

# SOME KIND of Arrangement

A National Film Board of Canada Release



Preety is the quintessential woman of the '90s: confident, independent and career-driven. But she's about to do something most of her contemporaries would never consider: the 20-something accountant is preparing to enter into an arranged marriage.

Focusing on three second-generation South Asians – Preety, Hanif and Rajni – **Some Kind of Arrangement** is a smart, stylish and thoughtful examination of an age-old tradition being adapted and transformed in North America.

Engaging and refreshingly candid in their opinions, the three young people make it clear that arranged marriages aren't what they used to be. Nowadays, they involve negotiation, beginning with introductory phone calls and matrimonial classifieds in Indian community newspapers, and continuing with long-distance trips, lengthy get-to-know-each-other sessions and the option of saying "no."

For those who eventually say "yes" to an arranged marriage, the tradition represents a celebration of, and commitment to, their Indian heritage. After her wedding, Preety is embarking on a new stage of life. As she says, it is a time for "getting to know the other person, and accepting whatever comes our way."


Director: Ali Kazimi

Producer: Geeta Sondhi

Producers for the NFB: Karen King, Claire Prieto and Gerry Flahive

43 minutes, 45 seconds

Order number: C9197 140

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P.O. Box 6100, Station Centre-Ville  
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3H5

Printed in Canada



VHS

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"A delightful documentary...has wry humour and warmth"

Starweek Magazine



## Introduction

Most marriages are the result of some kind of arrangement, although we may not readily recognize the form the arrangement takes.

In most traditional, formal arrangements, parents or a recognized matchmaker from the community choose the partners, basing their judgement on knowledge of the two people, their families, and so on. After marriage, the couple usually lives within the community and so can be steered through any problems that might arise.

As communities have moved and/or become redefined along geographical or urban lines, so the forms of arrangements have evolved to take account of a changing environment, changing networks and exposure to other cultures. The very act of immigration intensifies the need to create networks or activities that allow young people of the same community to meet and get to know each other. Arranged marriages now depend on arranged meetings more than anything else.

### Themes Central to the Video

- a sense of belonging, and what constitutes belonging
- cultural practices, and how they evolve over time and in different cultural milieus
- living in two worlds, and how people mediate or blend the two world views they inherit
- families (creating them, drawing from them)
- relationships and what defines them
- male and female roles
- acceptance and protest
- connections through and between people
- feminism and how it is defined outside Western parameters

### Who Can Use the Video

This video offers a rich scope for discussion, whether you are a teacher (using it for Family Studies, Media Studies, Language Arts or Society, Challenge and Change), or a community worker, youth worker or social worker and using the film for professional development or community education.

### Before Screening

Write down your definitions of the following:

- an arranged marriage
- identity
- family

### While watching the Film

Take note of the following:

- the interaction of parents with their children
- interactions between and across generations
- the different forms of arrangements
- the degree of choice exercised by the young people
- how the young people define themselves

### After Viewing the Film

Review your definition of an arranged marriage. Would you change it in any way? Why or why not?

Think about the following:

- who does the arranging?
- what role do the young people play in the arrangement?
- what element of choice do the young people exercise?

Look at the title of the film again. Could it accurately describe the way people meet through church youth groups, university clubs, sororities, fraternities, or even friends' parties? If so, what does that tell you about communities making arrangements to ensure that young people meet suitable partners?

### Common Experiences

Are there experiences in your families, communities or in society as a whole that parallel some of those shown in the film?

### Personal Responses

Choose one of the characters and write a diary entry or a poem or journalistic account of the significant events he or she experiences in the film.

Focus on one feeling or one character and explore your response to them in writing

or through artwork.

### Varying Perspectives

Choose one of the documentary's main participants (Preety, Rajni, or Hanif). Analyze how they view (and how they are viewed by) other characters in the film.

Write diary entries for the people who met Rajni and Hanif. How do you think their accounts of the meetings would read?

### Creative Thinking

Stop the video at specific places and try to predict what might happen next.

Explore alternative courses of action and endings. What could have caused events to turn out differently for the documentary's participants?

Write a diary entry for one of the characters dated a month or a year after the time of the film.

Write a letter from the characters to their children about their experience of finding a partner.

If you could talk to the young people featured in this film, what would you say to each one about the quest for a marriage partner?

Write a sequel to this film in groups and justify your continuation of the scenarios.

### Questions on Identity

- How do the young people in the film define their identity and their sense of belonging?
- Who defines our identity?
- What constitutes our sense of identity?
- How are self-esteem and identity linked?
- Is identity a purely personal concept or is it a social construct?

### Research

Find out which other communities have or have had a tradition of formal arranged marriages.

What safeguards are removed in the modern form of arranged marriage as Rajni is pursuing it? Do research to determine what safeguards operated in the past. Is the loss of safeguards compensated for by the increase in choice?

Interview a range of couples from diverse backgrounds and communities, and of different ages; find out how they met their life partners.

Using a questionnaire, discover the role of families in the search for a marriage partner. Do aunts, uncles and cousins play a part? What effect does distance from family have? Explore the role that immediate family and extended family play in influencing a young person's choice of a mate.

### Examining Gender Roles

Do you see Preety and Rajni as feminists? In pursuing an arranged marriage, are they being passive and relinquishing some of their power? Or are they taking control of their search for a marriage partner in a unique way?

Is there a difference, based on your viewing of the film, in the way men and women pursue arranged marriages? Are their goals the same?

### Questions on Stereotypes

A stereotype reduces people's real complexity and depth to a simple formula. How does this film restore complexity to the idea of an arranged marriage? What stereotypes do the characters in the film need to overcome?

Stereotypes are created as much by what they leave out as by what they distort. Do you agree? Does this film serve to educate you? How?

### Further Questions

If identity is socially constructed, then how relevant is it to try to resolve conflict, or initiate negotiations, between young people and their families using the institutions and resources established in the Western context of urban communities and nuclear families?

What steps can professional social workers, community workers and other caring professionals take to ensure that they are aware of the diversity of cultural approaches to conflict resolution, negotiation and community care, and social sanctions in diverse communities?

What are the risks inherent in ignoring this diversity and using only established Western avenues?

**Director**  
**Ali Kazimi**

**Producer**  
**Geeta Sondhi**

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**Karen King**  
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**Gerry Flahive**

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**Original Music**  
**Wende Bartley**

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**Performed by**  
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**Ravi Naimpally**  
**Raya Bidaye**  
**Ernie Toller**

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