

Caste in Mind: Craving for Endogamy

Reflection from the Bengali Matrimonial Columns of the Higher Castes

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ABSTRACT

Marriage is socially considered as one of the most important happenings of one's life. Like other Indian communities, Bengali community has been also traditionally hooked up with preference for endogamy. This is evident from the matrimonial columns published in the dailies across West Bengal in searching suitable brides and grooms. It may seem that with the spread of education Bengali people have become less inclined to attach much value towards caste-oriented mindset while negotiating for marriage. A study of matrimonial columns published in the Ananda Bazar Patrika, the leading daily from Kolkata reveals that people of the two higher castes in Bengal i.e. Brahmanas and Baidyas still give preference to caste identity and crave for prospective endogamous marital negotiations.

Key Words: Marriage, Matrimonial Columns, Endogamy, Hypergamy, Hypogamy, Caste (Brahmana & Baidya)

Introduction:

Negotiated or arranged marriage is still substantially considered one of the options for finding suitable grooms and brides. It is evident from the matrimonial columns published in the daily newspapers in the classified sections and profiles of the online matrimonial sites that people cutting across different sections with castes, communities, high educational qualifications and professional stands prefer to find suitable partners through matrimonial advertisements. In Bengal, *Brahmanas* and *Baidyas* are considered higher castes. Traditionally, boys and girls from higher castes aspire for marriage with partners from same castes. Earlier, matchmakers used to play a great role in finding suitable matches for suitable brides and grooms and fixing desired

negotiations for marriages within the same socio-economic background of the negotiating families concerned. With the expansion of education and spread of professional horizon for the educated the boys and girls traditional ways of matchmaking have taken a backseat in the concerned process. Permanent or semi-permanent shift from the rural native land to urban areas have put constraints in having the opportunity of arranging marriage through traditional family matchmakers. Again, trend of living in nuclear families since the last half of the last century has created a roadblock to access to the erstwhile family matchmakers. As a result of all these developments, the profession of matchmaking has become quite obsolete in Bengal, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas.

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This study zeroes in the matrimonial advertisements of the columns entitled 'brides wanted' (*Patri Chai*) and 'grooms wanted' (*Patra Chai*) published in the *Anandabazar Patrika* for consecutive 24 weeks roughly from July to December, 2012. A total number of 2226 and 2988 respective samples of 'grooms wanted' and 'brides wanted' as published in the classified columns for the prospective *Brahmana* girls and boys are considered in this study. Similarly, a total of 375 and 462 respective samples of grooms wanted and brides wanted as published in the classified columns for the prospective *Baidya* girls and boys are selected for this study. The selection of the samples is primarily categorized in keeping in mind the educational and professional qualifications. The selected samples then considered for the study from different aspects of caste related references as reflected from the contents of the advertisements concerned. The total samples of the *Baidyas* are comparatively less than the *Brahmanas* because as a community they are lesser in number than the *Brahmanas*. Seal (1971) observes this phenomenon. Report of the Census (1921) also reflects this trend.

Contemporary Bengali society is perceived to be progressive as inter-dinning amongst castes and choice of food going beyond the traditional taboos have been breaking the age-old restrictive world of life-style. Still caste is most evident component of matrimonial advertisements. This shows that marriage as social practice is yet to get over caste-dominated perception.

2. Review of Literature

The Portuguese is said to have first used the term *casta* to refer the social order in India. The particular word is believed to have been originated from the Latin word '*castus*'. However, Michaels

(Michaels 2004) shows that the word has been used to mean different things from time to time. The discourse on Indian caste has been depicted in different studies from different perspective. *Homo Hierarchicus* of Dumont (Dumont 1980) is perhaps one of the most read and debated works in this field. Dumont broadly holds that Indians are socially most represented by caste. Caste is the element which imparts a uniquely 'encompassing' ritual status over all the extant social, economic and power disparities. He argues that *Brahminas*' ritual status controls the political and economic domain in India and their relations with other castes. Dumont (Dumont 1966) observes that membership in a caste depends upon caste status of both parents and thus upon marriage. Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (Bandyopadhyay 2004) mainly concentrates on different caste related phenomena of colonial Bengal including discourse on caste and gender. He observes that dowry replaced the practice of bride-price among the upwardly mobile peasant and trading classes since the early twentieth century. School of Women's Studies, Jadavpur University undertook a Project entitled "Re-negotiating Gender Relations in Marriage: Family, Class and Community in Kolkata in an Era of Globalisation". Its area of study covers the municipalities of Kolkata and Salt Lake. The Report of this Project published in 2009 observes that in the urban context the influence of *jati* becomes diluted.

3. Higher Castes of Bengal: Brahmanas and Baidyas

Traditionally, the highest social position is attributed to the *Brahmanas* followed by other three castes of the four *varnas* of the Indian society i.e. the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaishyas* and the *Shudras*.

