariously. She says thus,

*"But the great official husband-hunt, as I had come to call it it, was well under way. I had been here for several days, and there had been some talk of this boy and that". (FMP 4)*

However, Anju faced lot of problems due to her arranged marriage. All the heroines of Kavita were made to go to any foreign land after their marriage. This adds up fuel to the agony mentality of them.

Like Anju, Priya from *Everything happens for a reason* also faces lot of problems due to her arranged marriage. She was sent to America after her marriage along with her husband and their family. She had many problems with the different tradition and the family there. She was first spotted by a post man as the servant maid in America. Later she learnt the tradition and started becoming a good intellectual woman in America. Even though she learnt the different tradition, she could not learn the difference in people's Minds. After facing many problems in life, she was finally understood by her husband. Kavita always intended to say that there are no understanding in arranged marriages. Priya's mental agony after reaching America was explained by herself in the novel thus,

*"Until the start of my new life in America, I had never experienced jet lag. It was, to me a concept as foreign as sea sickness and being hung over, all of which only sophisticated people ever talked about. My first collision with jet lag made me believe that there is something to be set for being confined to the same time zone for all one's life. I couldn't wait for everything to come so I could finally sleep, but what same like and external night ended abruptly, hours before dawn. It was when I felt most vulnerable, most alone, still subtly shocked at the sudden transformation of my life". (EHR 3)*



Thus, the heroines of Kavita undergoes lot of mental stress due to an arranged marriage in their lives. Forcing young women to step into a live which they never expected nor dreamt of is also a crime. To make women educationally good and economically stable is the primary duty of parents. They makes their daughters feel like princess in their homes but all of a sudden they throws them into a place where she will be treated almost like a servant is sarcastic. It is to understand that marriages are not made out of love but for pride and responsibility.

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