

AGGIELIFE

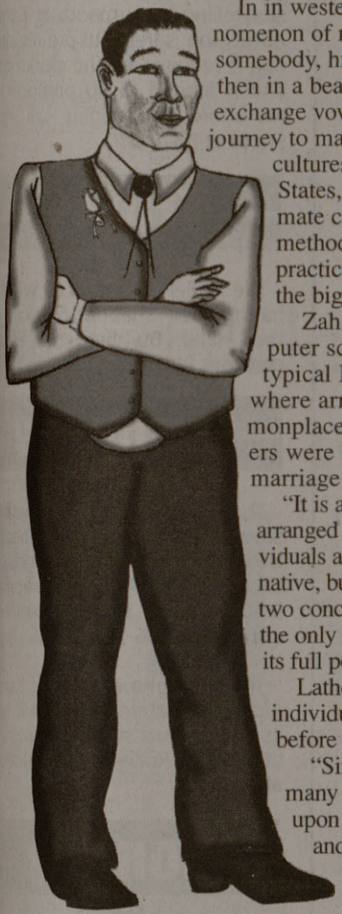
THE BATTALION

Page 3 • Wednesday, February 19, 2003

A match made in tradition

In some cultures, arranged marriages are a way of life

By Nishat Fatima
THE BATTALION



In western society, the exciting phenomenon of marriage is simple—you meet somebody, hit it off, date for a while, and then in a beautiful, rosy ceremony, exchange vows. For most, that's how the journey to marital bliss goes. But in many cultures overseas and in the United States, the road to finding your soul mate can be very different. The method of arranged marriages is still practiced today and remains one of the biggest cultural mysteries.

Zahir Latheef, a sophomore computer science major, grew up in a typical Indian Muslim household where arranged marriages are commonplace. His parents and older brothers were all wed through the arranged marriage process.

"It is a common misconception that arranged marriages are forced upon individuals and they are given no other alternative, but in modern day cases, there are two conceding parties," he said. "This is the only way that the marriage can reach its full potential."

Latheef said that in many cases, the individuals get to know each other before the actual marriage takes place.

"Since it is a very foreign aspect to many people, the practice is looked upon as something that is backward and demeaning, but that really isn't the case," he said. "Arranged marriages make it easier on people who choose not to date for one reason or another. It is assumed that you don't know the person or anything about them before the marriage, but depending on the culture, there is a courtship period where the couple can get to know each other through modest and limited means, such as phone or e-mail."

GRAPHICS BY BECKY MAIDEN • THE BATTALION

Latheef said religion and culture play an important role in how society performs arranged marriages.

"Cultures that are more family-oriented and traditional have more occurrences of arranged marriages. In our faith, marriage is based on a common purpose in life, and a commitment to one another. It is for a deep principle that remains constant throughout one's lifetime," he said. "This is why arranged marriages are chosen, to avoid getting caught up in superficial aspects of the other individual."

Ryan Turley, a senior nuclear engineering major, said arranged marriages sacrifice the theory of the personal right to choose.

"Everybody should have the option of going through an elimination process to find a spouse, because that's the only way they can find out for sure what they want out of a relationship," he said. "When people are culturally bound to have an arranged marriage, they have to sacrifice their personal freedom, just to stay within the confines of social requirements."

Turley said that although arranged marriages are not a part of the typical western life, they are quickly being popularized through reality television such as "The Bachelorette" and "Joe Millionaire."

"There are a lot of similarities in the shows and the process of arranged marriage, because they are having courtship for the purpose of getting married, and they don't necessarily know the person very well," he said. "At the same time, it is also different, because there isn't any third-party involvement, and they still have the freedom to choose for themselves who they think will be their best match."

Professor of sociology Dr. Vivien Chen said reality TV shows such as "The Bachelorette" are not necessarily an indication that western society is warming up to the idea of marrying somebody relatively alien.

"People find such shows appealing because events like that don't occur in real life," she said. "After the shows are over, the couples may not always end up marrying and the whole process is much like regular western courtship."

Chen said that from a sociological point of view the end results from all types of marriages are the same.

"The general social pattern remains the same regardless of how the couple was married. There is a tendency to think that arranged marriages are more restrictive because social class is a big factor for proposals," she said. "But even in modern courtship it is uncommon for people to marry a great extent above or below their own social class."

As a native of China, Chen said the concept of arranged marriage is not new to her.

"Historically it was the norm in China to have your family choose a spouse for you," she said. "Today, as Chinese society has become more modernized and individual-focused, there are fewer instances of arranged marriages in urban areas, although it remains

the norm in rural areas."

Chen said that ultimately, marriage and culture are interrelated.

"In some cultures marriage works in favor of the men, such as in Chinese culture many years ago. Arranged marriage is very relevant to the culture and the context that is being considered," she said. "The status of women in the particular culture is also significant because in some cultures women still do not have a choice in who they marry."

Tyckie Avery, a junior corporate law major at the University of Houston, said even though she grew up in a traditional Catholic family, she would prefer to have an arranged marriage rather than dealing with the risks of dating.