Inden (Inden 1976) observes that Brahmanas are also attributed the highest social position in Bengal. However, in Bengal, caste pattern is quite unparalleled. According to a particular reference of the *Brihaddharma Purana*, all the non-Brahmin castes of Bengal are mixed castes or *Sankar Varnas* resultant from unrestrained social mixture among the four *varnas* and all are included in the *Shudra Varna*, refers Ray (Ray 1414 - B. S.). Tracing back the origin of this peculiar caste pattern in Bengal, attention may be drawn to the extended significance given to the term 'Shudra' in the *Puranas* where it is denoted that all those members of the three higher castes actually fall to category of the *Shudras* on account of their acceptance of the heretical religions and indulgence in Tantric rites. Ray (Ray 1414- B.S.) shows that all the Bengali non-Brahmanas are categorized in two groups i.e. *Sat Shudra* and *Asat Shudra*. Davis (Davis 1983) also observes that *Brahmanas* accept drinking water from the *Sat Shudras* (*Jalchal*), but *Asat Sudras* (*Ajalchal*) do not have the right to serve drinking water to the *Brahmanas*. Ray (Ray 1414- B.S.) explains that generally *Brahmanas* are debarred from accepting cooked food from the non-Brahmanas. In the *Brahmabaibarta Purana*, *Anwashtha* (classified as born of *Brahmana* father and *Vishya* mother) and *Baidyas* (classified as born of *Ashwinikumara*, the son of Surya and the heavenly physician/*vishaka*, and a *Brahmana* woman) are categorized in two different *upavarnas* or subcastes. However, it is said in the *Brihaddharma Purana* that the *Anwashthas* are known as *Baidyas* by virtue of the profession of medical practice and that they are attributed the status of *Shudra* in religious rights despite their

professional attributes like the *Vaishyas*. Both the *Puranas* referred above are believed to have been compiled between twelfth to fourteenth centuries. Though the *Brahmanas* of Bengal are allowed to consume fish and meat as per guidelines of *Brihaddharma Purana* (which is unlikely to be found in any scripture throughout India), they are attributed highest rank in the society like elsewhere in the country. Both the *Brihaddharma Purana* and *Brahmabaibarta Purana* attribute first and second positions among the *Sat Shudras* respectively in the social rank to the *Karanas* (who were given same status as the *Kayasthas* during the Pala period) and *Anwashthas* (*Baidyas*). Again the *Brahmabaibarta Purana* attributes third position to the *Baidyas* who are separated from the *Anwashthas* as caste by virtue of its origin. It is probable that both the *Karanas* and *Kayasthas*, and the *Anwashthas* and *Baidyas* were clubbed together by virtue of their professional similarities. Seal (Seal 1971) mentions that later these *Baidyas* began to be treated as second rank holder in social hierarchy of Bengal since they had started to enjoy the right to wear sacred thread during the eighteenth century. Risley (Risley 1998), the Census Commissioner awarded them second position to the Brahmanas and thus above the *Kayasthas*. Ghosh (Ghosh 2011) refers that these *Baidyas* are said to have mastered four *Vedas* along with the *Ayurveda* and thus are known as *Baidyabipra*. They are also called *Trija* and they are said to have had third birth after completing the study. It may be added that the *Brahmanas* attain their second birth after *upanayana* i.e. ceremony of wearing sacred thread i.e. *upabita* for the first time.

In the present study, *Baidyas* are taken as the

second highest class of the Bengali society following the above-mentioned practice as started by Risley and acquired right of the *Baidyas* to wear *upabita*. At times, the *Baidyas* are socially treated more or less alike the *Brahmanas*. However, in the matrimonial classified section, the advertisements of the *Brahmanas* and the *Baidyas* are arranged in separate columns.

3.1 Marriage: Social Practice

Marriage is the centre stage of the social customs and ceremonies. Vyas(1992) traces the reference from the *Apastamba Dharma Sutra*, which declares that marriage awards a man the capacity to perform religious rites because an unmarried man is considered incomplete. From Bandyopadhyay's (Bandyopadhyay 2011) translation of Manu *Samhita* it is known that according to the ancient lawgiver a person protects his offspring, character, *vamsa* (dynasty), *dharma* and himself by protecting his wife. Sharma (Sharma 2011) referring to the *Manusmriti and Naradasmriti* mentions that a marriage is valid when the groom and bride both belong to the same *Varna*. *Manusmriti* advises the *Brahmanas* to avail better option of marrying women of his own caste. It is unlikely that this was completely abided by in the society. The presence of numerous mixed castes or *Sankara Varna* evidently leads us to believe that in spite of scriptural preference for endogamy i.e. marrying within castes inter-caste marriages were not unknown in India. *Manusmriti* has a list of such mixed castes or *Sankara Varnas*. This proves that inter-caste marriages were considerably practiced and approved by the society. When a man of higher caste accepts wife from lower caste, it is called *anuloma* marriage. When a man of lower castes

