

## **The Language of Matrimonial Columns**

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### **Abstract**

Newspapers occupy a significant place in the life of a modern civilized man. They have evolved in due course, to create a distinctive language of their own which, while sharing core features with the language of common use, has different ways of conveying messages. The language used in newspapers is also different from literary language but sometimes of a higher standard than the day to day language of communication. Fowler *et al.* (1979:3) regarded newspapers as exemplifying instances of ‘real’ language by which they mean “linguistic structures .... Used to explore, systematize, transform, and often obscure analysis of reality, to regulate the ideas about behaviour of other people, to classify and rank people, events and objects, to assert institutional or personal status”. It clearly shows the actual expectations of society. No other parts of newspapers illustrate these features more clearly than matrimonial ads. They express our expectations in a creative but simple way.

The main objective of this paper is to discuss the language of matrimonial columns. With a view to explore the data for this paper, material was collected directly from English newspapers which publish a separate column for matrimonial adverts.

**Keywords:** Newspaper Language, Matrimonial Columns, English Newspapers, Classify and Rank People

### **Introduction**

In the various sections of this paper, we highlight the history and development of matrimonial columns and a brief review of literature, followed by some light on the linguistic aspects of the type of language used in the matrimonial columns, that is to say, the adjectives and their classification have been done. The fourth section explores some innovations in the

matrimonial columns which are followed by concluding remarks on matrimonial columns in the last section.

### **Marriage as an Institution**

Marriage as an institution has been defined by various sociologists. The following are some of the important definitions given by eminent sociologists and social anthropologists.

Radhakrishnan (1956) remarks, “marriage is not a mere convention but an implicit condition of human society. It is an adjustment between the biological purposes of nature and the sociological purposes of man”. (Flickr)

The processes of individualization and urbanization, however, have brought about significant changes in the attitude and values of present day generation of Indians, especially for those from urban areas. Marriage to them is a contract entered into, primarily for the good of the individual – for his personal happiness and satisfaction. Women’s movements offering greater opportunities of financial independence for woman have accelerated the change in perception.

### **History and Development of Marriage**

History of marriage includes all traditional ways of match making & performing marriage. Historically we started shifting the ways and ideas of marriage according to our own choice.

#### ***Swayamvar***

In Indian classical literature we see that in the early days, life partners were chosen in *swayamvar*. Many cultures have legends concerning the origins of marriage. *Swayamvar* was the process through which people chose their life partners. In this practice the place, date, time and bride were pre-decided; it was open for all hopeful young men to come and participate, possibly within their own caste gatherings. *Swayamvar* played an important role in Hindu marriages for a long time.

## **Pundits**

After the practice of *swyamvar* died down, the role of “pundits” in match making became more prominent and perhaps the only standard procedure. They would suggest proper and suitable matches to interested families. In this context the role of “relatives” was also very significant, because they were also suggesting good matches according to need and compatibility.

## **Matrimonial Columns**

Newspapers are publishing classified “matrimonial columns”. In recent times, with the advancement in electronic and print media, the choice of finding a perfect match has increased manifold. In the field of “ELECTRONIC MEDIA” we have unlimited number of matrimonial sites e.g.: *jeevansathi.com*, *shadi.com*, *community matrimonial.com* and so on, which help people to search for suitable matches by providing basic information about both the genders.

## **Marriage Bureaus**

Marriage Bureaus also contribute a lot in the marriage settlement process. To get a suitable match people go there and submit their bio-data to agents. The process requires good communication between the agent and party who is looking for a match. In recent times, however we are witness to many new developments in this field which have cropped up in the form of classified “matrimonial columns” that appear regularly in newspapers.

## **History of Publishing Matrimonial Ads**

History of publishing matrimonial ads in newspapers is 85yrs (flicker) old, but the fashion of publishing advertisements in newspapers is still very demanding. On a particular day of every week various newspapers like (Times of India, Hindustan Times, Dainik Jagran, Aaj and so on) publish a separate section of matrimonial columns.

## **Research on Language of Matrimonial Ads**

According to R.S Pathak (*South Asian Language Review*, vol. XV. No. 2, June 2005), in south Asia many studies have been conducted on the language of Newspapers (e.g., Leech 1966;

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Pandyas 1977; Dubey 1989, etc.), but very little empirical research has been done on the language of matrimonial ads. The two studies that have come into to existence are: Mehrota (1975) and Dubey (1989), though the latter is not devoted exclusively to the analysis of matrimonial ads. R.S. Pathak's article about "Matrimonial advertisements in India" deserves a special mention in this context. His article focused on the sociolinguistic aspect of the language of matrimonial ads. The values of a systematic in-depth study of this particular use of English in India can thus be hardly overemphasized.

