Apartheid in Fancy Dress

Against India's arranged marriage regime

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INDIAN CINEMA LOVES LOVE. **It celebrates love between the poor and the rich; love across the lines of religion, region, and language; love that upends conventional notions of gender and sexuality. A foreign viewer of such films would be forgiven for concluding that India is a loving society. But nothing could be further from the truth. For what Bollywood does not honestly discuss is the brutal social reality that sits uncomfortably at the center of all romantic and marital relations in India: caste.**

Consider, for example, the popular Bollywood genre known as "family movies." They cater to the moneyed middle class but the audience is wider—I spent movie days at our neighbors because we couldn't afford a cable connection and our black-and-white television set offered little pleasure. These films, which can go on for three hours, usually culminate in a marriage. But before getting there, the viewer is introduced to a wide cast of characters, usually the extended families of the romantic couple. Then there are seemingly endless subplots—each family's business problems, bickering over inheritance, a scheming elder brother, celebration of Hindu festivals (usually accompanied by music)—which might threaten or aid the budding romance. Inevitably, by the end, bride and bridegroom are united in happiness.

It all seems innocuous on the surface. But look closer and you'll see that the elaborate family subplots are just a way to hide, or at least sanitize or soften, the fact that this is an *arranged* marriage the film is tacitly endorsing. Readers outside India tend to understand arranged marriages as an Indian "tradition" in which young people voluntarily submit to the authority of their parents or familial elders, who find the right "match" for them. Some might even associate it with lofty ideals. That's the storybook version. But arranged marriages are, in effect, caste marriages. That is, they are marriages between two people of the same caste, arranged by family cops—parents, elders, uncles, aunts, and distant relatives— who want to ensure that the caste bloodline remains "pure" and is not contaminated by the impure blood of lower castes, or, god forbid, blood of those castes formerly known as untouchables.

The sanitized family movies exist for a reason: India's upper caste, or so-called "twice-born" Hindus—who make up around 18 percent of the population—have exercised their power over Bollywood, passing off their own narrow, elite, turgid caste culture as a caricatured representation of pan-Indian life. (In truth, it is marriages of the Punjabi Khatri caste that are presented as the *Indian* culture of marriage.) The food, clothes, fancy homes, interiors, carpets, sarees, Bindi (the vermillion mark on the forehead), festivals, and gods they worship all fit the dominant caste's lifeworld. Bollywood mostly blocks out the culture and very existence of Dalits (castes formerly known as untouchables), Adivasis (indigenous peoples), and backward caste Hindus who together make up around 70 percent of India's population. The culture of separateness serves to reinforce the pernicious status quo in which members of the "twice-born" castes capitalize on the aristocratic dividends of their caste networks, inter-marrying, and thereby keeping their children—particularly their daughters—within the fold, while erasing the structural violence that undergirds it.

What is perhaps even worse is that when Bollywood *does* depict no-families- attached love marriages, it displays a striking level of "caste-blindness," entirely eliding the chaos, even the violence, that can ensue when people dare to have love marriages *in real life*, particularly when these love marriages cut across caste lines. For in a stark contrast to the fantasy world of Bollywood, the horrific truth is that inter-caste relationships can still incite Jim Crow-style riots and murderous vigilante assaults all across rural India. (In the press, these are euphemistically described as "honor killings.") Most often, it is the person from the lower end of the caste structure who is violated; sometimes they can even be hacked to death by the family of the dominant caste person. As I write this, a news headline pops up in my feed. It reads: "Woman in love with Dalit man murdered by her parents, brother." She was strangled by her own family for having a relationship with a Dalit man. According to the investigation officer, "Bharti's mother Rashmi sat on her chest and smothered her face with a pillow, while Manish grabbed her hands. After she died, her father and brother hanged the body from the ceiling of her room to show that

she had committed suicide." This despicable murder was committed simply to preserve the family bloodline, which is considered more important than a daughter's life. The entire caste structure is threatened by a Dalit's fluids.

That such acts of barbarism continue with impunity should make us rethink the so-called "traditional" virtues attached to arranged marriage—or, for that matter, the darkness hidden by Bollywood. In any case, one cannot understand Indian society without getting a grasp on arranged marriage, which, alas, remains prevalent there across class lines. A recent survey conducted by Taj Group of Hotels found that 75 percent of young Indians favored arranged marriage. And 82 percent of women in North India preferred their parents finding partners for them. What kind of married life lay in store for these millions of unfortunates? What tortures have their elders prepared for them?