marries a woman of higher castes, it is called as *pratiloma* marriage, which is considered somewhat degraded in the social order. Manu, however, is against *pratiloma* marriage. *Brahmanas* can accept wives from two immediate lower castes i.e. *Kshatriyas* and *Vaishyas*, and even from the *Shudras*. Sharma (Sharma 2004) mentions that the practice seems to have been stopped during the tenth century as Alberuni refers that *Brahmanas* were not inclined to take girls from three lower castes in marriage. The writers of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries mention prohibition of inter-caste marriages in the Hindu society. Majumdar (Majumdar 2009) shows that the radical *Brahmos* led by Keshab Chandra Sen took different initiatives to reform the social practices of nineteenth century Bengal. And they were active supporters of inter-caste marriages. In Ghosh's (Ghosh 2007) edited volume of Shibnath Shastri's *Ramtanu Lahiri O Tatkalin Bangasamaj* it is mentioned that Devendranath Tagore, one of the pioneer propagators of *Brahmo* Movement in Bengal could not tolerate initiative started by young *Brahmos* towards inter-caste marriage since 1864. Markovits (Markovits 2002) refers that the *Brahmo* Marriage Act of 1872 was a significant move by the colonial Government towards the demand for legislation of inter-caste marriage as upheld by the *Brahmos* under the leadership of Keshab Chandra Sen. Gore (Gore 1990) opines that in spite of the Hindu Marriage Act of 1956 making the inter-caste marriages legally valid without any material disadvantage to the persons marrying the permissive law has not been able to spread the practice of inter-caste marriage far and wide. Though Gore's studies (Gore 1990) reveal that

highly educated people tend to accept inter-caste marriage, the present study based on samples categorized show different trend among the advertisers seeking marriage negotiations through matrimonial columns in the leading Bengali daily, the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*.

3.2 Negotiating Marriage: Agents

Negotiations and negotiating agents are required for arranged marriage. In simple terms, negotiated marriage is a fixation of marriage by parents or guardians of prospective brides and grooms and not the stakeholders of the marriage directly themselves. The profession of matchmaking is an old one in Bengal. Risley (Risley 1998) refers that they are generally known as *Ghatakas*, the term used to identify the *Brahmanas* who are professional matchmakers and genealogists. In fact, each sub-caste of the *Brahmanas*, *Baidyas* and *Kayasthas* in Bengal once had its own recognized staff of *Ghataks* who used to arrange suitable marriages and preserve the social and ceremonial purity of each family belonging to it. Majumdar (Majumdar 2009) refers from *Vivahakosa* by Nagendranath (compiled between 1888 and 1911) Basu that *Ghatakas* were expected to have profound knowledge of *Kula* (lineage) and its various branches, and simple information regarding names of the families was not sufficient to prove their efficiency in their profession. With the urbanization and loosening of joint family structure, this profession has gradually become obsolete. Majumdar (Majumdar 2009) traces back an article entitled “*Vivaha Ghatkali*” from the journal “*Prachar*” published in 1886 and finds an interesting change in the realm of matchmaking. As the *gathakas* ceased to be genealogists and

stopped just being matchmakers, a structural change in the Bengali matchmaking scenario was observed when the female negotiators started to fill the void. Afterwards, matrimonial advertisements took the place of matchmaking agents. The first matrimonial advertisement was published in a periodical in the early 1870s and started gaining popularity shortly. Since the last decade of the nineteenth century a number journals ventured in the market of marriage negotiations. Majumdar (Majumdar 2009) finds that one of these was *Anusandhan*, edited by Durgadas Lahiri supposedly published a considerable number of real incidents of fraudulent practices adopted by the *Ghatakas*. Interestingly, proprietors of these journals employed efficient *ghatakas* to run their service of matchmaking. Use of print media for marriage negotiations was certainly an evidence of engaging new technology in support of traditional ideas of fixing marriage. Rochona Majumdar (Majumdar 2009) argues that matrimonial advertisements in newspapers came with spread of western education having strong connection with monetizing marriage through the practice of dowry. Certainly, there are some peculiar terms like ‘*sambhranta*’ used in the Bengali matrimonial columns. Such terms has latent notion of expectation for negotiations from wealthy households. Generally, middle class and upper middle class families choose matrimonial columns while seeking partners for marriage. If the advertisements are gone through, it would be evident that most of the aspirants for marriage are from middle class. Though online matrimony services have considerably spread their business, matrimonial columns in newspapers have kept their

market intact. The number of pages covered with classified matrimonial advertisements is evidence of acceptability of these services. One thing is very relevant to note that so-called or traditional type of arranged marriage has ceased to be exclusive prerogative of the parents or guardians. Oberoi (Oberoi 2006) finds that new kind of arranged marriage has an element of courtship among the future brides and grooms before marriage. Parents gladly approve such arranged courtship between the boy and the girl before marriage.

