

Are Doctors Marrying Doctors? Occupational Endogamy in Urban Indian Matrimonial Advertisements

Jiahang Liu

*School of Asian Studies, Beijing Foreign Studies University, Beijing, China
18438492330@163.com*

Abstract. Most research on the Indian marriage market focuses on caste, religion, family arrangements and educational matching, while there is insufficient discussion of how occupational identity enters mate-selection boundaries. This paper uses 120 urban matrimonial advertisements from the "Times Soulmate" section of The Times of India as its data, and employs content analysis and quantitative coding methods to examine occupational requirements and occupational endogamy. The results show that 26.7% of the advertisements specify spouse occupational requirements, and 14.2% show a tendency towards occupational endogamy; among the advertisements with occupational requirements, this proportion reaches 53.1%. Medical/Health occupations and female advertisements show a more prominent tendency towards occupational endogamy. In contrast, city differences and the relationship between occupational requirements and caste requirements do not reach statistical significance. This paper argues that the current evidence does not support the claim that occupational identity has replaced traditional marital boundaries. Rather, occupation appears as an additional screening dimension that operates alongside caste, religion, family background and other existing identity boundaries in urban middle-class matrimonial advertisements.

Keywords: Indian marriage market, matrimonial advertisements, occupational endogamy, occupational identity, social closure

1. Introduction

Marriage is not only a union between individuals but also a connection between families, identities and social resources. In Indian society, marriage has long played the role of maintaining group boundaries and reproducing social order. Caste, religion, language, region and family background are not external conditions for marriage selection; instead, they constitute an important classification framework of the marriage market. Therefore, the Indian marriage market provides an important window for understanding social stratification, identity boundaries and group reproduction [1-3].

With urbanization, the expansion of education and the rise of the professional middle class, occupational identities have increasingly become a frequent element in the expression of marriage preferences. In urban English matrimonial advertisements, occupational labels such as "doctor", "engineer", "IT professional", "civil servant" and "businessman" frequently appear. These terms not only describe the content of work but also convey multiple pieces of information such as educational

capital, income level, career stability, social prestige and lifestyle. In other words, in the urban English matrimonial advertisements examined in this paper, occupational identity appears as a noteworthy social classification marker.

It is worth noting that the occupational requirements in matrimonial advertisements do not always remain at broad expressions such as "well settled", "working", or "professional". In some advertisements, the occupational requirements are further specified as preferences for specific occupational backgrounds, such as "doctor match", "doctor/engineer", or "PG in medical". This phenomenon raises an interesting question to be analyzed: Are occupations transforming from general economic and identity information into a more explicit boundary for marriage? Especially when doctors, dentists, and other medical-related professionals tend to seek spouses with the same or similar occupational backgrounds, is occupational endogamy becoming an observable phenomenon in urban Indian matrimonial advertisements?

Based on this, this paper takes 120 urban matrimonial advertisements from the "Times Soulmate" section of The Times of India as the research material, and uses the methods of content analysis and quantitative coding to investigate occupational requirements and the tendency towards occupational endogamy in urban Indian matrimonial advertisements. This paper mainly answers three questions: First, to what extent do occupational requirements and occupational endogamy exist in urban Indian matrimonial advertisements, and which occupational categories are more likely to exhibit occupational endogamy? Second, do occupational requirements and occupational endogamy differ by gender and city edition? Third, do occupational requirements and occupational endogamy overlap with spouse caste requirements, or do they present a relatively independent screening logic?

This paper does not seek to prove that occupational identity has replaced traditional marriage boundaries such as caste, religion or region. Rather, it focuses on how occupation appears as an additional screening dimension in matrimonial advertisements. Its contribution lies in using occupational endogamy as an entry point to examine how occupational identity participates in the textual expression of mate selection, class matching and social boundary-making in urban Indian matrimonial advertisements.

2. Literature review

2.1. Traditional boundaries in the Indian marriage market

Previous studies have shown that traditional identity boundaries in the Indian marriage market still maintain strong continuity. Allendorf and Pandian point out that modernization has not eliminated the influence of family arrangements, group boundaries, and traditional marriage norms [1]. Banerjee et al. find that even in the context of educational expansion and the rise of the urban middle class, caste still profoundly affects mate preferences and marriage outcomes [2]. Fuller and Narasimhan also note that urban middle-class marriage is not a simple dichotomy between tradition and modernity, but rather a combination of multiple criteria such as family arrangements, caste boundaries, educational background, occupational conditions and emotional compatibility [3].

Therefore, the Indian marriage market is not a linear process from tradition to modernity; instead, it is a domain where traditional identity boundaries and modern classification standards coexist. Modern education, urban life and personal choice have changed the way marriage preferences are expressed, but caste, religion, language, region and family background may still influence mate selection in explicit or implicit ways.