Love for Sale

Arranged marriages come about in different ways. At the simplest level, they could be organized by the elders in your family, or of your *jati* (roughly, "caste group" or community), or of a cultural or religious organization your family is a part of. Often, the horoscopes of both partners will be consulted to check if the relationship is a good fit for not. Many hearts are broken over mismatched horoscopes. Such are the wonders of a superstitious society.

If your family circle is unable to find a match for you, there are also marriage *melas* (fairs), where sons and daughter are taken around for show like chattel. (This is not dissimilar to the Chinese "marriage markets," recently described in the *London Review of Books* by Yun Sheng.)

Arranged matchmaking is big business in India, representing an

unholy alliance of medieval prejudice and globalized capital.

But these kinds of "traditional" channels are small fry compared to the modern methods through which arranged marriages are organized. Open any Indian newspaper and you will find a page or two reserved for "matrimonial" listings. Shamelessly, the page will be divided up into little boxes along caste lines so that you find someone of your own community and save yourself the danger of pollution. To combat such imbecility, the *Times of India*, India's largest English-language daily, offers 25 percent discounts on matrimonial ads for those who would not mention caste and not cite caste-based choices. They have even created a separate section titled "Caste No Bar" to encourage inter-caste relationships. But upper-caste Indians have found loopholes even here. Some of those who advertise in the "Caste No Bar" section sneakily mention their *own* caste, which is a signal to their elite fellows. In one especially deranged instance, an applicant in the Caste No Bar section posted under the heading "Only Upper Caste." (This contradiction is perhaps explained by the fact that there are countless *jatis* that fall under the broader umbrella of "twice-born" or upper caste.) This kind of discrimination can get openly nasty, when for example an applicant applies under the heading "caste no barrier except SC/ST." (SC stands for "Scheduled Castes," the official term for members of formerly low castes; and ST stands for "Scheduled Tribes," people belonging to indigenous communities.)

Now even artificial intelligence is deployed to help fix arranged marriages. Matrimonial websites have proliferated in recent years—the most popular among them are perhaps Bharat Matrimony and Shaadi.com—offering advanced filters to help with the delicate cobwebs of relations, caste, and lineage. The websites could be an ideal location for one to anonymously transgress caste in semi-urban locale. Instead they have turned into new sites for the reification of barbaric Vedic norms. As if such ancient prejudice was not enough, there are now

matrimonial sites exclusively dedicated for the graduates of the various branches of the Indian Institute of Technology and Indian Institute of Management, ostensibly India's premier higher education centers. To keep caste and class élan running its tagline ironically declares "Alma Mater Matters."

All taken together, arranged matchmaking is big business in India, representing an unholy alliance of medieval prejudice and globalized capital. (AI has essentially become a collective family elder.) *The Economist* recently reported that the arranged marriage wedding industry in India is worth $50 billion a year and that at any given time there are 63 million singles actively seeking a joyless future. Nor is this retrograde practice limited to the mother country. Many overseas-based Indian professionals take a trip to India to cover as many options as they can within a short duration and fly back with a possible bride or groom. (New Jersey residents, you've surely met a few yourself!) A friend who works as an IT professional in the United States would shuttle to India every six months to meet matches he found online or candidates his family had set up for him. It took him three years to close the deal. Part of the reason he had to decide was his age. He was in his mid-thirties and was concerned about getting the ideal type he had hoped for. No doubt it also gave his bigoted parents great pleasure to know their son was not gay.

It goes without saying that the oppression of arranged marriage is felt disproportionately by women. In the arranged marriage economy, a girl child is considered "paraya dhan" (roughly, "other's wealth"), a concept that reduces her to a loan or investment to be returned in due course to the future bridegroom's family, where she truly belongs. The Indian Development Human Survey found that only 5 percent of brides in India had actively selected their own husband. Only 55 percent of families even *took* their daughter's input before settling a match; 65 percent of brides actually met or had acquaintance with their husbands at or around the wedding day; and the ones who knew their partner for at least a month before marriage was an abysmal 15 percent. As well, 62 percent of educated women

surveyed said they had not made contacts with their partners before marriage either.

In sum, arranged marriage represents an absolute control on sexuality and desire. It is a manual for the young on how to live the pre-decided life, a panopticon that prevents youth from wandering into the unknown.

