

Father of the Groom Toast at Pankti and Bhaskar's Bou Bhaat

By Pinaki Mazumder

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We have assembled here to celebrate Pankti and Bhaskar's Bou Bhaat ceremony, which is a traditional post-wedding ritual that my ancestors in the Eastern part of India had practiced for centuries to introduce the bride to her new community. You may find the Indian wedding system is quite strange. As Bhaskar and Monika grew up in Ann Arbor's vibrant multicultural and multi-ethnic environment, we have had a chance to mingle with people from different parts of the world. They often inquired how we Indians continue to follow the arranged marriage system, or for that matter why the bridegroom rides a decorated horse while the groom party joyously dances around. I cannot recall what impromptu replies I had given to justify the wisdom of the Indian arranged marriage system. My parents never explained to me any good reasons before asking me to marry a beautiful girl who they had only met and selected as their daughter-in-law. Now that I have been placed on the spot to give a toast at my son's Bou Bhaat, I shall revisit to some of those frequently asked questions and share my thoughts with you.



Pankti & Bhaskar's Wedding



FAQ#1: Why do Indians Continue to Follow the Tradition of Arranged Marriage?

I have proposed a Theorem proving that Arranged Marriages are No Worse Than Love Marriages. We engineering academics write theorems in our publications with rigorous proofs by using abstruse mathematical techniques and physical laws. However, in order to prove my theorem in this case, I shall follow the techniques social scientists use to prove their hypothesis by citing an eminent authority.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ) ABOUT THE INDIAN WEDDING

FAQ #1: Why do Indians Continue to Follow the Tradition of Arranged Marriage?



Two Perfect Strangers
about to Marry and Live
Happily Ever After

My proof has three parts.

The First part: Both love and arranged marriages are blessed if the couples thrive happily. To prove this part, we can cite the renowned religious reformer, Martin Luther who said, "There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage."

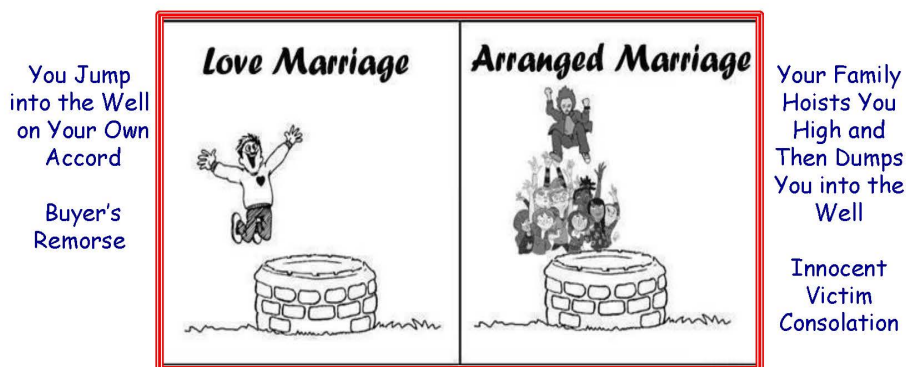
The Second part: Unhappy marriages in both cases are akin to plunging into a deep well. However, there is a subtle advantage with Arranged Marriage. In case of Love Marriage you think that you have jumped into the well on your own accord and agonize yourself in buyer's remorse, while in case of Arranged Marriage you can console yourself thinking that your family has hoisted you high and then dumped you into the well. Advantage Arranged Marriage.

Theorem (Mazumder 2014): Arranged Marriages are No Worse Than Love Marriages.

Case 1 (Happy Marriages): Both Love & Arranged Marriages are Blessed.

Proof by Citing an Eminent Authority: "There is no more lovely, friendly and charming relationship, communion or company than a good marriage," Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Case 2 (Unhappy Marriages): Both Marriages are Akin to Plunging into a Well.



Rewards for the Leap of Faith: "By all means marry. If you get a good wife, you'll be happy. If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher". Socrates (470-399 BC)

However, this naïve proof avoids telling you that more arranged marriages are likely to land up in the well as opposed to relatively less unhappy love marriages ending up in the well. One can concede that the above hypothesis is intuitively true and there also exists sufficient empirical evidence to support the hypothesis.

Nevertheless, there are good reasons for tradition-bound Indians to take the leap of faith. The famous Greek philosopher Socrates told to Plato: "By all means marry. If you get a good wife, you'll be happy. If you get a bad one, you'll become a philosopher." Therefore, if your Indian colleagues and friends frequently ramble about Karma, Reincarnation theory, and Vedic metaphysics, you must recognize that they are definitely living in the bottomless pits of the well and are on their way to rendezvous with Socrates.

