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Beyond Arranged and Love Marriage

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ISBN 978-981-15-1598-9 ISBN 978-981-15-1599-6 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-1599-6

This Springer imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Singapore Pte Ltd.
The registered company address is: 152 Beach Road, #21-01/04 Gateway East, Singapore 189721, Singapore

For Neelam and Naresh

Acknowledgements

This book, and indeed the pursuit of this research, which spanned my doctoral and postdoctoral years, was possible only due to the support of my colleagues, friends, and parents. As I sit down to this humbling task of thanking each of those who provided me the encouragement and strength to continue to think, write, and research, I am filled with immense gratitude. I want to begin by thanking my Ph.D. supervisor, Prof. Göran Therborn, who always accompanied his incisive comments with encouraging smiles. Dr. David Lehmann was incredibly supportive, enthusiastically engaging with what he found to be fascinating insights into Indian matchmaking. During fieldwork, I shared my thoughts and received guidance from Prof. Patricia Uberoi, who patiently heard me out. Professor Nandini Sundar has been a great influence throughout this journey, right from the time when she motivated me to apply for Ph.D. programmes to the time after I came back to India, and I discussed book ideas with her mostly on our Lodhi Garden walks! I thank all the academic and administrative staff at the University of Cambridge, the Centre for Social Sciences and Humanities (CSH), Delhi, and the Department of Sociology, Delhi School of Economics, who have nurtured my passion for research. A special thanks to all my interviewees, the gatekeepers, as well as those who preferred to chat 'off the record', for allowing me into their lives and trusting me with their personal information, secrets, struggles, pains, and guilt. This book is because of them.

The Springer team, especially Shinjini Chatterjee, Priya Vyas, and Satvinder Kaur, have been ever so patient and supportive. At Cambridge, I was fortunate to meet Anshul Avijit, Adeel Hussain, Tripurdaman Singh, Ali Khan Mahmudabad, Amir Khan, Parth Mehrotra, Michelle Wu, Sara Shahzad, and Adam Aly, who have been cheering for me till date. A special thanks to Vinay Sitapati and Aditi Sriram for patiently brainstorming a fitting title for the book. Finally, nothing would have been possible without the unwavering support of my parents, Neelam and Naresh Bhandari, who have given me immense love and care, boosted my morale during dreadful lulls, and remain the most inspiring duo for me. This book is for them.

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About the Author

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Marriages in India have since long been a topic of much anthropological, sociological, and general interest. In early twenty-first century, as India acquires a new form of global identity, accruing to its economic policies of liberalisation and a rising professional middle class, discussions on 'type' of marriages preferred by young Indians, have been abounded.[1] Largely, these types are analysed with respect to categories of 'arranged' and 'love'.[2] This book contributes to these discussions, by unpacking the ways in which matchmaking in contemporary India takes place. The main aim of this book is to provide an extensive insight into the processes of spouse-selection, which a particular segment of the Indian middle class—one that is immediately associated with a modern and global India—undertakes in order to self-identify itself as being both 'modern' and 'middle class'. To achieve this aim, I not only focus on the perspectives of the marrying individuals but also bring attention to the role, motivation, and intention of several important 'actors', as it were, involved in matchmaking, including matchmakers, friends, and the family. Significantly, I also unpack the essence and meanings of certain conceptual language—'good match', 'suitable wife', 'providing husband'—that is routinely used in matchmaking. In doing so, I also address renditions and understandings of love, duty, honour, and gender roles that mark the being of young middle-class Indians. In explaining and describing the process of matchmaking and its varied experiences, furthermore, I crucially emphasise on another important yet overlooked aspect, namely, of rejection, hurt, and pain. By providing such a detailed account of matchmaking, my larger purpose is to explicate the explicate the specific ways in which a seemingly 'simple' and straightforward process of matchmaking is transformed into a significant opportunity to construct,

[1] Several works have discussed the advent of a 'new' middle class in post-liberalisation India. Some of these include Jaffrelot and Van der Veer (2008), Jodhka and Prakash (2016), Varma (2007), Sridharan (2011), Fernandes (2011), and Upadhyay (2009).