2.2. Assortative mating, occupation and social closure

Apart from caste, religion and family background, educational and occupational matching is also an important topic in modern marriage market research. Assortative mating theory suggests that marriage choices do not occur randomly but are influenced by educational level, economic resources, cultural taste, lifestyle and social interaction circles. Kalmijn points out that educational and occupational backgrounds not only affect an individual's visibility in the marriage market but also influence their expectations for an ideal spouse. Occupation itself also carries symbolic meanings such as income, prestige, cultural resources and lifestyle [4, 5].

Smits, from the perspective of social closure, points out that internal marriage within high educational capital groups may become an important mechanism for maintaining group boundaries and reproducing social status [6]. Therefore, occupational endogamy can be understood as a manifestation of occupational assortative mating and social closure in the modern marriage market. For this paper, these studies provide a theoretical basis for understanding why occupation may operate not only as a labor-market label, but also as a sign of educational capital, class position and social identity in matrimonial advertisements.

2.3. Matrimonial advertisements and expressed mate preferences

Matrimonial advertisements provide an important textual entry point for studying mate preferences. Unlike actual marriage outcomes, matrimonial advertisements present the ideal partner conditions that families and individuals actively and publicly express in the marriage market. Therefore, they can more directly reflect how caste, education, occupation, family background, gender roles and class expectations are written and combined [7].

Previous studies have used Indian matrimonial advertisements or marriage market data to analyze the role of caste, education and socioeconomic attributes in mate selection, and have shown that caste boundaries may still exert influence even on modern matchmaking platforms and in expressions such as "caste no bar" [2, 8, 9]. Other studies have also shown that matrimonial advertisements reproduce gender norms and social expectations in changing Indian contexts [10]. However, compared with caste, education and family background, the role of occupation as a mate-selection boundary has received insufficient discussion. Especially in urban English matrimonial advertisements in India, occupational labels such as "doctor", "engineer", "IT professional" and "civil servant" frequently appear. To what extent these occupational labels translate into occupational endogamy preferences, and how they are related to gender, city and caste requirements, still require further analysis.

3. Main body

3.1. Data, coding and methods

The data for this paper come from the "Times Soulmate" matrimonial advertisement section of The Times of India. Since this section usually appears on Sundays, this paper selected advertisements from three consecutive Sundays, April 5, April 12 and April 19, 2026, as the sample sources. To compare differences between city editions, this paper selected Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai, and randomly selected 10 advertisements from each city edition on each date. Thus, a total of 120 advertisements were obtained, with 30 advertisements from each city.

During the coding process, this paper treats each matrimonial advertisement as an independent analytical unit, extracting information about the advertiser and the requirements for the potential spouse. The advertiser information includes gender, city edition, education, occupation, income, religion, caste and community background; the spouse requirements include occupation, education, caste, regional mobility, appearance and marital status. The core variables of this study are occupational requirements and occupational endogamy. For occupational descriptions, this paper re-codes them into several occupational field categories based on dominant occupational cues, including IT/Software/Data, Medical/Health, Finance/Banking/Accounting, Corporate/MNC employees, Business/Entrepreneurs, Engineering/Architecture/Technology, Education, and Government/Public Sector/Defense. Only when specific occupations or occupational field requirements are presented is the advertisement coded as having a clear occupational requirement. If the advertiser's own occupational category is the same as or highly similar to the expected spouse's occupational category, it is coded as showing a tendency towards occupational endogamy.

In terms of the analytical method, this paper uses descriptive statistics to examine the overall distribution of occupational requirements and occupational endogamy, and compares their differences across occupational categories, gender, city edition and spouse caste requirements through cross-tabulation. For relationships between categorical variables, this paper uses the chi-square test to determine whether they are statistically significant, with $p < .05$ as the criterion for significance.

It should be noted that the sample size is 120 cases, and the number of advertisements showing occupational endogamy is relatively limited, so some categories contain only a small number of cases. Therefore, the chi-square test results are mainly used to identify preliminary associations between variables. The findings should be regarded as exploratory and should not be interpreted as strong causal relationships. Moreover, the sample comes only from three consecutive Sundays and four urban English editions, so it better reflects the matrimonial expressions of the urban middle class and English newspaper readers in India, but cannot represent the entire Indian marriage market.

3.2. Overall patterns of occupational requirements

In order to examine the overall distribution of occupational requirements in urban Indian matrimonial advertisements, this paper first conducts descriptive statistics on the 120 advertisements. The results show that 32 advertisements explicitly stated spouse occupational requirements, accounting for 26.7% of the total sample. Among these 32 advertisements, 17 showed a tendency towards occupational endogamy, accounting for 14.2% of the total sample and 53.1% of advertisements with occupational requirements. This indicates that occupational requirements are not a universal condition in urban Indian matrimonial advertisements, but when they appear, they often point to same-occupation or similar-occupation matching.