4. Relevance of the Present Study

The present study concentrates on the element caste in the contents of matrimonial columns of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*. Though study of the School Women's Studies, Jadavpur University observes that the element of caste has been diluted in the matrimonial culture of urban areas, it is not out of concern at all. Matrimonial columns are published exclusively neither by urban people nor for urban people; stakeholders belong to urban, rural and suburban. Again, study of the matrimonial columns reveals that of advertisements are classified on basis of . While some categorically expect negotiations from same caste, some leave the choice open. Some specify immediate lower or upper castes as their limit of flexibility. Therefore, this study offers a great scope to highlight the particular mindset in this regard.

5. Study of Matrimonial Columns Published in the Ananda Bazar Patrika Matrimonial Advertisements

The Selection of the Newspaper

This study is exclusively based on the matrimonial columns published in the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* for consecutive 24 weeks from July

to December, 2012. As per the data given in the website of the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* it is the largest circulated daily in West Bengal. It publishes classified advertisements of matrimony once in a week on every Sunday. As per the National Readership Survey 2006, total readership of this newspaper is 72,95,000. In Kolkata alone, it has a readership of 32,61,000. It comes with 1,55,1,577,000 daily copies, the largest circulated single-edition regional language newspaper in India. According to Indian Readership Survey (IRS) 2010, the newspaper is the eighth most widely read newspaper in India with a total readership of 15,318,000. With this immense coverage among the readership community this newspaper commands a huge reach among the people. When advertisements are published in the matrimonial columns of this newspaper, there certainly reach a wide range of target groups. Similarly, when a match for matrimony is being searched, it can be assured of making choices from a large pool of advertisements. This is the reason behind choosing the *Ananda Bazar Patrika* Matrimonial Columns in this study.

5.1 Facilities Derived from the Matrimonial Classified Section

These columns provide an opportunity to find out suitable match from a large pool of choices, which are not presently handy in the absence of traditional matchmakers or *ghatakas* having a large number of prospective brides or grooms in their list of boys and girls particularly classified from the genealogical data kept at their disposal. Matrimonial columns thus offer a wide range of choices. Columns again make it easier for the advertisers to project and highlight their status and expectations

or requirements from the prospective matches easily with the help of different range of facilities forwarded by the service-provider. Even the readers searching for suitable match can be assured of the supply of their particular requirements as the matrimonial classified section comes with different set of highlighters, coloured boxes, bold captions and even photos of the boys or girls. The system acts like the system of modern day departmental stores where different products are kept at different counters or locations specified in each occasions. All these give optimum opportunity to the direct stakeholders i.e. the advertisers and the indirect stakeholders i.e. readers of these columns searching for suitable matches.

5.2 Expectations from the Future Matches

Matrimonial advertisements are published with different coloured highlighters, separate marked boxes, bold captions and other special eye-catching arrangements. These columns have two types of stake holders; one, the advertisers and second, the readers searching for suitable matrimonial match. While searching for suitable match people tend to keep in mind different social parameters, of which some are traditional and some are non-traditional but both are believed to be equally essential. Again some parameters have predominantly gender-centric notion, which is not socially inclined in the first sense, but are parceled with social mindset. In terms of traditional social parameters, people search match within their own castes, sub-castes and communities, and outside the clan or *gotra*. Some people seek for computer literacy or proficiency in English language as desired or compulsory requirements for their future match. These things are non-traditional parameters set by a section of

people. Turning towards a different expectation from the persons seeking to find suitable girls for marriage, complexion of the girls concerned is a matter of great consideration. Very few guardians or prospective brides seek for boys with fair complexion as compulsory or desired requirement for their future match. This requirement comes with a particular social mindset which believes that boys need not to be fair or handsome to seek fair or beautiful matches for marriage, but girls require to be fair and beautiful to expect good matches. This is a serious gender related issue.

5.3 Area of the Study and Point of Observation

This study concentrates in the caste-related requirements or expectations as evident in the matrimonial advertisements and their variations in the choice with the difference in the educational and professional qualifications and income. The columns give the present writer of the study to identify the status of the advertisers, understand the target area of the advertisers and above all to feel a mindset of the advertisers.