[2] Some of the works explaining the complex relationship between being middle class and type of marriage include Donner (2002), Kapur (2009), and de Neve (2016).

P. Bhandari, *Matchmaking in Middle Class India*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-1599-6_1

reinforce, or challenge ideals of being middle class. In so doing, I also explain how the spaces and methods of matchmaking appeal to both familial and individualistic sentiments of marriage.

In general, this book calls for expanding one's understanding of matchmaking by not limiting it to the process when matchmaking formally begins (e.g. by family, matchmakers, or the marrying individual themselves) or focus exclusively on the experiences when love is transformed to marriage (though these form an important theme of discussion). Rather, this book argues that in order to understand matchmaking in general and address specific questions as of why some people prefer to marry someone from the same caste or same class it is also important to understand their pre-marital experiences. At the same time, it is important to note the intervening role of matchmakers who may shape desires and criteria of the family and the marrying individuals on the suitability of a spouse. This expansive approach, as it were, to understand matchmaking is all the more relevant in contemporary times because the middle class—especially that segment that is the focus of this book—is pushing their age at marriage to the late 20s or the early 30s. Their unmarried status is often described as a phase of 'elongated singlehood' or 'prolongation of youth' (Jeffrey and Dyson 2008; Jones 2007; Koh 2011), in which they experience significant romantic encounters and establish ideas on how their life can/should be. These experiences in turn, as I explain in the book, can reinforce middle-class identities or allow the young middle class to reconfigure and re-imagine these identities. This book thus provides an understanding of the phase of pre-marital experiences and how it shapes practices and preferences of matchmaking.

At another level, this book also provides a peek into the anxieties and apprehensions of the middle class particularly on their marital future. The world of the professional middle class who are often viewed as the 'children of neoliberalism'—owing to the fact that they grew up in the neoliberal era of India—is increasingly shaped by a rhetoric as well as bourgeoning reality of a 'new' India. What this 'new' begets, however, is far from clear and is continuously in the process of being contested and discovered. In this situation, the topic of marriage—who to marry, when is the 'right' time to marry, and how and where to meet a suitable partner—becomes only more interesting. This book, thus, is an attempt to delineate, reveal, and understand experiences of matchmaking in this 'new' and old world of the middle class. In doing so, this book adopts four approaches and perspectives: firstly, it provides an extensive and exhaustive account of contemporary spaces of matchmaking, giving due attention to all aspects involved in finding a suitable spouse from the use of professional matchmaking services to expectations of family, and to individual and experiences of intimacy and romance. Secondly, it explains how the individual-informal practices of spouse-selection interact with the family-formal-arranged practices, not always challenging each other but also working in tandem. Thirdly, it explains the specific understandings of the 'modern' that construct a middle-class Indian identity, arguing that the modern is indeed about remakings, adjustments, and changes and is far from a neat category. Finally, it brings special attention to feelings and experiences of hurt, rejection, and pain of the process of spouse-selection arguing that these too are significant to the making of modern middle-class selves.

In the next few pages, I lay out a framework of the main themes and axes along which this research may be analysed. In the first section, I briefly discuss the 'setting' as well as 'positioning' of the subjects of this research, namely the professional middle class. I also provide a short introduction to research and approaches on marriage in India thus far. In the second section, I delineate the methods used to collect data, with a reflexive discussion on my role in conducting this research, and the final section provides a brief outline of the other chapters of this book.