3.3. Occupational differences in occupational endogamy

In order to analyze whether occupational endogamy differs across occupational groups, this paper conducts cross-tabulation analysis based on the occupational categories of advertisers. The results show that the Medical/Health category has the most prominent pattern. In Medical/Health advertisements, the proportion explicitly stating spouse occupational requirements reaches 76.9%, much higher than 26.7% in the overall sample. In contrast, the proportions are 14.8% for IT/Software/Data, 14.3% for Finance/Banking/Accounting, and 15.4% for Business/Entrepreneurs.

The chi-square test shows a significant association between advertisers' occupational background and spouse occupational requirements, $\chi^2 = 23.464$, $df = 10$, $p = .009$.

Table 1. Occupational endogamy by occupational category

Occupational category	N	Endogamy frequency	Endogamy percentage
IT/Software/Data	27	3	11.1%
Medical/Health	13	10	76.9%
Finance/Banking/Accounting	7	1	14.3%
Corporate/MNC employees	22	2	9.1%
Business/Entrepreneurs	13	0	0.0%
Government/Civil service	4	1	25.0%

As shown in Table 1, occupational endogamy is most clearly concentrated in Medical/Health occupations. Among the 17 advertisements showing occupational endogamy, 10 belong to this category. This suggests that occupational endogamy is more likely to appear in highly specialized occupations, where educational requirements, professional qualifications and social prestige are more strongly linked to mate selection [6]. However, because some occupational categories contain only a small number of cases, this pattern should be interpreted as exploratory rather than as a strong causal relationship.

3.4. Gender differences in occupational requirements and occupational endogamy

This paper further compares male and female advertisements in terms of occupational requirements and occupational endogamy. The cross-tabulation results show that 41.7% of female advertisements explicitly state spouse occupational requirements, which is much higher than the 11.7% found in male advertisements. The chi-square test result is $\chi^2 = 13.807$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$, indicating a significant association between gender and whether occupational requirements are mentioned. In other words, occupation is more often treated as an important criterion for spouse selection in female advertisements.

A similar pattern can also be seen in occupational endogamy. The proportion of occupational endogamy is 25.0% in female advertisements, compared with only 3.3% in male advertisements. This difference suggests that occupational requirements in female advertisements are not limited to a general expectation that the spouse should have a stable job or career. Rather, they are more likely to point to the same, similar, or highly compatible occupational background.

Table 2. Gender differences in occupational requirements and occupational endogamy

Gender	Occupational requirements	Occupational endogamy
Female advertisements	41.7%	25.0%
Male advertisements	11.7%	3.3%

This gender difference indicates that occupational identity is not a completely neutral criterion for mate selection in urban Indian matrimonial advertisements; instead, it has distinct gender-specific connotations [10]. In matrimonial advertisements, male occupation may function not merely as a description of the job, but also as an indicator of income capacity, educational background, family stability and social class position. Therefore, the fact that female advertisements more frequently mention occupational requirements may reflect the use of occupation as a criterion for judging

future marital security and class compatibility. Since this study analyzes advertisement texts rather than actual marriage outcomes, this interpretation should be further examined with larger samples and additional data sources.

3.5. City differences in occupational requirements and occupational endogamy

This paper further examines whether occupational requirements and occupational endogamy differ across city editions. The results show certain descriptive differences among Bangalore, Chennai, Delhi and Mumbai. Regarding occupational requirements, the Delhi edition has the highest proportion, at 33.3%, followed by Mumbai at 30.0%, Bangalore at 23.3% and Chennai at 20.0%. However, the chi-square test results indicate that city edition is not significantly associated with occupational requirements, $\chi^2 = 1.705$, $df = 3$, $p = .636$.

A similar pattern appears in occupational endogamy. The Bangalore and Mumbai editions have the highest proportions of occupational endogamy, both at 20.0%, followed by Chennai at 10.0% and Delhi at 6.7%. However, the association between city edition and occupational endogamy is also not statistically significant, $\chi^2 = 3.495$, $df = 3$, $p = .321$. Therefore, the observed city differences should be treated as exploratory rather than as stable urban effects. Compared with city edition, occupational category and gender appear to provide clearer explanations for the variation in occupational endogamy.

