Golden Talk Series

Traditional Marriage

Iran-Australia

Part 1: Traditional vs. modern marriage

Traditional and modern marriages often differ in several key aspects, influenced by cultural, societal, and personal values. Here are some elements that typically distinguish traditional marriages from modern ones:

1. **Arrangement vs. choice**: You might have heard the term **arranged marriage**. Arranged marriages are the kind of marriage where families or **matchmakers** make decisions regarding the right partner and bring a couple together by considering factors like cultural background, **economic status**, and social compatibility. They often prioritize factors like family compatibility, social status, and economic considerations. Modern marriages are usually based on individual choice and romantic love.

2. **Role of family and community**: In traditional marriages, the family and community play a significant role in the marriage process, from selecting a partner to organizing the wedding. These marriages **are often viewed as** a **union** between two families. In contrast, modern marriages focus more on the individual couple, with less direct involvement from family and community.

3. **Gender roles**: Traditional marriages **are** often **characterized by well-defined gender roles**, with specific expectations for the roles of husbands and wives. Modern marriages tend to promote equal and flexible roles, with partners sharing responsibilities like household management, raising children, and financial support.

4. **Ceremonial practices**: While traditional weddings typically involve a range of customs and ceremonies deeply rooted in cultural or religious heritage,

modern weddings may **simplify** these traditions, adapt them, or create new ones to suit the couple's preferences.

5. **Perception of divorce**: Divorce is often less accepted –even **stigmatized**– in traditional contexts. Many couples may face pressure to stay together despite personal issues. Modern marriages, however, generally accept divorce as a **feasible** option when a relationship is **unfulfilling** or problematic.

6. **Economic and social considerations**: Traditional marriages might place more emphasis on economic stability and **social standing** in choosing a spouse. In contrast, modern marriages prioritize personal **compatibility** and emotional connection.

7. **Living arrangements**: Traditional marriages might involve living with extended family members. Modern marriages often prefer **a nuclear family setup** or even **cohabitation** without marriage.

8. **Decision-making**: In many traditional marriages, one partner (often the male) may have greater decision-making power. Modern marriages strive for equality in decision-making, emphasizing mutual respect and partnership.

Part 2: Beyond longevity

The commonly heard statement, "Our grandparents had better marriages than us," has been echoed through generations. But how much truth does it hold?

There is a **commonly held belief** that traditional marriages are inherently more successful, **long-lasting**, or **enduring** compared to modern marriages. But in fact, this is more of a myth than reality. This notion tends to **oversimplify** complex **relationship dynamics** and **ignores the evolving nature** of a successful marriage.

Traditional marriages may appear more enduring due to cultural and societal factors, such as the stigma against divorce and the emphasis on family and community involvement. However, **longevity doesn't necessarily equate to happiness or fulfillment**.

Modern marriages, on the other hand, often prioritize personal choice, mutual emotional support, and shared responsibilities. While they might have higher divorce rates, this could indicate a willingness to leave unsatisfactory relationships and a focus on **individual well-being**.

In other words, while traditional marriages may exhibit a higher rate of longevity, this is often influenced by **cultural pressures**, **societal norms**, and a historical **stigma against** divorce rather than **a true reflection of** marital satisfaction or health.

It's crucial to recognize that the success of a marriage should not be solely measured by its duration but by the quality of the relationship, mutual respect, and fulfillment of the partners involved. Therefore, the assumption that traditional marriages are more successful than modern ones is a reductionist view that **fails to capture** the **nuances** and individualities of marital relationships in different cultural and temporal contexts.

Part 3: What is there to be learned?

Modern couples can learn several valuable lessons from traditional marriages, which can **enrich** and **strengthen** their relationships:

1. **The importance of commitment**: In traditional marriages, there's a big focus on staying committed, **no matter what comes your way**. This is

something modern couples could really **take to heart**. They can learn how to **navigate challenges together** through **tough times**, living out their promise of 'for better or for worse' in their relationship.

2. **Long-term perspective**: Traditional marriages often see marriage as a lifelong journey, teaching us to think long-term. This approach can help modern couples to **see past immediate problems** and concentrate on what keeps their relationship strong over time.

3. **Sacrifice and compromise**: The concept of sacrifice and compromise is often **ingrained** in traditional marriages. Modern couples can learn the importance of sometimes **putting** their partner's needs **above their own**.

4. **Communication styles**: In many traditional marriages, communicating with respect, especially during disagreements, is vital. Modern couples can learn from this, making sure to **keep their cool** and speak kindly, even **in the heat of an argument**.

5. **Patience**: In traditional marriages, people often have patience in resolving issues. Modern couples can **take a leaf out of this book** and learn to avoid **rushing conversations, jumping to conclusions**, looking **for immediate results**, and instead, try giving each other **time to process** and respond.

Part 4: Wedding rituals in a traditional marriage

Wedding rituals are a big part of the journey for couples getting ready to **tie the knot**. These traditions can be a source of happiness, help celebrate where we come from, and bring people together. However, they can also be a source of pressure, causing stress and worry for the couple. Balancing the joy of getting married with the expectations of culture can really affect those about to get married. From the happiness of following **age-old customs** to the stress of trying to **live up to** what society expects, the **wedding season** stress is a challenging marathon many can't endure! Let's take a look at how these customs can both help and put pressure on couples as they get ready to start their life together.

- **Positive effects:**

1. **Cultural identity and pride**: Wedding rituals often reflect a culture's heritage, fostering a sense of identity and pride among participants. They can

be a powerful way of keeping traditions alive, especially in multicultural societies.