1.1 Approaches and Paradigms

1.1.1 Defining the Middle Class

Misra in his seminal work 'The Indian Middle Class: Growth in Modern Times' (1961) lamented the absence of adequate scholarship for the study of the middle classes. Since then, Indian scholarship has considerably compensated for this lack. The initial works in this field were conducted mainly on understanding the distinctiveness of a colonial middle class. More recently, research is interested in concluding whether there indeed exists a 'new' middle class, born in the wake of India's liberalisation policies of the 1990s. In pursuit of this question, much of ethnographic research on the middle class in India has delineated certain characteristics of being middle class in contemporary India. Specifically, they attempt to draw out distinctiveness of being middle class according to specific geographic regions. This is to say, instead of making claims on middle class at a pan-Indian level, their emphasis is to account for specific regions. Therefore, we note that Donner (2002, 2008, 2011, 2016) conducts her fieldwork in Kolkata and Fuller and Narasimhan (2007, 2014) in Tamil Nadu; Nisbett (2007) focuses on the city of Bangalore and Ossella and Osella (2000) on Kerala; Dickey's research is based (2011) in Madurai; Rudolph and Rudolph (2011) focus on the region of Rajasthan. Furthermore, each of these works understands the middle class based on a different occupational status. For example, Fuller and Narasimhan (2007, 2014) focus on IT sector and its relationship to being middle class. They include in this category those who have migrated to the city of Chennai to pursue a career in the IT sector. Some other works (Jeffery et al. 2011; de Neve 2011) trace the transformation of the landed rich class of small towns to being a middle class. Furthermore, these works include those who self-identify as being middle class as well as those who have 'achieved' middle-class status by an upward mobility. Together these works, therefore, explain the middle class as including a range of professions, class, and social status. At times, this variegated, heterogeneous essence of being middle class has led scholars to prefer the term 'middle classes' (Baviskar and Ray 2011; Srivastava 2011). In effect, this heterogeneity has come to mark the defining feature of being middle class, albeit, a class that is loose and expansive and accommodating of many a professions and social and cultural backgrounds. Deshpande succinctly notes, 'Although it is true that the middle class is a notoriously

loose term, it is striking that hardly anyone wishes to decline membership and even those who are ineligible wish to be included in it' (2003:129).

It is in the backdrop of these debates and discussions on the nature and meaning of being middle class that I present my research. Like the above-mentioned woks, I do not claim that my findings and research are indeed a pan-Indian phenomenon. Nonetheless, my aim is to unpack the world of a 'new' middle class, which grew up in post-liberalisation policies and is nurturing its professional ambitions in an ever-increasing multinational work culture. In order to understand and define the 'new' of this set of the middle class, I begin with reverting back to classic understandings of class as provided by Marx and Weber, according to whom class is determined by material resources and skills that an individual brings to a market situation. In that regard, there is indeed something 'new' about the contemporary middle class, for they hone and sell their work skills in a 'new' market situation, that of private multinational employment. Jodhka and Prakash (2016) too note this 'change', as it were, in the ideals and professional choices of the middle class. They explain that the post-colonial middle class was committed to ideals of nation-building and promoting a socialist state by committing to state or public sector employment. The 'new' middle class, on the other hand, they claim, provides legitimacy to the policies of economic liberalisation and privatisation as it 'has turned to the market for its further growth and consolidation…the state begins to be increasingly viewed as a site of corruption and patronage while the market is seen as rewarding merit and performance' [Chatterjee (2011) in Jodhka and Prakash (2016:161)]. A distinctive feature of the 'new' middle class then is their increasing participation in an open economy dictated by free market ideals, best exemplified in a shift in preference from public to private sector employment. Therefore, I chose to interview that segment of the Indian middle class who desire private sector employment, particularly in a multinational organisation, after achieving educational and professional training at India's leading engineering and business administration institutes.

Whilst this section of the middle class is homogeneous in terms of their material position, their familial and social backgrounds were varied. Some, for example, were born to parents employed in high-status professions, with at least one four-wheeler vehicle, whilst others were born to barely literate parents who did not own a car or fancy furniture.[3] Some were educated in English-medium schools of urban centres such as Delhi and Mumbai, whilst others were not fluent in English until they moved to Delhi for higher education and employment. The commonality, amongst them all though was that they all self-identified as middle class. This speaks to Deshpande's description and analysis of the middle class. According to Deshpande, the middle class is an elusive and loose category, not necessarily 'middle' or average in terms of income or its number in relation to the general population. Rather, it has come to signify an in-betweeness or average position as it is not defined by extremes of wealth or poverty, or lifestyle preferences. Such an understanding of the middle class is indeed echoed by the professional middle class I interviewed, for they took pride