### **Developments in Matrimonial Columns**

In the 1930s and 1940s, a typical matrimonial ad consisted of a desire to find a "**slim and extremely fair girl**". For example:

**Wanted a very beautiful, gori..... girl (HINDUSTAN TIMES)**

**Seeking alliance for a factory owner, looking for a slim and fair girl from a cultured family. (THE TIMES OF INDIA)**

In the 1960s a "**family with connections**" was a popular request, along with "**grooms in government service**".(flickr) For example:

**Wanted groom for a slim and homely girl from a reputed family, looking for a boy from a High Status family with political connections. (R.S., *South Asian Language Review*, vol. XV. No. 2, June 2005)**

"The 1970s and 1980s saw many ads for "**fair, tall, homely, and convent educated**" girls (ie. **ones who could speak English**)". (flickr)

For example:

**Seeking alliance for a very handsome engineer boy looking for a convent educated, smart, tall & slim girl. (THE TIMES OF INDIA)**

Many females started becoming well educated, and these girls were in high demand from educated men, such as engineers and doctors.

By 1990, social status became determined not by caste but by education, and whether the family owned a house. Well-to-do families started becoming very fussy about prospective grooms, and started making demands of their own! Non Resident Indian grooms were highly sought after. Ads such as the following were very common. For example:

*“Delhi based reputed Gupta Medico family seeks alliance for their beautiful, fair, smart, slim daughter 23/5’5 MBA (U.S.), pursuing CPA from US, and working in respected bank in US. Looking for tall, handsome, below 28, well placed professional. Preferably qualified Medico. Match from Status family only”.* (HINDUSTAN TIMES)

### **Type of Language used in Matrimonial Columns**

Language of matrimonial ads should be very catchy to attract the reader’s attention, but at the same time it should be to the point. The language of matrimonial ads, like that of other advertisements, aims at precise, clear, glamorous and catchy communication. Matrimonial ads bank heavily on synonyms or polysemous expressions which express a range of meanings, often suggesting what is left unsaid or partially said. These meanings are expressed not only by the lexical items but also by the ways in which sentences are made to present the message. In matrimonial advertising, getting the message across is of prime importance, and the advertiser cannot afford to be lax or uncritical. As Walter Weir (1960:26) says, “The heart and soul of advertising are, and, in my opinion, will remain the creation of effective communication between producer and customer”. Further, there is a close link between the use of language and the economic aspect. Since the ads are paid in terms of cost per word, large sentences and full word are avoided. Therefore it is better to adopt abbreviations (short forms) to highlight the important aspects in the ads. Attractive words should be used, which communicate superbly.

### **Presuppositions and Short Forms**

The messages should be very brief. Concept of brevity goes with “PRESUPPOSITION” which is to say, so many things are assumed that the reader already knows about all those things in the advertisement.

For example: **short forms for handsome**. We have (*H'some*), *very beautiful (vb'ful)*, *working(wkng)* *educated (edu)* and so on. Some short forms which we generally find in matrimonial ads are as follows:

- **M4:** match for
- **PQM:** perfect qualified match
- **RJPT:** rajput
- **PQ:** perfectly qualified
- **MGLK:** manglik
- **SM4:** seeking match for
- **S'BLE:** suitable etc.
- **DIV:** divorcee

It is assumed that the readers already have some exposure to these short forms. But however, sometimes a person can face difficulties in the interpretation of these short forms.

Matrimonial advertisement is one type of communication. It is just a proposal for marriage which may be accepted or rejected, so it comes under the category of NON-PERSUASIVE advertisement. If we want to make it persuasive then we have to add some adjectives to attract the people towards the advertisement. Probably the most remarkable aspect of language of matrimonial advertising is its use of high-power adjectives, which are in fact most effective tools in all kinds of advertising. A fair dose of adjectives make an advertisement more attractive and appealing. The superlative description of bride/groom would not be possible without them: e.g., [Wanted] extremely beautiful, tall, slim, fair, traditional, good natured, educated, attractive, sincere, charming .... girl (HINDUSTAN TIMES).

### **Adjectives Used**

All the adjectives used in matrimonial ads are positive adjectives. Hence the language of matrimonial advertisements is full of creativity, new and catchy words being used to attract the

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attention of readers. More adjectives are used as compared to noun and verbs. The use of verbs in these advertisements is relatively few in number. Some popular adjectives are as follows:

*Handsome, good looking, tall, fair, beautiful, charming, cultured, social, religious, slim*, etc.

Whenever a string of adjectives seems to be less effective, intensifiers such as *really, actually, very, exceptionally*, and so on are used. Sometimes highly expressive adjectives are coined: *convented, ex-convented, wheatish, modernite, greencarder* and so on. If the term “*fair*” fails to convey what the advertiser wishes to convey “*gori*” (*meaning ‘of fair complexion’*), with all its associations in the Indian context, is added to the list of the attributes of the bride.

These adjectives can be broadly classified into two categories:

- (a) Adjectives for girls
- (b) Adjectives for boys

**Adjectives for Girls:** beautiful, fair, adjustable nature, home loving, working woman, convent educated, gentle and submissive, religious and so on.

