

Marriage customs

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



Introduction

The issue of arrange vs. love marriage in the modern American society may be viewed as unimportant. As long as arrange marriage is considered to be the custom of the old days, it is immediately rejected as unacceptable in the free social norms, in which we live. However, social diversity should not be neglected, and we cannot deny the fact, that differences in marriage customs do exist. Not only national traditions differ; the fact that arranged marriages still occupy significant place in many communities, cannot be denied.

Positive attitudes towards arrange marriages may seem surprising, especially for a young woman who has never known any other man except her husband, and whose marriage was arranged. Ruth (Breen, 1998) speaks about her arrange marriage as the event, which has not made her life deficient. She relates to the fact that her marriage was arranged, but as a result, her family appeared to serve an effective societal unit.

The situation, that her husband has not known any other woman, is viewed by Ruth as the greatest advantage; moreover, she states, that they have fallen in love with each other in exactly five weeks after their marriage (Breen, 1998). Simultaneously, she does not make the fact of her arrange marriage open to the public, due to traditional societal misunderstanding. Does it mean, that arrange marriage tradition has a chance to survive in our 'free to choose' society?

It is yet unknown, whether arrange marriages are as positive as Ruth assumes. The fact, that 30 out of her 32 classmates' marriages have been

arranged and seem to be happy, does not mean that this happiness is sincere. Another example of Neet (Prasad, 2007) should be reviewed to make this evaluation objective. Objectively, there is not a single notion in our life, which can be absolutely positive or negative. The same approach can be used towards the issue of marriage traditions.

For Neet matchmaking has failed; she has appeared absolutely unprepared to this process, and especially to its outcomes. The rejection which Neet has faced at the very beginning of her search (Prasad, 2007) risks resulting in absolutely negative attitudes to matchmaking as a process. Moreover, it is very probable that Neet let the process of her love and marriage flow naturally, until she meets her future husband.

The differences in national traditions create some grounds for researching arrange and love marriages. Speaking about marriage traditions in Southern Korea and America, the difference seems dramatic, and sometimes unacceptable. Marriage in South Korea has historically included six difficult stages, with all of them relating to arrange marriage (Korean Overseas Information Service, 2003). This number has presently been reduced to four stages (Korean Overseas Information Service, 2003).

The process of arrange marriage starts with negotiations (Uihon). The three other stages include the wedding proposal, which always appears in the form of letter from the groom's family, the blessing, and the announcement of the wedding to both families. Finally, the wedding itself takes place (Korean Overseas Information Service, 2003).

A natural question is why a highly developed Korean society still exercises the marriage customs, which are not accepted by the majority of the international society. The answer is simple: marriage in Korea is viewed not as the unit of love, but as the means for two different families to merge (Browning, 2006). Browning (2006) tells the story of Nye, who was married by her parents, and though she didn't admire her marriage, she clearly understood its social meaning for both her family and the family of her husband.

Browning (2006) refers to this story as the example, when social traditions overweight personal attitudes. Such sacrifice can hardly be found in contemporary America. Koreans strictly view their generation lineages, and the Korean population exercises very thorough approaches towards marriage issues. However, modern tendencies have caused certain impact onto the marriage traditions in South Korea. First of all, love marriages are acquiring more popularity in the Korean society; secondly, the use of matchmakers is becoming a usual form of getting married (Korean Overseas Information Service, 2003).

Importantly, arrange marriage is not viewed as a historical disadvantage: the progressive character of the Korean society is in no way diminished through the fact, that Koreans exercise the traditions of arrange marriage. (Browning, 2006)

As a result, arrange marriage may be viewed as the integral part of any modern society (community). In distinction from traditional negative attitudes, arrange marriage does not prevent society from effective development.

Marriage traditions in America do not have any strict boundaries, as in case with South Korea. Moreover, it is difficult to describe, what traditions are pursued by Americans in marriage, due to the large number of cultural blends in this open society. America accepts the wide variety of marriage traditions, depending on the origin of both the bride and the groom. It is still unclear whether this approach works for the benefit of the American families.

On the one hand, Americans are free to choose their matches; on the other hand, the number of divorces in America is much higher, than in South Korea (Browning, 2006). Does it mean, that arrange marriages improve the overall social structure of any society? The answer may be positive or negative. It will be too narrow to state, that love marriage, as accepted in America, is absolutely better than arrange marriage, traditional in South Korea.

Each of the two discussed traditions has its advantages. Ruth (Breen, 1998) refers to the aspect of choice through her own simple logic: as long as the potential bride strives for finding the best match, in arrange marriage the choice is already made by parents. As a result, Ruth does not see any significant difference between the two traditions (Breen, 1998). However, her evaluation is rather limited; the fact of her marriage being happy does not imply the same situation in other arrange marriages. Simultaneously, the opportunity to choose a match does not presuppose the 100% guaranteed positive marriage outcome.

Conclusion

As any other traditions executed by specific community marriage traditions should be respected. The specific character of marriage traditions is in the

fact, that following them does not determine family happiness. It is impossible to define, which of the two marriage traditions is more acceptable, more positive or more beneficial. Both types of marriage approaches carry serious historical, social and cultural implications.

Arrange marriage is not as imposing, as traditionally assumed, and it still presupposes a certain extent of freedom for the bride in expressing her opinion. The number of re-marriages in the Korean society is constantly growing (Korean Overseas Information service, 2003); it is possible to predict, that the choice opportunities in arrange marriages will only increase.

References

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