So how is this justified? When you ask elders why they would go through the trouble of finding partners for their offspring, you will receive responses in a veiled, compromising tone. Many will say that it is easy to marry within the same "caste culture": the habits, food, ritual, and religion match, and thus it is easy to adjust to a stranger's place. (The stranger here being the family in which the girl is married into.) Others go so far as to claim that caste relations are better to maintain harmonious relations among the members of two families. Whatever you make of their arguments, it is certainly true that arranged marriages are in essence the formation of bonds between entire families, rather than individuals. After all, a recent survey found that 95 percent of couples in India live with their parents and extended family after marriage. About 70 percent stayed with the family for ten or more years. This makes for an environment in which family members can have an overwhelming influence on the major and minor decisions of a couple's life (when you should have children, how many children you should have, etc.). Marriage, viewed in this light, is just one sector in the larger familial economy. In a caste-arranged marriage, one satisfies the desire of the society and that of the immediate family. The heavy burden of age-old custom has to be borne by the younger generation.

Homo Hierarchicus

By now you must be duly frightened. How can it be that in India—a country you probably associate with spirituality, elephants, colorful clothing—there remains such an obviously hierarchical, feudal form of marriage? To begin to understand how India got where it is, you will have to learn something about the caste

system, which is the fundamental social order on which the benighted country is based.

The origins of caste are generally understood to be found in classical Hindu religious texts. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the lord proclaims that he is the originator of the Chaturvarna—four-fold varna system—which divides society into four broad castes, the "Brahmin," (or high priests), "Kshatriyas" (soldier and warriors), "Vaishyas" popularly known as "Baniyas" (businessmen), and "Shudras" (peasants or manual laborers). With these broad categories, there are thousands of "Jatis," or communities, each associated with a particular occupation (fisherman, gardeners, teachers, and so forth). There were also the "untouchable" Jatis—i.e., various castes and subcastes making one caste group, who have traditionally been forced to perform the most degrading or "impure" occupations and are nominally considered to be outside the caste order itself.

Arranged marriage represents an absolute control on sexuality, desire, and options. It is a manual for the young on how to live the pre-decided life.

Caste resembles class in that it is a brutal division of labor, and preys on the vulnerabilities of the marginalized. By strictly controlling the economic outputs, the "twice-born castes"—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Baniyas—maintain superiority over productive faculties forcibly fixed in the hardened structure. (Their overwhelming control over the Indian economy remains in place today.) Yet there is also a metaphysical element to the violence of caste. For it is a hierarchically organized system of degradation, mediated by notions of pollution and purity, in which people on *every* rung of the ladder look down upon or kick out at those below them. The polluted bodies of those at the very bottom of the caste ladder were literally "outcasted" from

society—prevented from entering ostensibly sacred spaces like temples, kept away from political and cultural deliberations, and even barred from communal graveyards. They were stigmatized in the most barbaric ways; caste Hindus believed they carried impurities of various forms. In the most extreme cases, a Dalit's shadow, spittoon, and gaze were all considered impure; any Dalit trying to overcome these barriers invited—and still invites—violence by the caste Hindus. They act as unassigned police of the state who prefer to have the local activities run according to their customs through *khap panchayat*, or unofficial village councils, that have more say in individual affairs than the state institutions. The marker of violence has a permanent domicile on Dalit bodies.

Caste stood on the strong foundations of graded oppression of women, what the scholar Uma Chakravarti describes as "Brahmanical Patriarchy." This social system emerged around the time of Aryan invasions in the subcontinent, which lead to the enslavement or domination of the "indigenous" population—men and women—who over time were turned into "lower caste" communities while the Aryans became upper castes. In the *Rigveda*, an ancient Sanskrit text, Chakravarti finds evidence of a form of sexualized slavery, in which women from different castes were allotted different labor roles. Those at the top—Brahmin women—existed to reproduce high-caste heirs. In this ritualized hierarchy of dominance, Aryan Brahmin women stood to gain. They ruled over slaves and cattle. The slaves were captive indigenous tribes belonging to the lowest outcastes. Women of lower castes on the other hand were considered sources of impurity because of their proximity to forms of menial labor. As such, upper-caste men were horrified by the prospect of hypogamy, since cross-caste sexual intercourse could lead to the loss of caste purity. They codified the horror by passing religious laws banning Shudras from marrying above their fold.