[3]For further discussion on the different variables as of income, household items, and vehicles to define middle class, see Sridharan (2011) and Krishna and Bajpai (2015).

in being a moderate and temperate class—one that does not epitomise extremes of Indian class system. For example, they said that they do not identify with, nor approve of the lavish lifestyle of the elites and nor do they relate to the struggles of survival of those from lower economic backgrounds. Satisfied with their situation, mindful of their limits and aspirations, my chosen population sample considered themselves to be the 'in-between' class. It is of course to be noted that this was their self-presentation, for most of them, if not all, had come to live a rather luxurious life with frequent foreign trips, meals at fine restaurants, and expensive leisure activities, alluding to a status that was akin to that of the elites. Yet, they were keen to self-identify as being the middle class, which, as I found out, was also most starkly emphasised in their decisions of spouse-selection.

It is here that I find Ortner's (2003) conceptualisation of class most useful and appropriate for my research. Following Geertz's (1973) methodological approach, Ortner provides a 'thick description' of middle class in America, explaining that class is also culturally constructed and is not simply a given or assigned status, as it were. She says, '…we may also think of it as a project, as something that is always being made or kept or defended, feared or desired' (2003:13). She assiduously explains the need to incorporate both objective and subjective factors in understanding class constructions. She explains that there is a two-way relationship between an individual's 'objective' position determined by income, residence, occupation, and their 'subjective' experiences and practices involving boundary maintenance, use of status symbols, and others as such, which define their class position. Bourdieu (1984) too explains the role of cultural dispositions in determining and performing of class, most evidently observed in mannerisms, tastes, and styles of life. My understanding of class then is guided by these important works, which argue that class is constantly constructed in everyday performances and is determined by cultural and subjective experiences as much as by any overtly objective factors. An important contribution in this pursuit is the edited volume by Baviskar and Ray (2011). Baviskar and Ray explain middle-class characteristics not only by economic standing or consumption practices but by bringing attention to the everyday experiences that carry cultural codes which enable an 'unconscious gatekeeping' for the middle class, especially in the spheres of work, leisure, and at home. In this volume of collected papers, they showcase the dialectical relationship between economic objective standing and the actor's desires, imaginations, and aspirations, which together map the journey of being middle class.

An emphasis on subjective experiences of 'actors' to perform and experience their class thus remains central to this work. In particular, I am drawn to the discourse on the importance of values, especially moral values, which are seen to be important boundary markers of class. Here, the pioneering work of Lamont (1992) remains most influential for my analyses. Lamont, in her exhaustive comparative study between the American and French upper middle classes, much like Ortner, brings attention

to the subjective experiences of class.[4] She significantly emphasises on the place of 'morals' in distinguishing between classes. In fact, her primary critique of Bourdieu's conception of boundary maintenance is that he overlooks the role of moral boundaries. To explicate, Lamont in her work identifies three types of boundaries—(i) socio-economic, determined by wealth, power, profession; (ii) cultural boundaries, determined by taste, high culture, style of life, and (iii) moral boundaries, which are drawn on the basis of honesty, work ethic, personal character (1992:4). She argues that often works on class tend to focus on the first two, with little attention to the later. This absence was also detected by Dickey (2011), which, in her work on the middle class in India, leads her to argue that the Indian middle class takes moralising themes of moderation and deliberation in almost all its everyday practices including consumption. Saavla (2010) too explains the middle class's determining relationship with morality by arguing that it is through the use of morals in their everyday life that the middle class is able to strengthen their 'in-between' position. Srivastava (2007, 2011, 2014) explains that being middle class is essentially a moral claim. He argues that the middle class has little to do with one's income or material possession as, for example, a low-income clerk as well as a high-earning employee at a multinational firm equally claims middle-class belonging. The binding factor here is their claim to certain moralities that are seen as distinctively being middle class.

