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A Matter of Degree: Wedding Website for IIT and IIM Graduates

By Mary Ercilia Gayen



An Indian couple performed a Hindu ritual at a wedding in New Delhi on June 15.

Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

Helping people find the right bride or groom is big business in India where most marriages are arranged.

Parents and relatives weigh a list of criteria from religion and caste to skin tone and height in looking for an acceptable spouse for Indians reaching marriage age. And that has spawned a horde of online matchmaking businesses that promise to make the search easier.

Now a new website, iitimshaadi.com, says it can help people seeking partners with a degree from an appropriate alma mater.

The site takes its name from two of the country's biggest brand names in higher education, the Indian Institute of Technology and the Indian Institute of Management. Shaadi means marriage in Hindi.

Membership isn't limited to graduates of those two institutions, and the site sets a higher bar for educational attainment by men than women.

The site restricts male membership to “alumni of Indian and international premier institutions” in fields like engineering, medicine and law. Women are required to have a degree from school with a “country-wide” reputation.

The site has lower entry requirements for women to give “a larger pool of choice to the men,” said the site’s founder Ajay Gupta. “It is not a chauvinistic discrimination, but some highly-educated men, in terms of practicality, like women who also consider taking care of the home a task as good as a job.”

Mr. Gupta says he came up with the idea for the site after struggling to find brides for his nephews, who are business-school graduates. His search on matrimonial websites kept turning up profiles that fell short of the family’s expectations.

“They were looking for intellectual compatibility, but at the same time wanted women who would understand their hectic lives and dedicate more time to the house—while doing some part-time work,” Mr. Gupta said. “Someone with a half-day job would have also worked.”

That combination can be hard to find in modern India, Mr. Gupta said. “One of the nephews has settled with someone with a similar intellectual wave length and an equally demanding job,” Mr. Gupta said.

Priya Florence Shah, who runs an online magazine called Naaree.com that offers business and career advice to women, says men shouldn’t be dismissive of ambitious professional women. “Career-oriented wives are more understanding of their husband’s work issues,” she said.

In an ideal world, Ms. Florence Shah said, men should share the load of staying home, taking care of kids or working part-time instead of the onus falling only on women. “If someone wants to choose a woman who is going to take care of the kids, it’s their personal choice. But for me, women like me, we are hoping for a more equal world.”

Since the launch of iitimshaadi.com in April, more than 500 people have applied for listing, but only 70 have been accepted. The others were rejected since the site only lists profiles for people who provide proof of education.

That pales in comparison to mega marriage websites like shaadi.com, which has over 20 million members.

But smaller might be better for Indians in the market for a spouse with a particular academic background. The narrower focus on education is better, “unlike the general focus on castes and religion on the other matrimonial websites like shaadi.com,” said Prachi Tiwary, a graduate of the Institute of Management Technology in Nagpur.

India’s top business schools are big marriage markets, where men and women often shop for future spouses, said Ms. Tiwary, who married one of her classmates. But men can have a hard time finding

spouses on IIT and IIM campuses, where men outnumber women, she said. They might be earning a degree that has employers chomping at the bit to nab them, but they “have to look harder for girls,” Ms. Tiwary said.

Mr. Gupta is not the only person trying to connect people who want well-educated spouses. Another site, premiummatrimony.in, was set up in January by three IIM Bangalore graduates. The website says they were inspired by “the fact that many of our friends from IITs and IIMs face the difficulty of finding the right partner.”

While enrolment at iitimshaadi remains small, Mr. Gupta is already beginning to see returns. He said his family has found a potential match for one of his nephews.

—Suryatapa Bhattacharya contributed to this post.

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