2. **Community bonding**: Many wedding rituals involve the participation of extended family and the community, strengthening social bonds and a sense of belonging.

3. **Transmission of Values**: Weddings are often a platform for passing down cultural values and norms to younger generations, helping in the preservation of cultural practices and beliefs.

- **Negative Effects:**

1. **Psychological pressure**: The **emphasis on perfection** in wedding rituals can lead to psychological pressure on the couple, potentially **overshadowing** the joy of the occasion.

2. **Financial stress**: In many cultures, elaborate and costly wedding customs and rituals can lead to significant financial stress for the couple or their families.

3. **Social pressure**: The need to conform to cultural expectations in wedding rituals can create social pressure, leading to stress and anxiety. Non-conforming couples might face criticism.

4. **Gender inequality**: Some traditional wedding rituals may **perpetuate** gender stereotypes and inequalities, reinforcing outdated notions about the roles of men and women in society.

5. **Exclusion**: Certain rituals may **inadvertently** exclude or **marginalize** members of the community who do not **fit the traditional mold** (e.g., LGBTQ+ individuals, interracial couples).

- **Traditional wedding rituals in the US**

In the United States, the specifics of pre-wedding, wedding, and post-wedding rituals can vary widely depending on cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, and personal preferences. However, here are some common practices that are often observed in traditional American weddings:

Pre-wedding rituals

1. **Engagement party**: A celebration to announce the couple's engagement to friends and family.

2. **Bridal shower**: A gathering for the bride, hosted by friends or family, where she receives gifts for the home.

3. **Bachelor/Bachelorette parties**: Celebrations for the bride and groom with their close friends, **marking the end of** their single lives.

4. **Rehearsal dinner**: Held the night before the wedding, this dinner includes the wedding party and **immediate family**, serving as a final **run-through** of the wedding ceremony.

- **Wedding rituals**

1. **Processional**: The formal entry of the bridal party and family members **down the aisle**

2. **Exchange of vows**: The couple **recites** their commitment to each other; these can be traditional or personalized.
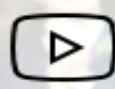
3. **Exchange of rings**: The couple places wedding bands on each other's fingers.

4. **Unity ceremony**: This can vary from lighting a unity candle to blending sands, symbolizing the coming together of two lives.

5. **Pronouncement of marriage**: The **officiant** declares the couple officially married.

6. **Recessional**: The newly married couple and the wedding party exit the ceremony space.

- **Post-wedding rituals**

1. **Reception**: A celebration with guests that includes dining, dancing, and wedding toasts.

2. **Cutting of the wedding cake**: The couple cuts the cake together, often feeding a piece to each other.

3. **First dance**: The **newlyweds** share a first dance, often followed by dances with their parents.

4. **Bouquet and garter toss**: The bride throws her bouquet to unmarried female guests, and the groom tosses the bride's garter to unmarried male guests.

5. **Send-off**: Guests form a line or gather to send off the newlyweds, often with a special exit like a shower of rice, petals, or sparklers.

6. **Post-wedding brunch**: Sometimes hosted the following day for guests, particularly those from out of town.

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gender roles: expectations and norms in society that decide what behaviors and roles are suitable for people, based on their gender **Example:** *In many societies, traditional gender roles dictate that men should be the breadwinners, while women are expected to handle domestic responsibilities.*
Collocations: challenge gender roles, traditional gender roles, gender role expectations, shift in gender roles, social gender roles

stigmatize: labeling someone or something as shameful or bad, often as a result of a negative stereotype
Example: *Mental health issues are often unfairly stigmatized, leading to people feeling ashamed to seek help.*
Word family: stigma, stigmatization, stigmatizing, stigmatized
Collocations: socially stigmatized, heavily stigmatized topic

longevity /lɑːnˈdʒev.ə.t□i/ (noun): the quality of having a long duration of existence; often used in reference to life spans, careers, institutions, or relationships
Example: *The longevity of their marriage was admired by everyone in their community.*
Collocations: promote longevity, increase longevity, factors affecting longevity, longevity in relationships,

nuance (noun): a subtle or slight variation in meaning, expression, tone, feeling, or color; often important in detailed or precise understanding.
Example: *Understanding the cultural nuances is essential for effective communication in a diverse workplace.*
Word Family: nuanced (adjective)
Collocations: subtle nuance, nuance of meaning, appreciate the nuances, cultural nuances, nuance in language

Questions to think about

1. Do you believe that traditional marriages are generally more enduring, hence more successful, than modern marriages?

2. What is there for you to learn from a traditional style of marriage?

3. How do traditional and modern marriages differ in terms of partner selection? What would be some of the negative outcomes of each style?

4. How do modern marriages approach gender roles and responsibilities differently? What is wrong with the traditional gender roles?

5. In what ways do ceremonial practices differ between traditional and modern weddings? What are your personal preferences in this regard?

6. How is divorce perceived in traditional marriages compared to modern ones?

7. What are some myths about the longevity of traditional marriages compared to modern ones?

8. Are wedding rituals essential, in your opinion? How do you believe they contribute to the lives of a married couple?

9. **If you are or have been married before**: How ceremonial was your wedding? Did you follow all the traditional pre- wedding and post-wedding customs of your culture? Looking back, what effect do you think these choices about your wedding ceremony had on your marriage?

10. **If you aren't married**: Have you thought about what your wedding ceremony might look like? Are you considering a traditional wedding style? Why/why not?