**Adjectives for Boys:** Handsome, well settled, qualified, non smoker, well established, earning six digits salary, financially sound, honest, N.R.I and so on.

Apart from this, adjectives can be divided on the basis of:

- **Religion**

For non-Muslims: manglik, non-manglik (It’s a feature of horoscope. According to Hindu mythology, a person with *mangal dosh* (fault) is considered as unlucky for marriage and faces many difficulties in getting good match from a non-manglik or a person without magal or manglik fault in his or her horoscope.)

For Muslims: pardah (one who wears gown or wears scarf on head), non-pardah and strictly Islamic family, etc.

- **Region**

Himachali girl, Gujarati boy and so on.

- **Caste/Sect**

For non-Muslims: Rajput boy, Vaishya family, Punjabi boy, Brahmin girl.

For Muslims: Sunni girl, Shia boy, sayed family, and so on.

Thus we can clearly see that the use of adjectives play a significant role in the language of matrimonial ads. They are exclusively used to bring about creativity in these ads. Some examples of matrimonial ads are cited below to mark the above mentioned features in the matrimonial ads.

### **For Hindu Groom**

(Jaisawal) Hindu “suitable match for 30yrs /5’2” MBA fair & b’ful convent edu girl wkng in MNC bank. (21dec. 2014, The Times of India)

Similarly:

**PQM4** fair B’ful slim 31/5’6’ Msc wkng as Asst. Manager in well-known MNC, caste no bar. (21dec. 2014, The Times of India)

### **For Hindu Bride**

Seek Agrawal / Gupta girl pref. work for S/W Engg. Boy 27/ 5’8 B.Tech MBA. (21dec. 2014, The Times of India)

Similarly,

V’B’Ful PQM4 Gaur Br feb 84/174cm Madhya nandi, B.Tech, P.O in SBI father ex AGM in bank. (21dec. 2014, The Times of India)

### **For Muslim Groom**

Alliance for SM, sheikh 25/ 5’3 career oriented homely b’ful girl wkng in rptd financial co. in Chennai for only career oriented boy of high status family, father rtd class 1 officer, Bihar. (21dec. 2014, The Times of India)

Similarly,

Shia Sayed 26/5’4’ B.Sc. M.C.A fair religious working girl. Seeks qulfd. & settld. Boy. (21dec. 2014, The Times of India)

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### **For Muslim Bride**

SM for 31/ 5'4" Ansari boy MBA Delhi based own business in UAE. (21dec2014, The Times of India)

Similarly,

Muslim sunni fair h'some boy own factory, Lucknow based family seeks B'ful, edu. Girl. (21dec. 2014, The Times of India).

From the above examples it can be discerned that the language of matrimonial columns is very different and creative. Abbreviated forms are used aplenty, usually verb phrases are avoided. We focus on the point of economy because payments for these ads are made in terms of cost per words.

### **Innovations in the Language of Matrimonial Columns**

In historical times women were not allowed to live after the death of their husbands. That trend of burning wife with husband's dead body was known as "SATI *PRATHA*" or "*SATI PRACTICE*".

'*Sati pratha or practice*' was a social funeral practice among some Indian communities in which a recently widowed woman would immolate herself on her husband's funeral pyre. But with the passage of time this *pratha* or practice was abolished from our society. In modern era things are developing and people's thoughts are also taking shape; primitive customs have faded and women are more independent and progressive and empowered than before. Nowadays the trend of second marriage is growing increasingly in our society. Hence matrimonial ads appear under the separate heading which deals with ads for divorcees, widows and widowers. Examples for such ads are presented below:

### **Advertisement for Divorcee**

SM4 fair b'ful Bengoli girl born 71/5'2' MA' B.ED wkng EB kayastha issueless DIV. caste no bar. (21dec. 2014, The Times of India).

### Advertisement for Widower

Well settled turbaned Sikh businessman in USA 59yrs age widower seeking suitable match for himself lady should be around 40yrs of age (divorcee not allowed).  
(21dec2014, The Times Of India).

### Advertisements from Different Regions

These days some separate headings are also published for different regions. For example: Himachali boy, Kumauni girl, Gujrati boy, etc.

For example:

#### HIMACHALI BOY

1981 born Himachali Bahti Choudhary girl, fair, slim, beautiful 5'3' M.ED MBA HR manager. Caste no bar. (21dec2014, The Times Of India)

#### KUMAUNI GIRL

Well settled. Kum Brahmin girl 32/5 M. Phil caste no bar. (21dec2014, The Times Of India)

### Conclusion

The fashion of writing matrimonial ads is developing day by day because it has proved very helpful in finding perfect and suitable match easily. Many people get a match of their choice through these matrimonial columns. Matrimonial columns are drafted to fulfill the need of suitable matches, provide various options to select a life partner by choice. A successful matrimonial column achieves its target at the destination of "marriage". It is a union of two surnames, two different cultures and families.

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