

**YOUSUF BASHIR**

# Prearranged marriages normal

"I am a woman. I have no choice. I have to marry this guy my parents chose for me! God, he's hairy, fat, sweats like a horse, smells like a pig, and — above all — spits when he speaks!"

This is what the Western World thinks when they hear about arranged marriages.

The concept of arranged marriage is prehistoric, unique as well as foreign to the people of this hemisphere. Westerners forget that it is a norm in a lot of cultures and is still practiced in many Eastern countries today.

Let's start from the beginning: how the arranged marriages work.

First of all, dating is not a common practice and is not socially, culturally or religiously accepted, especially among most of the Muslim countries (but exceptions are there).

So, if you don't date, it is kind of hard to have an affair, and marriage for love is an impossibility. The department of marriage is usually handled by the mother and the older female relatives.

When a girl is old enough to get married, the word is spread by women and women only. The families whose sons are seeking a life companion send formal proposals to the girl's family.

The one thing both families look for in each other is a sound, strong and respectable family background. Family is all you have, and it would not be wrong to say that, "A man is known by the family he has."

This is a negative side of the arranged marriage system — no matter what their personality is like, he or she has to be from a respectable family.

The next thing the family looks for is financial stability and a respectable personal background. The guy's family looks for politeness in a girl. She especially would have to get along with the mother-in-law, as she would be dealing with her the most.



*This is the traditional way of arranged marriages. Those times have long gone when neither had a choice. Such instances still do exist, but in a small, uneducated, diminishing minority.*

Age is another factor. Generally a 5-year age difference between the guy and a girl is common; the man usually is older.

When both the families agree upon these terms and are happy and comfortable with them, they tell the intended couple — most of the time by showing photos and sometimes letting them talk in private or on the phone so that both of them have at least a slight idea of whom they are marrying. After that, the girl's parents ask her decision, and so does the other side.

If her answer is yes, great. Everyone is happy. The engagement takes place, and later, the marriage. And they live happily ever after.

But if her answer is no? What now? Is it the end of the world? Now, come on, it's 1994; life goes on. More proposals keep coming in, and the whole process goes around once more until the girl says yes. (Very seldom have I seen the guy say no! Why is that? Are they desperate? No comment!)

This is the traditional way of arranged marriages. Those times have long gone when neither had a choice. Such instances still do exist, but in a small, uneducated, diminishing minority.

But what if he or she is not good looking? How can one be attracted to that person? Or, how can one love someone he or she barely knows?

These are some of the questions which strike the minds of people, to whom arranged marriages are new.

Good looks! Is that all? I know they help. Look at it from this side. The Creator made everyone, and he made everyone beautiful. When we perceive someone as ugly, there is nothing wrong with that individual, it is the mere fact that we just can't immediately see the beauty in them.

Physical beauty is temporary. Internal beauty is there to stay. And when we can see the internal beauty in a person and be attracted to it, it's true love, otherwise it's just lust. And when you really love someone, you can find beauty even in their crooked teeth and slanted nose — it's not going to appear ugly any more, but cute.

The other question is, how can we love someone without barely knowing the person? Remember, it's a common practice there, and once you've said "yes," it is determined that he is yours and you are his for life. Now you know that you will be together rest of your life, so why not make the best out of it.

So then you begin to love and give the person all the love you have which you never shared with anyone else. As the days pass, you start loving that person more and more, till death do you part.

(About 97 percent of the marriages in Pakistan are arranged in this fashion; the divorce rate is less than 2 percent, although divorce is allowed in the religion and supported by law).

Bashir is a senior food science major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

**CINDY LANGE-KUBICK**

# Kids push parents to the edge

Walking home last night, I heard a disembodied voice in the shadows ahead: "When Mommy says to shut up," the male voice boomed, "that means to shut the — up!"

My neighbor, I am sure, thought he and his daughter were alone in the darkness.

I know this man; we had exchanged pleasantries on the street. His 5-year-old daughter had come to my door looking for a playmate.

I know his face, and I know his rage.

Parenting isn't just about bonding and affection.

It's about anger and impotence; it's about the fine line between love and hate — love and violence.

Our children are our blood. And most parents would risk life and limb for their offspring. They are also our albatross — capable of bringing out the worst in us.

Speech writer Robert Orben once said, "I take my children everywhere, but they always find their way back home." Umpteen parents, frazzled and frustrated, have probably fantasized about pulling a Hansel and Gretel on their own progeny, but most don't.

In a society dominated by the mass media, children left home alone order room service and bamboozle burglars. Large families form rock groups and sing, "A whole lot of lovin' is what we'll be bringing; come on, get happy ..." And disciplinary extremes are exemplified by June Cleaver-like raised eyebrows and plaintive dictums, "Now Theodore, behave yourself."

For most parents, it appears that every other family in America is living life as a series of Kodak moments.

In the real world, the disheartening reality is that almost 3 million American children were reported to authorities as victims of abuse and



*In the real world, the disheartening reality is that almost 3 million American children were reported to authorities as victims of abuse and neglect in 1993.*

neglect in 1993.

In the real world, child abuse fatalities have increased by 50 percent since 1985, according to The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse.

In the real world, poverty is increasing, and the majority of adults feel stressed and out of control.

These statistics make their way into the daily lives of the public through TV and newspaper reports.

We frequently catch glimpses of in-the-flesh folks who just can't cope:

Like the Pittsburgh couple who left their kids for three days with a teen-age sitter and returned 16 days later to find them in foster care.

Or the adoptive parents of 84, accused of neglect and abuse in the deaths of three of those children.

We uncomprehendingly hear of children who are burned and beaten, scalded and suffocated by those entrusted with their care — their parents.

In our society there is a schism — a dividing line between the public and the private parent. The cultural ideal and the behind-closed-doors reality.

Facing the world, we are at our best. Most of us do not shame, ridicule, belittle or beat our children at Kmart.

And those who do are always the "other" — monsters who have no relationship to the families on our

street. They are the people we choose to believe did not come from the same gene pool as the rest of us.

But most of us fall somewhere along a continuum in the scale of perfect parenting. We don't stick our son's head in the toilet when he defecates in his pants, and we don't cover our baby's face with a pillow when she won't stop crying at 2 a.m.

But at the other extreme, most of us aren't like the Waltons. We aren't part of an extended family that sang out its good nights in a silent and peaceful home.

We don't live in a perfect world. We live on a planet where the statistics in the news are our neighbors or ourselves.

Before I had children of my own, I may have lashed out at this man berating his daughter under cover of night. But after having been a parent for almost 12 years, I know that shame is not what this man needs.

He does not need to be labeled as "other" — as a monster.

And as I passed him in the darkness, I didn't know what else to do but hope. Hope that this man and his daughter would not become statistics in a computer, faces on the news.

Lange-Kubick is a senior news-editorial and sociology major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

**PRECISION**  
Clothing. Shoes.  
Sunglasses. Fun.  
**We GOT Style!**

**AIRWALK**  
FOOTWEAR

Save with College Coupons

**VANS**

2115 O St.  
476-3044

*Feeling Comfortable & Looking Beautiful*

*No Longer Just a Dream*

*Rhea*

800 "P" Street, Suite B  
Behind The Mill in The Haymarket  
477-7587

**NEW!**

CD'S \$11.97  
CS'S \$7.97

- They Might Be Giants
- Grant Lee Buffalo



They Might Be Giants "John Henry"



Grant Lee Buffalo "Mighty Joe Moon"



Five convenient locations

**NOW ON SALE**