Thus, in this book, I focus on a particular segment of the middle class who are popularly seen as the 'new' middle class, as they seek employment in the ever-increasing private multinational sector, newly emerging in India. At the same time, my definition of this middle class is not limited to their income or professional status. Rather, I am interested in delineating the ways in which they invoke and reinforce moralities of being middle class. More recently, works explain the middle-class sphere of consumption (Appadurai and Breckenridge 1995; Fernandes 2006; Lietchy 2003; Mazzarella 2003; Nisbett 2007), youth cultures (Bhandari 2019; Jeffrey 2010; Nisbett 2007; Osella and Osella 1998; Waldrop 2011), professional choices (Fuller and Narasimhan 2006, 2014; Jeffery et al. 2011; Radhakrishnan 2011; Upadhyay 2009, 2011), gated communities (Baviskar 2011; Srivastava 2014). My focus however is on the often-overlooked field of romance and matchmaking. This is not to say that no previous work has linked marriage with middle-class moralities, but that the approach provided in this book is more holistic. This is to say, this book does not focus on one aspect of marriage, defined by 'type' or arranged or love marriage. Rather, it undertakes an expansive framework by focusing on all 'actors', as it were, in this process of matchmaking (individual, family, and matchmakers), as well as the essence, and meanings of concepts routinely used in matchmaking. Crucially, unlike any other previous work on marriage in India, this book delves into hurt, pain, and injuries experienced in the process of spouse-selection, to explain the ways in which middle-class identities are constructed, invoked, and reinstated.

[4]Whilst Ortner explains the dialectic relationships between subjective and objective experiences, Lamont clarifies that she is 'exclusively concerned with the subjective boundaries that we draw between ourselves and the others. I pay no attention to…objective social boundaries…' (p. 9).

1.1.2 The Post-liberalisation Era

Often whilst referring to the 'new' middle class or 'neoliberal' class, the indication is towards that set of the middle-class population that grew up in the 1990s and thereafter in the wake of new liberalisation policies adopted by India. Scholarship, however, has demonstrated reservation and discomfort in these labels of 'neoliberalism' and 'new'; for example, Fernandes (2006, 2011) argues that this set of middle class is not 'new' in terms of being new entrants to the middle-class status. Rather, this term signifies a new identity and orientation towards the state that promote the state's ethos of liberalisation. Fernandes writes

> The middle class is not 'new' in terms of its structural or social basis…Rather, its newness refers to a process of production of a distinctive social and political identity that represents and lays claim to the benefits of liberalisation (2011:68–69).

This difference in orientation of values becomes starkly evident if we understand the middle class as a historical and sociological category (Jodhka and Prakash 2016). Jodhka and Prakash explain that the category of the middle class is synonymous with a modern capitalist society. It came into being in the context of a western-style education system, which demanded an administrative class to support colonial rule in India (2016:4). As time passed, these middle class nurtured ambitions of freedom and were in fact those with acute political aspirations leading the country into independence. In the 1950s and 1960s, post-colonial India's focus was on nation-building, and the middle class then popularised socialist state policies. At the same time, as Joshi (2011) explains, they also established their cultural authority by undertaking a cultural entrepreneurship as they published literary journals and magazines.[5]

In the 1990s, India underwent another significant shift in its economic policies where it supported free market and opened its economy to foreign investments and trade. This strong economic change certainly impacted India's social and cultural reality, with a growing emphasis on being 'modern' and experimenting with the 'new'. One of the most compelling characteristics that the 'new' ushered in was an emphasis on consumption.[6] It is in this time period that consumption, and not nation-building, development, or social programmes was the new idiom of 'mobility, achievement, and identity for the middle class' (Jodhka and Prakash 2016:145). This is to say that for the 'new' middle class the sign of being middle class was not passion for nation-building and furthering of socialist agenda, rather 'self-making through the acquisition of a lifestyle, primarily associated with possession of status goods' (ibid:146). Upadhyay (2008) succinctly states that for this middle class the primary ideology was consumption, which replaced previously held ideology of

[5]However, they did not want to dislodge the feudal elites. So, they incorporated them as they excluded the lower castes and classes from participating in the public sphere. In fact, in this way, the middle class became a class of the upper castes leaving out a substantial population. Also noted by Deshpande (2003).