The next FAQ I shall answer is about Baraat, the colorful wedding procession that you may have witnessed in crossover English movies such as Monsoon Wedding, Bride and Prejudice, or Eat, Pray, Love. Central to all these movies is an Indian wedding with its Baraat, glamor and glitz. To explain what Baraat is, I shall use a short video clip of Bhaskar's Baraat during his wedding at Dallas exactly two weeks ago.



The second most frequently asked question is: Why Does the Indian Groom Ride a Horse at Baarat? My conjecture is that the Greeks had inadvertently sparked the concept of Baraat when Alexander the Great invaded India in 327 BC riding on his legendary horse, Bucephalus, flanked by an entourage of infantry blowing their horns and bugles. Alexander was only 26, appearing like a prospective bridegroom and many elderly Indian kings had refused to battle against him. Instead, they considered marrying their daughter with him like the way Persian king Darius offered his daughters to Alexander. Though battle-fatigued Alexander retreated soon and died on his way to Macedonia, one of his Generals named Seleucus returned to India in 305 BC riding on his horse. He fought against an Indian king to the point when both of them agreed to cease fighting after Seleucus contracted a marriage relationship. Therefore, my conjecture is that the horse riding at Baraat is a symbol of valor and the Indian grooms have their Alexander the Great moments at Baarat. The renowned historian Appian had mentioned in History of Rome about

wedding between Greeks and Indians in the context of Greek incursions, thereby providing a credible foundation of my conjecture.

FAQ #2: Why Does the Indian Groom Ride a Horse at Baarat?

Conjecture (Mazumder 2014):

The Greeks had sparked the concept of Baarat in 327 BC, when 26-year old Alexander the Great arrived in India on his horse, flanked by an entourage of infantry blowing their horns.



Proof of My Conjecture:

In 305 BC, after Alexander the Great's death, his general Seleucus crossed the Indus and waged war with Sandrocottus, king of the Indians, who dwelt on the banks of that stream, until they came to an understanding with each other and **contracted a marriage relationship.** -

Appian, History of Rome.

During his invasion, Alexander had encountered a stiff resistance at the Battle of Jhelum by the Indian king named Porus, who used elephants to overpower horses. Further, the incessant trumpets of wild elephants caused confounded horses to run in disarray and the Greek army eventually retreated from India. To honor the heroics of King Porus, patriotic Indians prefer to ride decorated elephants in their Baarat.



Alexander (left) on his horse battling against the Indian king, Purosottam (right) mounted on his elephant at the Battle of Jhelum in 327 BC

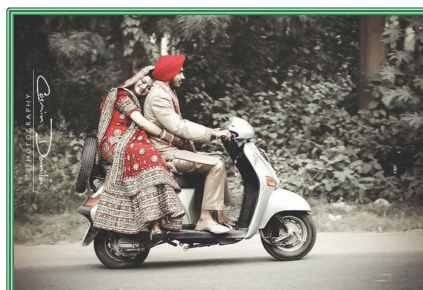
Patriotic Indian groom rides Elephant to commemorate the Battle of Jhelum, 327 BC



Pinaki Mazumder's Toast on His Son's Wedding Reception at the Groom's Place

However, the cost of hiring an elephant is an order of magnitude higher than the cost of renting a horse. The logistic compels average Indian grooms often to settle with a horse at their Baraat. However, in other parts of India where the Greeks did not enter, a variety of pragmatic forms of Baraat can be witnessed, as shown here.

Baraat in Other Parts of India



Baraat has also intrigued the Hollywood entertainment industry, which has shown its comical ingenuity by tweaking the intent of Baraat. Before I raise the toast, I shall show you a short clip from an episode of ABC TV's Neighbors. You will find it hilarious and also instructive for your dance moves with Indian music later in this evening. Enjoy.

Hollywood's Tweaking of Baraat

Guests ride horse and dance their way to the wedding to surprise the groom



ABC TV: The Neighbors, Episodes Season 2; Ep217 Balle Balle!

[Start](#)

Well, you came to the right wedding reception. Our caterer has made sure that fish and chicken are not dry. Sadhana and I thank all of you again for your love and support. Let us Raise a Toast: "To the Bride and Groom: Pankti and Bhaskar Mazumder".

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Acknowledgement:

Pictures, incorporated in the speech and displayed as PPT slides, have been obtained from various Internet websites, including the following URL, to illustrate the theme of the toast. Thanks to photographers of those brilliant pictures for posting them on the Internet.

<http://creativeroots.org/2009/09/bengali-wedding-paintings/>
<http://silence-of-the-werewolf.blogspot.com/2012/04/bengali-marriages.html>
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