5.4 Reasons behind Selecting Caste as the Parameter of Study:

- *Caste is still a social concern.*
- *Matrimonial Columns are arranged separately for different castes.*
- *Almost every advertiser mentions his/her castes in the first line of advertisement highlighting it with bold font.*

5.5 Questions & Thrust Area of this Study:

- How does caste identity matter for the so-called 'higher castes' in the matrimonial advertisements?
- Does the level of higher education/ professional qualification make any difference in the choices

- advertised?
- Does the option of ‘caste no bar’ are substantial in number in the samples observed or studied?
 - Is there still a conservative section (among the advertisers) strictly sticking to the tagline seeking negotiations only from the prospective marches of same caste/s and what is the proportion in this study?
 - What is proportion of choice for hypergamy towards immediate higher caste and hypogamy towards immediate lower caste?
 - Overall reflection of craving for endogamy

5.6 Samples Selected and Classification

For consecutive 24 weeks (starting from 1st July, 2013 to 9th December, 2012) Brides Wanted (*Patri Chai*) and Grooms Wanted (*Patra Chai*) columns of the Brahmin and Baidya boys and girls advertised are studied. A total number of advertisements of 2226 of *Brahmin* girls, 375 *Baidya* girls, 2988 *Brahmin* boys and 462 *Baidya* boys are selected for the study.

Each group of the study is further classified in two categories. The first category selects the advertisers with professional and higher qualifications. Degrees earned in the areas of

medical and engineering courses and post-graduates degrees awarded in non-professional general courses are the parameters set for the first category. The second category selects the advertisers having only graduate degree in the general courses and educational qualifications less than graduate degrees are parameters set for the second category. These two categories are subdivided into five sub-groups: first advertisers with specified desire the prospective matches for their own castes, second, advertisers highlighting their option with specific tagline ‘caste no bar’, third, advertisers seeking match from their own caste and other castes at the same time, fourth, advertisers seeking negotiations from only immediate two lower castes (in case of the Brahmins expecting negotiations from the *Baidyas* and *Kayasthas*) or both immediate higher and lower castes (in case of the *Baidyas* seeking negotiations from both the *Brahmanas* and the *Kayasthas*) and fifth and last, advertisers with no specific mention of caste/s from desired matching but with their own caste/s mentioned in the text of the advertisements. In case of the *Baidyas* it is noticed that some of the prospective grooms and brides specially mention the term ‘*Brahmanas* to be considered’.

Grooms Wanted (*Patra Chai*) Samples Studied

Classified Samples of the *Brahmana* Girls Advertised for Desired Match and the Findings

Total Number of Samples Studied: 2226

Samples with Post Graduate/Professional Degrees=1446 (64.96% of total advertisements studied)

Samples with Graduate Degree or Les Qualifications=780 (35.04% of total advertisements studied)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Brahmana Girls With P.G./ Professional Qualifications	Desire for Only Brahmana Match	‘Caste No Bar’ Tag	Match Desired From Brahmana And Non-Brahmana	Match Desired from Only Brahmana/Baidya/ Kayastha	Others:No Specific Choice Mentioned but Caste Identity Declared/ Highlighted In the Advertisement
Total Number Of Samples =1446		32.328%	1.037%	4.357%	5.187%
Rest (57.091%)					

Table 1: Showing Brahmana Girls with Post-Graduate Degrees of Professional Degrees Seeking Marriage

Negotiations from Prospective Matches and the Percentage of Different Classification as per Declared Specifications of Caste-Related References in the Advertisements

1	2	3	4	5	6
Brahmana Girls With Graduate Degree or Less Qualification	Desire for Only Brahmana Match	'Caste No Bar' Tag	Match Desired From Brahmana And Non-Brahman Sought	Match Desired from Only Brahmana /Baidya / Kayastha	Others:No Specific Choice Mentioned but Caste Identity Declared / Highlighted In the Advertisement
Total Number of Samples=780	17.692%	1.154%	6.932%	5.385%	Rest (68.837%)

Table 2: Showing Brahmana Girls with Graduate Degrees or Less Qualifications Seeking Marriage Negotiations from Prospective Matches and the Percentage of Different Classification as per Declared Specifications of Caste-Related References in the Advertisements

Classified Samples of the Baidya Girls Advertised for Desired Match and the Findings

Total Number of Samples Studied: 375

Samples with Post Graduate/Professional Degrees=252 (67.2% of total advertisements studied)

Samples with Graduate Degree or Less Qualifications=123(32.8% of total advertisements studied)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Baidya Girls With P.G./ Professional Qualifications	Desire for Only Baidya Match	'Caste No Bar' Tag	1.Match Desired FromBrahman / Baidya /Kayastha 2. Brahman to Be considered	Match Desired From Baidya & Non-Baidya	Others: No Specific Choice Mentioned but Caste Identity Declared/Highlighted In the Advertisement
Total Number of Samples=252	11.905%	2.38%	1. 33.333% 2. 11.905%	17.857%	Rest (22.62%)

Table 3: Showing Baidya Girls with Post-Graduate Degrees of Professional Degrees Seeking Marriage Negotiations from Prospective Matches and the Percentage of Different Classification as per Declared Specifications of Caste-Related References in the Advertisements