This is not to suggest that there was no cross-caste intercourse. On the contrary, Brahmin men had undisputed access to woman of every caste—it's just that these encounters, often a form of rape, were never consummated as marriage. In extreme cases, where a form of serfdom reigned, upper-caste lords raped "lower"

caste women, in the process creating their future labor. Indeed, in parts of rural India well into the twentieth century, Dalit brides had to submit to the upper-caste landlord's rape even before mating with her legally wedded husband. Raping a Dalit women's body is to control the family's honor. By having her, the lord marks his territory upon the conscience of his worker's family. The male has lost his honor because his woman has been "tasted" by the other. By silencing his rage, the lord recreates a new fief upon the bodies of the oppressed—a permanent post of his exploits. In a profound sense, caste is built on and in the bodies of women. Caste is executed on the partner's body.

Though Indian society has of course changed dramatically over the past thousands of years, and though "casteism" of all kinds is forbidden by the country's constitution, the country's culture and political structure remain to a dismaying—shocking—extent drawn across the traditional caste lines.

In a 2010 report by Navsarjan, a Dalit organization in the western state of Gujarat, it is shown that inter-caste marriages were prohibited in 98.4 percent of villages surveyed there. This is irrespective of the provisions of the Special Marriage Act of 1954 and the Indian government's encouragement of inter-caste marriages through monetary remunerations to the inter-caste couples. According to the India Human Development Survey conducted by the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the University of Maryland, only 5 percent of marriages in urban and rural areas can be counted as inter-caste in India. These include marriages within "Jatis." The same survey identified 30 percent of rural and 20 percent of urban India admitting to practice untouchability. And even today many villages operate according to the dictates of unofficial village councils (known as Khap Panchayats), run by casteists elders, that have more say in individual affairs than the state institutions. Needless to add, so may Dalit brides are yet to find that autonomy in the barbed wires of caste.

Amidst the barbarism, there are also moments of tragicomedy. Consider a recent story from the northern state of Uttar Pradesh,

where twenty-four-year-old Sakshi Mishra, the daughter of Rajesh Mishra, a Brahmin member of the state legislature from the Hindu-fascist Bharatiya Janata Party, fell in love with twenty-nine-year-old Ajitesh Kumar, a Dalit man. On hearing of the relationship, Sakshi's father publicly denounced it, and was supported by the entire Mishra caste clan in the region. He went so far as to issue death threats to her, and apparently goons were sent to eliminate Ajitesh.

But in a courageous twist, both Sakshi and Ajitesh fled from the area, taking to social media to seek police protection. "I want to be happy and free," Sakshi affirms in the video, shot in the back seat of their getaway car, which was soon to go viral on social media. She also addresses her bigoted father, defending Ajitesh's family: "They are humans. They are not animals," she says. "You gotta change your mindset. They are good people. I will be happy with them." It is the audacity of a Dalit man to engage the sexuality of a Brahmin woman that invited the wrath of casteist society. Brahmin women's supposedly vulnerable, pure status is the currency of family honor. By taking away that honor, Ajitesh has committed a murderous mistake and thus along with him the woman deserves to be dead, too.

These contradictions arise in the monogamous forms of committed relationships where one is expected to carry on with one person till death and even an offer for having the same husband for seven lives stays. Fallout in the middle of the journey can be normal; however, this is taken as a fault in either of the partners. In India, divorced women in a caste-locked society are looked down upon by both male and females, family included. Her autonomy becomes a bigger threat to preserving Indian values which has a history of burning single women in the pyre of her husband—known as sati, or making her ugly by tonsuring her hair. B.R. Ambedkar argued in his 1916 anthropology paper "Caste in India" that such a system creates "surplus women," not in any conjugal relationship or widowed, who are a threat to caste society. Hence they were banished—made untouchables of society.



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At War with Civilization

If any social progress has been made in modern India, it is because of the indefatigable efforts of Dalit and lower-caste leaders, who have always been committed to the liberation of women (in the course of which they often came against the upper-caste leader of the so-called nationalist movement, who wanted to preserve every possible Hindu bigotry in the name of "tradition").

Of the lower-caste reformers of the nineteenth century, it is perhaps the Maharashtrian Jyotiba and Savitribai Phule who are today the best known. A pamphleteer and activist, who took Thomas Paine as his hero, Phule was a biting and pioneering critic of Hindu Brahminic orthodoxy. With his wife, he did phenomenal

work in the sphere of female education—proscribed by Hindu bigotry at the time—setting up the first school for girls and for untouchable children, as well as opening an orphanage for infants born to Brahmin women out of wedlock (many such children were abandoned, or even killed, for fear of orthodoxy). They were also strong advocates of widow remarriage.

