Arranged marriage exists in all parts of the world.  The degree to which the marriage is arranged varies. In the West for many centuries the marriages involving royalty were for the most part arranged.  Only people belonging to lower income groups were allowed to choose their own spouses.  In many countries parents or close relatives still introduce their children to potential mates.  Then it is up to the couple to decide whether to marry or not.  At the other extreme there are still marriages conducted in India where the bride and the groom only meet on the day of their wedding. It is rare but it still happens.

Arranged marriage is about families coming together and making sure that their interests and the interest of the individuals getting married are protected.  The question of whether the individuals are compatible emotionally, sexually or in other ways is less important.  On the other hand love marriage is about freedom, independence and personal choice.

The reality is that most marriages in the world are a combination of arranged and love marriages.  In the West people fall in love and over a period of time often make serious compromises in their careers, where they live and so on before they marry or after their marriage.  In India these compromises are made as part of the marriage “negotiations”.

Manisha Koirala’s statements regarding her marriage highlight the hybrid aspect of most marriages.  She said “Yes, our families know one another for some years now. So there was a comfort level between me and Samrat for a very long time. Gradually the bonding grew from friendship to love. And when Samrat asked me to marry him, I agreed”.  Some Westerners would not consider this as love marriage because for them marriage involves long periods of dating and living together and not just knowing each other.

She then talked about her move from Mumbai to Kathmandu (Nepal) after her marriage “That’s where Samrat is based. He is into many kinds of business ventures including a project in alternate energy. So yes, one thing will change. Mumbai used to be my first home. Now Kathmandu will be my first home. But I’ll continue to be a Mumbai girl at heart and will have a home here”.  Is this love marriage or is this arranged marriage?

But the debate between arranged and love marriage is increasingly not relevant because the trend is clearly towards not getting married at all.  In 2006 for the first time in American history the Census Bureau reported that only 49.7% of the nation’s households were made up of married couples.  This means that the majority of Americans are living in households where the couples are not married!!

Marriage rates in European nations are even worse and have fallen to the lowest rates in countries like England and Wales since the 18th century when they first started recording this data.  The writing on the wall for both arranged marriages and love marriages is loud and clear.  So if you think that you are hip and want to marry a person you love then think again.  There is nothing wrong with marrying a person you love but remember marriage itself is not fashionable anymore!

**Reading Comprehension** (30 marks) *Please answer the following questions. Questions 3, 4 and 5 are to be answered in your own words as far as possible*. 45 mins

1. ‘highlight’ means a) emphasize b) cancel c) upward d) lower
2. ‘hip’ means a) joined b) happiness c) fashionable d) unlucky
3. ‘the writing on the wall’ means………………….
4. To what extent does arranged marriage also exist in the West?
5. Why is the debate between arranged and love marriage becoming less relevant?