[6]Several recent works have explained the middle class's relation to consumption in contemporary era, including works by Brosius (2010), Jaffrelot and Van der Veer (2008), Mazzarella (2002, 2003), Nisbett (2007), Varma (2007), and van Wessel (2004).

development. As a result, whilst the 'old' middle class were symbols of a Nehruvian state socialism and Gandhian ideals of austerity (Fernandes 2006; Khilnani 1997), this contemporary middle class, due to its acute focus on consumption, is viewed as a symbol of India's transition to liberalisation (Fernandes 2011:69). This penchant towards consumption is not restricted to consumption of goods. Rather, as Jodhka and Prakash (2011) point out, it extends to their style of life, which now includes extensive traveling and regular medical check-ups, therapy, and counselling. This is not to say that all middle class are increasing their consumption practices per se. Rather, it is the appearance or association of consumerism with being middle class that is now widely accepted. By championing the era of consumption and itself as its symbol, the middle class has thus become a 'hegemonic socio-cultural embodiment' of India's turn to liberalisation (Fernandes 2011:69), advocating its benefits.[7]

1.1.2.1 Neoliberalism Unpacked

Often, as noted earlier, this middle class is popularly referred to as the 'neoliberal middle class'. The use of the term 'neoliberal' has generated much debate in scholarship, and my aim here is certainly not to provide any definitive understanding of this term. Rather, I acknowledge that 'neoliberalism' has a range of different implications for people attach different meanings to it depending on their own unique context (Springer et al. 2016). It is beyond the scope of this book to delve into this discussion, yet for purposes of better understanding this research context, I briefly discuss those definitions of neoliberalism that come close to the current situation. Here, I consider Hilger's (2010) contribution most relevant, as he offers three approaches to unpack this term. The first approach emphasises the culture of neoliberalism, according to which neoliberalism can be defined much like a culture is defined, that is, as a shared set of values and practices. A second approach focuses on understanding neoliberalism as a system, one that perpetuates and enables a 'top-down' capitalist system. The third approach emphasises on the technologies of government that are involved in promoting neoliberalism, '…the individual responsibilisation and the self as enterprise is a major principle of the neoliberal art of governing' explains Hilgers. This art of governing, promotes acute individualisation, where the self is developed and conceived of as an enterprise in a competitive framework that leads individuals to manage themselves in the logic of the market' (2010:358). In order to understand the middle class from the perspective of their matchmaking practices, I find Hilger's first approach as more relevant. This is because this approach urges to view neoliberalism as a shared set of practices and values, and in the contemporary situation this shared sense seems to be consumption—not simply of goods and services but with a focus on betterment of self.

[7]Furthering this explanation, Deshpande (2003) considers a framework as provided by Gramsci as more useful to understand than the Weberian, Marxian, or Bourdeian approaches which give primacy to material positions and dispositions, whereas in discussing the middle class it is crucial to analyse the discourses of power and hegemony.

Gooptu (2013) explains that one of the features of neoliberal culture in India is an 'enterprise culture', which is dominating the contemporary Indian youth. Amongst the middle class I spent time with, Gooptu's 'enterprise culture' seemed evident in the phase of 'elongated singlehood'. This is to say that the youth decided to push back their age at marriage, so as to pursue their professional ambitions, and in this way, the fervour of enterprise can be connected to decisions on marriage. The professional middle class often explained to me that they prefer to use the decade of their 20s to 'focus on making a career', instead of deciding on marriage. At the same time, it is not that this phase of non-marriage is devoid of any romance or intimacies and decisions on marriage. Instead, they make use of this phase of 'elongated singlehood' to experiment and ponder over their preferences of a suitable spouse. In due process, at times they engage in romantic relationships and/or prefer to primarily be 'unattached' and focus on building a career. Either way, it is in this phase that they begin to hone their understandings of how they wish to appear being middle class and suitably modern and how this may reveal in the choice of their spouse.