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From the next generation, the South Indian thinker "Periyar" E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker, considered the founder of the anti-Brahmanical "Self-Respect" movement, was similarly a strong advocate of women's rights. In tract after tract, he took apart the illogic of Brahmanical texts, advocating, among other things, that women be given the full freedom to choose their partners, to divorce as they please, and to use contraception so that they might have life beyond children and family. Periyar's first book was in fact on birth control. He saw pregnancy as a misfortune that prevented women from having an "independent way of life."

Periyar's critique of Brahmanical patriarchy extend to the realm of organized politics. A staunch supporter of family planning, which he saw as the best solution to conservative religion and custom, he proposed that the government establish community cooking and child-care centers to socialize the burden of child-rearing and cooking. A staunch modernist, he pointed toward western countries, which promoted family planning in the face of conservative opposition. As parents give birth to "more and more children, their own comforts and facilities are reduced," he wrote. "Similarly, in a country, if the population goes on increasing that

nation is bound to face famine, poverty, and dearth of essentials for average life." Essentially, large families were a barrier to creating a welfare state. (A "child is a nuisance for public life," as he put it more pungently elsewhere.) Periyar's radicalism extended to endorsing polyandry as he saw marriage and chastity being primarily patriarchal, anti-woman institutions. His hatred of sexism was only equaled by his hatred of caste.

Yet more than anyone, it is B.R. Ambedkar, India's foremost modern intellectual and statesman, who attacked Brahmanical patriarchy at its roots. Ambedkar is a figure of mythic proportions. The first untouchable from the Bombay region to graduate college, and first of his caste from India to pursue graduate studies—at Columbia no less—he is the father of the Dalit movement and perhaps the most revered intellectual in India today. He was a polymath and polyglot who studied subjects ranging from anthropology, sociology, economics, religion, to French history and English literature, among others. (All in all, he took some sixty courses during his years at Columbia.) After he completed his MA at Columbia in 1915 (where he studied under Dewey), he received a D.Phil. at LSE in 1916 with a bar-at-law, and then returned to Columbia to get another doctorate in 1928. Following this stint, he returned to India to embark on a political career that changed the face of the country. Not only did he tirelessly raise and sustain lower-caste social and political movements—editing newspapers, organizing workers, floating parties, contesting elections—he also drafted the Constitution of independent India, all the while furiously composing meticulously researched book after book at night (not to mention fending of constant attacks from the casteists in the freedom movement).

Ambedkar continuously fought to put the woman question at the center of his political work. In 1928, he vehemently supported the bill in Bombay legislative assembly to grant paid maternity leave for women. In 1938 his colleague P.J. Roham presented a bill, which was unfortunately defeated, on behalf of Ambedkar in Bombay Provincial Assembly that advocated birth control. Ambedkar believed the right of reproduction solely remained

with women. Through the 1930s and 1940s he battled for various women's liberation bills that were inevitably watered down by more conservative politicians. But perhaps his greatest and most tragic legacy is the Hindu Code Bill he drafted and introduced in Parliament in 1951, through which he attempted to overhaul the basic structures of Hinduism's female oppression, by granting Hindu women full equality with regard to marriage, divorce, adoption, and property. The bill was opposed by regressive forces within and outside the Parliament, which finally led to Ambedkar resigning as India's Law Minister. (A watered-down version of the bill was passed many years later.)

Ambedkar's conception of caste, of which he remains the foremost modern theorist, was based on the understanding that women were the primary victims—and agents— of the social system. He observed the caste-based gender ritualism as the reason for the Hindu Brahminic order to sustain. The organized codes of conduct were held against women's incapacity to attain the spiritual enlightenment. Addressing a conference of Scheduled Caste students on 12 December 1938, he emphasized the importance of gender equity in education, employment, and not least marital relations, "I have seen many beautiful girls handed over to ugly men," he said. "I am tired of this country . . . its religion, social system, reforms and culture I am very tired of this. I am at war with civilization."

A decade earlier, in 1927, he had organized a public burning of the *Manusmriti*, an ancient Hindu text that codifies the worst kind of misogyny. (Section 8 of chapter 3 includes a list of women to be avoided: those with no or too much body hair, those who talk too much, those who are simply redheaded.) Yet a list of great men should not make us overlook the Dalit women who have fought caste. In their monograph, *We Also Made History* (1989) the scholars Meenakshi Moon and Urmila Pawar delve into this rich history, drawing on archival materials and ethnographic details to narrate the feminist achievements of Dalit women, both before and in the wake of the Ambedkarite movement.

