

[Marriage in Britain - Old and New Ways](#)

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Britishers Looking for Chaste Wives Discover the Hindu Marriage Brokers

Recently I met Ramesh Bhargava, who with his wife, Suman, has arranged more than 7,000 marriages in Britain over the last 18 years. The current trend is to arrange weddings between Hindu girls and the British boys. "I am tired of British girls," said Charles Durgan, a 29-year-old careers advisor. He explained, "They are too liberated and want too much economic freedom. Always demanding perfect equality, always expecting far more than what is actually feasible out of a relationship."

Charles is one of the growing new wave of young, white, professional British men who, disillusioned with prospective English sweethearts, have decided to join the Suman Marriage Bureau in search of an Asian partner.

I also met Esperanza Galeano de Isaac, an anthropologist and writer from South America who has done some recent studies on the subject of arranged marriages. She says, "After three hundred years of ruling India and not wanting to be associated at an intimate, personal level with the colonized because of their color and culture, the great grandsons of those who upheld such views are making their forefathers turn in their graves! The Brits are queuing up for Hindu mates. They love the Hindu traditions and their strong sense of family unity and responsibility."

Esperanza quotes the case of handsome Jonathan Harris, who is a solicitor from Bristol. Jonathan has stated his desire to marry an Asian girl: "It's all to do with

faithfulness. Four or five years ago, I would have been happy seeing myself marrying an English girl or any European for that matter. But now, with AIDS lurking in every corner, the situation has become rather scary. I am not saying all western girls are promiscuous, but one has to minimize the risks these days. Somehow I feel if I marry a Hindu girl, for example, I will have a better guarantee of her being faithful."

A recent television show discussing the issue of mixed marriages brought out the point that when white people had failed marriages within their own community, they became more interested in marrying out. It is not known at this point how many such marriages are taking place, though the British census to be released later this year may provide some reliable data. The social acceptability among the Hindus for marriages with the white community is high. It is much less so for marriages with Muslims, especially when the Hindu parents experienced the trauma of India's partition. As Indians are Caucasians, the general preference is for marriage within the race rather than outside of it - matches with blacks from either Africa or the Caribbean are not as welcome.

Payment of dowry, the modern scourge of marriage in India, is not practiced in Britain when love marriages take place between the Asians and non-Asians or between couples of different caste or religion (Hindu, Muslim or Sikh) within the Asian community. According to the Suman Marriage Bureau, almost all marriages among Asians of the same community involve bargaining for either house property, the mandatory Mercedes-Benz car or substantial cash. Even the most liberal and non-materialist of families expect a bride to bring along gold jewelry and diamonds as security for the future.

The raising of the children depends much on the mother. Those that are very orthodox won't intermarry in the first place, so those marrying outside the Hindu community don't care as much about tradition. If there are two children in a mixed marriage, one may have a Hindu name, the other a Christian, though if the father is Hindu all the children generally have Hindu names.

It is too early to tell how many of the mixed marriages will end up in divorce. Uma Maithreyan, a Hindu psychotherapist and marriage counselor, has seen several mismatched marriages breaking up. "As people get older, they lean towards those values which are formed in the childhood. With most of the Indians, it is a problem of adjustment with a new environment. The western way of thinking is much more

linear and logical while the Indians think in instinctive and emotional ways."

Uma has seen serious differences emerging simply because some Indians do not believe in using formal expressions like "Thank you, please" or "how kind" with their spouses. In India, speaking out gratefulness is considered as impolite. The thankfulness should always be expressed in gestures or through the expressions of the eyes, while in the West, everything has to be spoken out. In India, life is paradoxical. The women either enjoy reverence and are treated like "Lakshmi," a Goddess, or they are dejected. In any case, they have a great community feeling and are brought up to live with others. When they come to Europe, they are left on their own with not many friends to communicate with. If they are badly treated then they have no recourse to family comfort or solace.

Love marriages among Indians often break when people dwell too much on relationships and do not concentrate on developing themselves. These views are held by Balraj Khanna, an Indian painter and novelist who has been able to keep his love marriage alive despite twenty-two years of turbulence with his French wife, a professional fashion designer.

Balraj belongs to the swinging 60's generation when he came to England and had the full freedom and permissiveness that prevailed in Europe at that time. He recalls, "I doubt very much it would have worked if I had married an English girl. With the French girl, it is so easy to communicate. We have lots of things in common. Love for food, love for children and family unit and then the Latin temperament is more akin to the Indian one - aggressive at one point and humble at the other - but never a hypocritical one for trying to please others."