1	2	3	4	5	6
Baidya Girls With Graduate or Less Qualifications	Desire for Only Baidya Match	'Caste No Bar' Tag	1. Match Desired From Brahman/ Baidya/ Kayastha 2. Brahman to Be considered	Match Desired From Baidya & Non-Baidya	Others:No Specific Choice Mentioned but Caste Identity Declared/ Highlighted In the Advertisement
Total Number of Samples=123	7.317%	4.878%	1. 24.39% 2. Very Negligible =0.81301 (only 1 Sample out of Total123)	31.707%	Rest (30.89499%)

Table 4: Showing Baidya Girls with Graduate Degrees or Less Qualifications Seeking Marriage Negotiations from Prospective Matches and the Percentage of Different Classification as per Declared Specifications of Caste-Related References in the Advertisements

BRIDES WANTED (PATRI CHAI) SAMPLES STUDIED

Classified Samples of the Brahman Boys Advertised for Desired Match and the Findings

Total Number of Samples Studied: 2988

Samples with Post Graduate/Professional Degrees=1389 (46.486 % of total advertisements studied)

Samples with Graduate Degree or Less Qualifications=1599(53.514 % of total advertisements studied)

1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Brahmana</i> Boys With P.G./Professional Degree Qualifications	Desire for Only <i>Brahmana</i> Match	'Caste No Bar' Tag	Match Desired From <i>Brahman</i> And Non- <i>Brahmana</i>	Match Desired from Only <i>Brahmana</i> / <i>Baidya</i> / <i>Kayastha</i>	Others: No Specific Choice Mentioned but Caste Identity Declared / High lighted In the Advertisement
Total Number of Samples=1389	32.613 %	2.16 %	4.32 %	4.32 %	Rest (56.587%)

Table 5: Showing *Brahmana* Boys with Post-Graduate Degrees of Professional Degrees Seeking Marriage Negotiations from Prospective Matches and the Percentage of Different Classification as per Declared Specifications of Caste-Related References in the Advertisements

1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Brahmana</i> Boys With Graduate Degree or Less Qualification	Desire for Only <i>Brahman</i> Match	'Caste No Bar' Tag	Match Desired From <i>Brahmana</i> And Non- <i>Brahmana</i> Sought	Match Desired from Only <i>Brahmana</i> / <i>Baidya</i> / <i>Kayastha</i>	Others: No Specific Choice Mentioned but Caste Identity Declared/ Highlighted In the Advertisement
Total Number of Samples=1599	18.011 %	0.75 %	6.754 %	4.503 %	Rest (69.983%)

Table 6: Showing *Brahmana* Boys with Graduate Degrees or Less Qualifications Seeking Marriage Negotiations from Prospective Matches and the Percentage of Different Classification as per Declared Specifications of Caste-Related References in the Advertisements

Classified Samples of the Baidya Boys Advertised for Desired Match and the Findings

Total Number of Samples Studied: 462

Samples with Post Graduate/Professional Degrees=261(56.494 % of total advertisements studied)

Samples with Graduate Degree or Less Qualifications=201(43.506 % of total advertisements studied)

1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Baidya</i> Boys with P.G./Professional Qualifications	Desire for Only <i>Baidya</i> Match	'Caste No Bar' Tag	1.Match Desired From <i>Brahmana</i> / <i>Baidya</i> / <i>Kayastha</i> 2. <i>Brahmana</i> to Be considered	Match Desired From <i>Baidya</i> & Non- <i>Baidya</i>	Others: No Specific Choice Mentioned but Caste Identity Declared/ Highlighted In the Advertisement
Total Number of Samples=261	9.195 %	10.345 %	1. 28.736 % 2. 11.494%	3.448 %	Rest (36.782%)

Table 7: Showing *Baidya* Boys with Post-Graduate Degrees and Professional Degrees Seeking Marriage Negotiations from Prospective Matches and the Percentage of Different Classification as per Declared Specification of Caste-Related Reference in the Advertisements

1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Baidya</i> Boys with Graduate Degree or Less Qualification	Desire for Only <i>Baidya</i> Match	'Caste No Bar' Tag	1. Match Desired From <i>Brahmana/ Baidya/ Kayastha</i> 2. <i>Brahmana</i> to Be considered	Match Desired From <i>Baidya & Non-Baidya</i>	Others: No Specific Choice Mentioned but Caste Identity Declared/ Highlighted In the Advertisement
Total Number of Samples 201	8.955 %	0.995 %	1. 23.88 % 2. Very Negligible (2 Sample out of total 201) =0.99502%	20.896 %	Rest (44.31898%)

Table 8: Showing *Baidya* Boys with Graduate Degrees or Less Qualifications Seeking Marriage Negotiations from Prospective Matches and the Percentage of Different Classification as per Declared Specification of Caste-Related Reference in the Advertisements

