

LOVE COMES LATER

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love comes later

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Until the last century, arranged marriages were standard practice and widespread in different cultures around the world. Even now, this form of bringing couples together continues to be popular in some countries. In India, arranged marriages are customary and seen as a natural passage. Most often, the starting point is a meeting of the bride and groom's families, along with the potential couple. Increasingly, the candidates get a chance to meet separately and learn more about each other, before agreeing to the marriage. Declining is permissible, unless there have been a series of rejections.

Forced marriages are a different story. In these cases, negotiation revolves around the bride's dowry, which is expected to enrich the family of the groom. Currently, in the urban middle classes, the percentage of love-matches, for which dowries and family consent are not key factors, is increasing.

People host marriage ceremonies on a grand scale, planning colourful spectacles with meticulous choreography, expensive, sophisticated decorations and hundreds of spectators. Celebrations with up to 500 guests are considered small, while more extensive marriages have 1,000 to 10,000 people in attendance.

For the wealthy, marriage showmanship has no limits. There is an increasing trend of elaborate wedding celebrations for which interior designers are hired to transform outdoor locations, large halls or tents into Indian dream worlds. Replicas of famous temples or palaces are popular choices. This culture of celebration has an economic impact. The annual revenue of marriage service providers is estimated at 50 billion Indian Rupees and growing. Indian marriage ceremonies are magnificent spectacles, where the bridal couple and guests act on different stages to celebrate the matrimonial bond.

In our series, *Love Comes Later*, marriage is considered through both contexts and characters. Some of the photographs show aspects of the venues, festival halls and ballrooms before and after these major celebrations. The other part of the series includes portraits of Indian women, taken months or decades after their marriages.

The women are dressed in their wedding saris and decorated with their wedding jewelry, when possible. These former brides come from different religious backgrounds and castes. All are still married. And some of them found love. In these portraits, they are much more relaxed than they were on their weddings.