Balraj Khanna has often faced the problem of an Indian male chauvinist. "Indians may tend to take a lot for granted. I am absolutely hopeless in doing household chores like washing up or changing nappies, so my wife had to accept that fact. But in return, I offered her long term benefits like faithfulness, care, reverence and the chance to grow together."

Marriage: Mixed and Otherwise - and Interview With London Hindu College
Principal

HINDUISM TODAY: What is your opinion on intermarriage?

Dr. J.C. Sharma: Most Hindus would feel against mixed marriages: I do personally. But in the context in which our youngsters are growing up in the West, intermarriages are bound to take place. You can't control Hindu boys and girls mixing up with the white members of the host community or the Afro-Caribbean or the black. The second generation of Hindu immigrants don't see intermarriage as a big problem, but the first generation fear that cultural, religious and ethnic mixtures have an adverse effect.

HT: What is the adverse effect?

Sharma: When we set up the Hindu College, one of the considerations was the preservation of Hindu values and culture, in generations to come. I don't know what kind of shape the future is going to take if a Hindu girl is married to a Christian white boy, whether they will devote time to the preservation of either set of values - Hindu or Christian. I am not a traditional, orthodox, blinkered Hindu. But I fear that we will not be able to persuade the young people to attach the importance to culture and religion that I think we should.

HT: How common are intermarriages?

Sharma: Maybe 5 to 6% and increasing. Less so in the Gujarati community from East Africa and more so for the Hindu Punjabis. The more liberal you are, the more freedom you give to the youngsters when they are growing up. The more fruits of that liberalism you reap when they grow up.

HT: What about arranged marriages?

Sharma: Arranged marriages of British residents are most common among not-sowell-educated Hindus. Next are arrangements adapted to the situation here where the boy and girl were introduced, mixed freely with each other and then

married. Both I believe rank similar in number to love marriages. The third is the spouse brought from India. Mixed marriages are the lowest, but are now on the increase.

HT: What is the community reaction to the mixed marriages?

Sharma: If an Asian girl falls in love and wants to marry a white man, the attitude is likely to be less offensive than if she is getting married to a black man. And that reaction has less to do with color than the cultural hierarchy.

HT: How common is divorce?

Sharma: The more religious or culturally strong people are, the less the incidence of divorce. I haven't heard of any divorces in any significant numbers among my generation. The youngsters who are the first to claim, "It is my life. I want to live it my way. I want to make my mistakes." - these will be more prone to divorce. There have been divorces in the group where spouses have been brought in or in marriages arranged against the wishes of the children.

HT: What is your advice on dealing with the intermarriage situation?

Sharma: We should be well-guarded against having an obsession that the marriages should take place here in the same way they did in India. Our children are living in a different situation. This tide is not going to be locked or stocked. If a girl who is living away from her parents for three years at a university decides she is going to fall in love with a black, brown or white person, there is nothing you can do about it. The more adaptive or open attitude we take. The less miserable we will be.

HT: Has the spouse been brought into the Hindu religion? Or arrangements made that the children are definitely raised as Hindus, as the Catholics insist children of mixed marriages be raised Catholic?

Sharma: No. But in India, if a Muslim girl was accepted into a Hindu family, the girl was put through process of shuddi, and the youngsters were brought up in paternal tradition. What I'm really afraid of is that the mixed marriages in this country are very doubtful in terms of any religious obligations toward any religion.

Matches by The Stars

One of the secrets of the strong Hindu marriages is the reliance upon astrological analysis of a couple's future prospects. Even when it is a "love match," the astrology should be consulted, because it can reveal the future state of the relationship - after the initial excitement has worn off. Compatibility prediction is based upon a reliable system developed centuries ago by the rishis. The Hindu astrologer makes a comparison of two birth charts calculated according to the Sidereal Zodiac and the Vedic method of astrology which indicates the condition of karma that will exist between the two individuals.

When calculating the suitability of a proposed marriage, there are 10 major comparisons of the nakshatras (fixed constellations of the Moon position) of the couple to be considered. These are the Dasa Porutham or "Ten Agreements." Each comparison is rated in importance and given a certain number of points possible to obtain. A knowledgeable astrologer will also consider at least 16 more agreements which involve all planets of both horoscopes, not just the positions of the Moon.

Every relationship contains points of similarity and harmony, as well as points of conflicts and discord. The idea of a good match is simply to have more positive points than negative ones. A couple with a majority of positive comparisons between their charts indicates not only that the marriage will be happy and long lasting, but also that they will fulfill the grihasthu dharma (obligations of the family path) by passing on their knowledge to a new generation, being a benefit to the community and both advancing together in spiritual unfoldment.

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