[Source: Table 1 to 8 are based on the Classified Data Collected from Matrimonial Columns Published under the Caption 'Patra Chai' & 'Patri Chai' for 24 Consecutive Weeks starting from 1st July, 2012 to 9th December, 2012 in the *Ananda Bazar Patrika*]

5.7 Choices Projected by the *Brahmana* Girls as Evident from the Data Analysis

It is evident from the tables shown above that the *Brahmana* girls with post graduate degrees and professional degrees seeking prospective partners for marriage are keener to have match from their own caste than their counterparts having graduate degrees or less qualifications (Column No. 2 of Table Nos. 1 and 2). There is no marked improvement or decline in terms of choice for 'caste no bar' with the increase in educational qualifications (Column No. 3 of Table Nos. 1 and 2). Option for non-*Brahmana* match among the highly qualified girls are kept slightly lower (Column No. 4 of Table Nos. 1 and 2). There is no marked improvement or decline in the option of having match only from prospective *Brahmana* or *Baidya* or *Kayastha* boys (Column No. 5 of Table Nos. 1 and 2). Girls having graduate degrees and less educational qualifications have more trend in avoiding specification of caste for desired match than their more qualified counterparts, even though both sections do not

fall short of mentioning their caste in bold fonts in the first or second line of the text of the advertisements (Column No. 6 of Table Nos. 1 and 2)

5.8 Choices Projected by the *Baidya* Girls from the Data Analysis

In case of the *Baidya* girls seeking negotiations from prospective grooms, desire for 'only *Baidya* match' is slightly higher among the highly qualified ones (Column No. 2 of Table Nos. 3 and 4). *Baidya* girls with graduate degree and less qualification are little more interested in declaring 'caste no bar' option (Column No. 3 of Table Nos. 3 and 4). Again, highly qualified *Baidya* girls are more interested to have partners from immediate higher and lower castes i.e. *Brahman* and *Kayastha* respectively (Column No. 4 and Sub-Column No. 1 of Table Nos. 3 and 4). Desire for hypergamy i.e. having prospective match from *Brahman* caste (to be considered) is visibly high among the highly educated *Baidya* girls (Column No. 4 and Sub-Column No. 2 of Table Nos. 3 and 4). *Baidya* girls with graduate degree and less qualification are shown to have more interest in prospective negotiations

from the *Baidya* and non-*Baidya* match (Column No. 5 of Table No. 3 and 4). *Baidya* girls having less qualification are also shown to have more avoided specification of caste for desired match, though their caste is mentioned in the text of the advertisements (Column No. 6 of Table Nos. 3 and 4).

5.9 Choices Projected by the Brahmana boys from the Data Analysis

Like the *Brahmana* girls with higher qualifications, *Brahmana* boys with post graduate degrees and professional qualifications are more interested in finding desired match from their own caste (Column No. 2 of Table Nos. 5 and 6). Highly qualified *Brahmana* boys are slightly more interested in declaring 'caste no bar' option in the text of the advertisements (Column No. 3 of Table Nos. 5 and 6). Desire for negotiations from both *Brahman* and Non-*Brahmana* match is slightly higher among the *Brahmana* boys with graduate degree and less qualification (Column No. 4 of Table Nos. 5 and 6). There is no marked improvement or decline among the two sections in the desire for prospective match from immediate lower castes i.e. *Baidyas* and *Kayasthas* (Column No 5 of Table Nos. 5 and 6). Less qualified *Brahmana* boys are found to have more avoided mentioning caste for negotiation from desired match, though their caste identity is declared in the text of advertisements (Column No. 6 of the Table Nos. 5 and 6).

5.10 Choices Projected by the Baidya Boys from the Data Analysis

Baidya boys having higher qualifications are not found to have much higher desire for having prospective match from their own caste only (Column No. 2 of Table Nos. 7 and 8). However, they are more inclined to declare 'caste no bar'

option for desired partners than the boys having graduate degree or less qualification (Column No. 3 of Tables Nos. 7 and 8). Choice for negotiation from both *Brahmana* and *Kayastha* brides is higher to some extent among the highly qualified *Baidya* boys than the less qualified ones (Column No. 4 and Sub-Column No. 1 of Tables Nos. 7 and 8). However, boys with higher qualifications are found to be far more interested to seek prospective negotiations from the *Brahmana* caste (Column No. 4 and Sub-Column No. 2 of Table Nos. 7 and 8). *Baidya* boys with less qualification are found to have been more open to have prospective negotiations from both *Baidyas* and non-*Baidya* match (Column No. 5 of Table Nos. 7 and 8). This section of the *Baidya* boys also is slightly higher in percentage while avoiding any specific mention for caste from the prospective negotiations (Column No. 6 of Table Nos. 7 and 8).