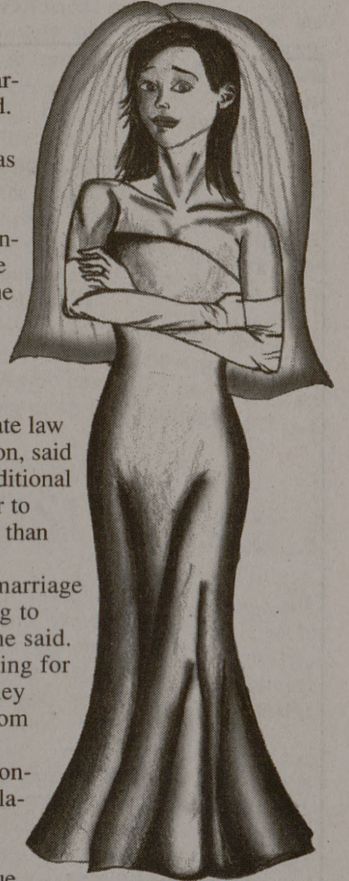
"I think having an arranged marriage would be a lot easier than having to deal with the dating process," she said. "Both parties are ready and willing for the lifelong commitment, and they already know what they want from the union."

Avery said she came to this conclusion after experiencing the relationship process firsthand.

"My friends and I would always be facing some trivial issue because of the relationships that we were in. On the contrary, I had some friends that chose to have arranged marriages who said they were content in their relationships," she said. "I could almost see why they felt that way — they didn't have any unnecessary bad history with their spouse, no unexpected surprises, and less chance of heartbreak. They started with a clean slate and could therefore be themselves."

Avery said that no matter how you get married, ultimately the same things are needed to keep the relationship going.

"Regardless of whether or not you know your spouse very well, a lot of compromise and patience is needed to make a marriage work," she said. "Different people have different ways to do it, but in the end, it's all about holding on to the commitment you have to the other person."



12th MAN FOUNDATION 2nd Spring General Meeting

COME HEAR COACH

JOHNSON AND THE AGGIE BASEBALL PLAYERS TALK ABOUT WHAT'S IN STORE FOR THIS SEASON.



Door Prizes

When: Wed. February 19th, 2003

Where: The Zone Lobby

Time: 7:00 pm

Free Food!



11th Annual Baseball BBQ

Join us for good food and fun!

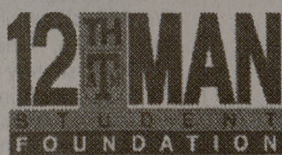
When: February 21, 2003

Where: Olsen Pavilion

Time: 4pm-6pm

Cost: \$5 (for non-members)

EVERYONE IS WELCOME!



10TH ANNUAL TEXAS FILM FESTIVAL

SCHEDULE FOR WEDNESDAY, FEB 19

A daily schedule will be printed in each Battalion this week. A full schedule and more detailed descriptions of all our films can be found at txfilmfest.tamu.edu.

Thursday Preview
Aggie Shorts Program
5:00
Rudder Theater
A collection of 4 shorts created by Aggies on campus.

Tickets can be bought at Rudder Box Office (979) 845-1234
Visa, Mastercard, Aggie Bucks Accepted

5:00 Look Again Shorts Program

(Dr. Cuddle, Fueling the Fire, Face of the Enemy, Move)

7:00 Unprecedented

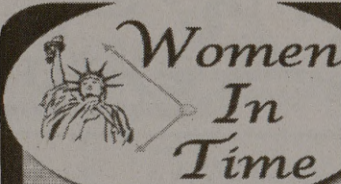
A slice into the old battle scars of the 2000 Election complete with misleading ballots, hired guns, and political racism.

8:00 The Utopian Society

The story of 6 college students from different backgrounds, who are assigned to a work on a final project, although they can't stand each other.

10:00 Killers 2

Trapped in a maximum security insane asylum, a girl must escape not only psychological demons but a band of killers determined to silence her forever.



Ticket Sales Deadline - Friday, Feb. 21st

"Profiles of Achievement" March 1-7, 2003 invites you to the

Annual Kick-Off Luncheon

"A salute to all women in the working & learning environment"

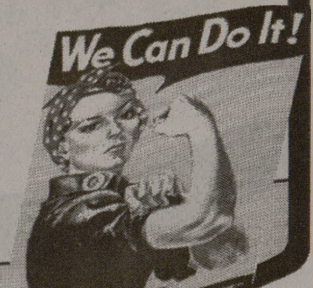
Friday, February 28th, 2003
Duncan Dining Hall
11:30 - 1:30 pm
featuring

Karen Kaiser Clark

Karen Kaiser Clark is a world-renowned consultant, educator and lecturer. She is also a best-selling author of three books on perception, maintaining balance and growing through change.

For more information about Women In Time and for reservations, please visit

www.tamu.edu/womenintime



NEWS

THE BATTALION

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Correction
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