The relationship between being modern and being middle class is indeed an important one and not just the contemporary, but the previous middle class too was defined by explicating this relationship. Particularly, the 'old' middle class was seen to have a dubious relationship with modernity, where, for example, a western 'modern' lifestyle was an acceptable ideal in the public sphere. Yet, the private life, it was insisted, should be unsullied by these ideals. In other words, the private sphere, for example, was expected to carry on ideals of patriarchy and to maintain the status quo, namely of women's primary sphere being that of the domestic (Chatterjee 1993). In the same vein, important characteristics of the contemporary middle class too can be understood vis-à-vis its relation to being modern. In this case, the contemporary middle class seems to have embraced the modern in a way that it furthers specific aspects of neoliberalism ones that emphasise consumption and 'self'. This book aims to further unpack the relationship of the middle class and being modern, in that, it delineates the ways in which middle-class professionals encourage and engage in practices and decisions of 'self' whilst at the same time giving due importance to values relating to family, duty, and honour. It poses the relevant question that if post-liberalisation India can be seen as en era that promotes 'enterprise culture', that is, individualism and focus on 'self', then how does this interact with the structures, norms and expectations of the 'collectives', particularly family, community, kinship networks?

1.1.2.2 Understanding the Indian Modern

One way of approaching and untangling the interactions between desires of self and continuities of societal norms and familial expectations is by nuancing the idea of the 'modern'. It is important to approach the concept of the modern not in an uncritical manner, wherein only ideals of progress, betterment, or development are attached to it. Rather, the modern needs to also include those registers which are at once contradictory and conciliatory. In other words, it is important to view the modern not

as a neat category which only champions values of rationality and progress, as the modernisation theorists would like us to believe.[8] Instead, it needs to be recognised that the 'modern' is bereft with hierarchy, violence (Dube 2009; Dube and Banerjee-Dube 2006), and as such can be a tortuous and far from a straightforward experience. The modern has often erroneously been presented as based on some *tabula rasa* of imagination and practice, looking outwards to a futurity. However, it is important to note that 'modernity involves processes of the past and the present' (Dube 2012:7). This interaction with the past and present inevitably leads to contradictions and contestations, thereby making a neat future vision and experience of the modern a difficult possibility. It is in this framework that the experiences of the middle-class youth need to be analysed as they do make claims of being 'modern'. In effect, it needs to be noted that these claims are not simply about being 'new' or completely detached from the past, exuding a focus on 'self'. In fact, as we will see in the book, their expressions and aspirations of being modern are not detached to their social and cultural backgrounds and learnings.

My argument then is not that there is a 'new' middle class in India, the characteristics of which I explicate in this book. Instead, following Fernandes' (2006, 2011) work, I recognise that there has not been a drastic structural change in the reckonings of the middle class. Nonetheless, post-liberalisation has shaped the social and cultural orientation of the middle class in a certain way, albeit related to ideals of professional success, aspiration to a global identity, and a life significantly determined by consumption. At the same time, ties with family, notions of traditions, and other cultural identities find firm resonance with this 'new' middle class. The aim of this book, then, is to explicate the specific ways in which these approaches influence matchmaking. In doing so, I reveal the specific ways in which these aspects enable a making, remaking, and experiencing of middle-class modernities.

[8]One of the key modernisation theorists is Talcott Parsons. The aim of the modernisation theory he proposed was to categorise societies in binaries of 'modern' and 'traditional'. In order to determine the category to which a society would belong, Parsons proposed that progress should be measured along five pattern variables: affectivity versus affective neutrality; self-orientation versus collective orientation; particularism versus universalism; ascription versus achievement; and diffuseness versus specificity. For him the West, in particular the American society, had successfully laid a claim on the modern as it had experienced industrialisation, specialisation of occupational roles, urbanisation (Parsons and Shils 1951). Subsequently, there emerged other scholarship that argued against a unilinear vision of the modern; for example, Eisenstadt proposed the use of 'multiple modernities' (2000); post-colonial scholarship insisted on critically appraising a western hegemonic concept of the modern, and instead focus on the 'local' or subjective (instead of 'global' or imposing) interpretations and understandings of the modern. A few recent works that bring attention to such a critical and nuanced understanding of the modern include Chakrabarty (2000), Dube and Banerjee-Dube (2006), Dube (2009, 2012), Deshpande (2006), and Choukroune and Bhandari (2018).