5.11 Observations

Both the highly educated *Brahmana* girls and boys are found to be interested in marrying within the same caste. Highly educated *Baidya* girls are more interested in marrying within their caste. In case of the highly educated *Baidya* boys this trend is less evident. Both the sections of *Brahmana* girls and boys (i.e. highly educated and less educated) are not found to be very interested in choosing partners without considering caste as parameter. Comparatively highly educated *Baidya* boys are found to be somewhat more interested considering negotiations beyond caste consciousness. Both the highly *Baidya* educated boys and girls are found to have been more interested in considering prospective match from *Brahmana* girls and boys respectively. *Baidya* girls with graduate degree

and less qualification are more open to consider prospective match from the non-*Baidya* girls, whereas *Baidya* boys of same category are found to be comparatively less interested in finding possible match from the non-*Baidyas*. Studying the classified samples, it is found that except the highly educated *Baidya* boys, others from the Brahman and *Baidya* girls and boys are not much interested in considering possible match beyond caste consciousness. Even those, who declare 'caste no bar' as one of their criteria also mention their caste in the advertisements.

6. Conclusion

After examining the samples and classifying those in accordance to the text of the advertisements, it is evident that caste is still an important element in the negotiations for arranged marriage. At least, for the sections of the population who choose matrimonial columns in the newspapers for finding suitable match caste identity is a compulsory element of the text of advertisements. *Brahmana* boys and girls are found to be not very keen to find suitable match from non-*Brahmana*. Boys and girls with post graduation degrees and professional qualifications do not go beyond caste consciousness; rather the highly qualified boys and girls from the highest caste i.e. *Brahmana* are found to be more interested in endogamy. Apparently a considerable percentage among the samples from the advertisements of the *Brahmanas* studied (more than 50 per cent in any case) choose to avoid mentioning anything regarding caste from potential negotiations, but they are not so open minded as seem to be; because they invariably mention their caste identity in bold fonts in the first line of the text in almost all cases. During the study, a very

negligible number of samples are found to have avoided declaring caste identify. Their percentage would come much less than one per cent and much lower than even the samples of 'caste no bar' classification (when it comes less than 1 per cent in some results), if calculated. That is why those are not classified in the study. The samples of 'caste no bar' classified and studied are not adequate to reach any generalization. For *Brahmana* girls whether with high or less qualification 'caste no bar' option is very low. In case of the less qualified and non-employed girls negotiations without caste consideration are sought. In case of the highly qualified and well-employed ones, a little more than 1% samples studied prefer to go beyond any caste bias. It may be concluded that *Baidya* girls both with high or less qualifications seem to be more inclined to go beyond caste consideration. *Brahmana* boys with higher qualifications seem to be a little more open to choose beyond caste considerations than those with less qualification. However, the study shows that *Baidya* boys with post-graduate and professional qualifications seem to be more interested in declaring 'caste no bar' preference. Going through the contents of the particular samples it appears that most of them desire to have prospective negotiations from professionally qualified or handsomely employed girls. Therefore, it seems that acquiring higher qualification does not bring significant changes in the traditional outlook. But desire for better qualified and employed match sometimes make people apparently more considerate in this respect. The study reveals that 'caste no bar' option is yet to a choice of larger section of the marriage negotiations through matrimonial advertisements. It may be said

caste sometimes continues to exist in hiding behind 'class', determination of which varies from educational qualification, income, family background etc. Desire for endogamy is a preferable choice not only for those who categorically declare it in the text of advertisements, but also for those who mention that proposals from immediate higher or lower castes are to be considered. Given ample scope to choose from their own castes, they would certainly select matches from the same castes. In fact, they are just keeping the options open in case of better negotiations with better income or qualifications. If other criteria regarding looks, income, qualifications and family background are fulfilled along with caste criterion too, they would certainly look for endogamy. Consideration for hypogamy is not very high (less than 7 per cent in all cases) among *Brahmana* girls whether highly educated or not. However, *Baidya* girls with higher qualifications and less qualification are more open to consider hypogamy than their Brahman counterparts. A considerable section highly educated *Baidya* girls seem to be somewhat keen to have prospective match from the *Brahmana* boys, a desire for hypergamy is thus evident. Even, a section of the highly educated *Baidya* boys are found to be keen to consider proposals from *Brahmana* girls.

So caste is still an essential element in marriage negotiations and endogamy is still preferable for a considerable section of the highest castes. As far the findings of this study are considered, higher education does not bring higher mind among the highest caste of Bengal. Overall, a craving for endogamy is noticed. This study has revealed a piece of social mindset of the higher castes. Bengalis

are yet to witness radical change in the social mindset in this regard. Modern life-style has not been able to bring in fundamental shift of age-old social practices. Therefore, it shows a piece of ambivalent modernism among the Bengalis in the arena of matrimonial columns of newspaper.

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