The Marriage Rot

The fight against caste discrimination remains the central feminist battle in India. For as we have seen, Brahmanical marriages profoundly undermine women. Worse still, divorce is widely held to be a sin that "taints" the character of women (not men), thus, many put up with the brutality and oppression of their men folk, who control and manipulate, fully cognizant of their outsize power.

Can love offer a way out? The truth is that "inter-caste" or love marriage in India remains scandalous and alluring. Couples who married out of love are a subject of curiosity. How did they pull it off? Why? What's it like? Cinematic renditions of love, as I mentioned, avoid caste, so there are few reference points.

It's true that love marriages are based on pure emotions, not for claiming inheritance or the purified DNA. Yet we should not idealize it, or imagine that that things can change in India overnight. After all, the venom of Hinduism runs deep in Indian society. Even if the structures of Brahmanical patriarchy are being overturned (as they are, slowly), Hindu mentalities, especially pertaining to love, are going to take a lot more fighting. In the current Hinduized mythic the love of spousal relations is desperate and untrustworthy. The suspicion and revolting passion of one's desires leads to acts of mental and physical violence.

***Joru ka Ghulam*, or slave of the wife, is a phrase commonly used in the Indian households. This is often used against men who are devoted to their spouses. The men who demonstrate public appreciation of the spouse are mocked. Loving a spouse is taken as a sign of weakness or submissiveness. It's the patriarchal heritage: upon facing society's harshness, the boy turns the motherly affection into rabid, unruly male—a character society has indoctrinated into him as being ideal.**

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But also, one does not want to fetishize relationships and marriage. After all, the pressure to marry—whether by arrangement or from love—is very strong in traditional societies and takes a great toll on the young. The society's pressure added with relatives' harassment force parents to coax their children to follow the traditional routes of marriage. More than the individual essence of marriage, it becomes the parent's marriage. At the ceremonies, one can easily spot the parents tense as well as happy about their children's future. It's worth recalling here that the average age of marriage in India is approximately twenty-two, as compared to around thirty across many developed nations. Early initiation into family culture is the norm here, and the general belief is that you are in the world to reproduce. Indeed, giving birth to a (male) child is a "capstone of success." A single person is seen as a disease in a plagued society like India. Elders here don't want anything other than the "normalcy" of heterosexualizing (and, in very rare cases homosexualizing life). Rarely is anyone who is single upheld as an icon or someone to look up to. Economically, the single person of a certain age is looked upon with suspicion. Why would anyone choose to live the life they wish without following the rat-race rituals?

Capitalism has only exacerbated these problems. The idea of reproduction fits well into the debt industry that rules the patented lifestyle. One has to adjust into the saving models by confining its wishes and dreams to the rule books of banks. Many times, we dream through the claws of the debt manual. What to dream and how much to dream is decided by the corporate exploitation industry. Often times the partnering surrounds the

market rules. One moves in or moves out per ability of one's wallet. The insecurity of job security and the burdens of debt don't recommend going it alone, and thereby life continues to increase in the mandated sojourns of single life. Therefore, one needs to partner up—to feel less alone and less miserable.

Love and Happiness

No matter how bad things have been in India, the youthful energy there is rebellious, and it demands radical change. The youth—at least some of them—are as yet unaffected by Hindu society's prejudices, and as such are a possible source of radical energy.

Young Indians should embrace free-spirited love, knowing also that love is a heavy experience, and not a one-way ticket to a country of pleasure. In the context of matrimony, we need a marriage manifesto—a declaration of the post-marriage amenities. Women and men should freely discuss their deepest concerns. In the case of non-heteronormative marriages, new versions will be discovered. In the heterosexual manifesto, the female should chart out her needs, desires, her sexual preferences, ways to deal with changing moods and changing roles. This should be followed by the man too. Love needs to be made within reach and not an unreachable exercise in wishful thinking.

Kabir, a fifteenth-century mystic-poet, is one of India's greatest anti-caste thinkers. In his book *On the Songs of Kabir*, the writer Osho holds forth: "If you really want to love a woman, never get married to her. If you really want to adore a man, escape as far away from him as possible. Then you will always love. But if you want to crash the whole love affair, get married." Elsewhere in his freewheeling, light oeuvre, Kabir puts it this way: "The home of love is high and lonely." Therefore, "maintaining love is difficult, all cannot maintain it." Marriage, therefore is an unmatured development.