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ARRANGED MARRIAGES, REARRANGED.

They are young, modern South Asians in their 20s who glide without any problems between two cultures. They eat halal meat but wear jeans and T-shirts to cafés.

These young people are pushing the cultural boundaries created by their parents and grandparents one step further. They are reshaping the tradition of arranged marriages in Britain.

While couples were once introduced exclusively by relatives and friends, matchmakers are being slowly replaced by a boom in marriage Web sites, chat rooms and personal advertisements.

Arranged marriages are still the norm within these communities in Britain, but with the urging of 2nd and 3rd generation children, the nature of the arrangement has evolved mostly by necessity.

What the young Indians and Pakistanis of Britain have done is to modernize practices, allowing the prospective bride and groom a little more than one meeting to make up their minds. After an initial meeting before their extended families, they can meet alone several times. Now the meetings take place in public places.

Nevertheless, the young people recognize that arranged marriages is an important way to preserve religion and identity which can outweigh the importance of physical attraction.

Young generations are often torn between the desire to maintain their parents' traditions and the wish for a British lifestyle.

"It's nice to know your parents have done the work for you. You feel more secure," says Vani Gupta,30.

The New York Times, November 19, 2003.