3.6. Occupational requirements and caste requirements

To further investigate whether occupational selection overlaps with traditional caste boundaries, this paper conducts a cross-analysis of spouse caste requirements, occupational requirements and occupational endogamy. The chi-square test results show that spouse caste requirement type is not significantly associated with occupational requirements, $\chi^2 = 3.742$, $df = 5$, $p = .587$, or with occupational endogamy, $\chi^2 = 5.890$, $df = 5$, $p = .317$. This suggests that, in this sample, occupational selection is not significantly concentrated within any specific caste requirement category, and occupational endogamy does not depend strongly on explicit caste requirements. Even in advertisements that do not mention caste or state "caste no bar", occupational matching may still exist as a screening mechanism [8].

This finding does not mean that caste and other traditional boundaries have disappeared. Previous studies have shown that caste, religion, language, region and family background still influence mate selection in India [2, 9]. Rather, the result suggests that occupational identity may operate as an additional screening dimension alongside existing identity boundaries. Therefore, occupational endogamy should not be understood as a replacement for traditional identity boundaries, but as a form of overlap between modern occupational structure and traditional marriage order [3].

4. Conclusion

This study uses 120 urban matrimonial advertisements from the "Times Soulmate" section of The Times of India as its data source. Through content analysis and quantitative coding, it examines occupational requirements and occupational endogamy in urban Indian matrimonial advertisements. Among the 120 advertisements, 32 cases, or 26.7%, included explicit spouse occupational requirements. Occupational endogamy was found in 17 cases, representing 14.2% of the full sample and 53.1% of the advertisements that mentioned occupational requirements.

Further analysis reveals that occupational endogamy is not evenly distributed across all occupational groups but is most clearly concentrated in Medical/Health occupations. Doctors, dentists, and other medical-related professionals are more inclined to require their spouses to have the same or similar medical background. Additionally, there are significant gender differences in occupational requirements and occupational endogamy. Female advertisements are more likely to specify occupational requirements and exhibit occupational endogamy tendencies than male advertisements. In contrast, city differences and the relationship between caste requirements and occupational endogamy do not reach statistical significance.

The main contribution of this paper is to use occupational endogamy as an entry point for understanding how occupational identity appears in the boundary-making logic of urban Indian matrimonial advertisements. While previous studies have emphasized caste, religion, family arrangements and educational matching, this paper shows that occupational identity provides an additional lens for observing mate selection and possible class reproduction in urban Indian matrimonial advertisements. Occupational endogamy should therefore be understood not as a replacement for traditional identity boundaries, but as an overlap between modern occupational structure and traditional marriage order.

This study still has several limitations. First, the sample is relatively small, including only 120 matrimonial advertisements from four city editions, so the statistical results should be regarded as exploratory. Second, this paper analyzes the explicit mate preferences expressed in advertisement texts and cannot directly observe actual marriage outcomes. Moreover, English-language newspaper advertisements mainly reflect urban middle-class or higher-education groups, rather than the entire Indian marriage market. Future research can expand the sample size, compare matrimonial advertisements across different languages, regions and platforms, and combine interviews or marriage registration data to further examine occupational endogamy in actual marriage choices.

References

- [1] Allendorf, K., & Pandian, R.K. (2016). The decline of arranged marriage? Marital change and continuity in India. *Population and Development Review*, 42(3), 435–464. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2016.00149.x>
- [2] Banerjee, A., Duflo, E., Ghatak, M., & Lafortune, J. (2013). Marry for what? Caste and mate selection in modern India. *American Economic Journal: Microeconomics*, 5(2), 33–72. <https://doi.org/10.1257/mic.5.2.33>
- [3] Fuller, C.J., & Narasimhan, H. (2008). Companionate marriage in India: The changing marriage system in a middle-class Brahman subcaste. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 14(4), 736–754. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9655.2008.00528.x>
- [4] Kalmijn, M. (1998). Inter marriage and homogamy: Causes, patterns, trends. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, 395–421. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.24.1.395>
- [5] Kalmijn, M. (1994). Assortative mating by cultural and economic occupational status. *American Journal of Sociology*, 100(2), 422–452. <https://doi.org/10.1086/230542>
- [6] Smits, J. (2003). Social closure among the higher educated: Trends in educational homogamy in 55 countries. *Social Science Research*, 32(2), 251–277. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0049-089X\(02\)00049-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0049-089X(02)00049-2)
- [7] Ramakrishnan, S. (2012). 'Wheatish' grooms and 'innocent' divorcees: Commodifying attributes in the discourse of Indian matrimonials. *Discourse & Society*, 23(4), 432–449. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926512441115>
- [8] Sen, S. (2025). Caste no bar? Non-resident Indian grooms searching for brides in Kolkata. *Public Humanities*, 1, e69. <https://doi.org/10.1017/pub.2025.11>
- [9] Rajadesingan, A., Mahalingam, R., & Jurgens, D. (2019). Smart, responsible, and upper caste only: Measuring caste attitudes through large-scale analysis of matrimonial profiles. *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media*, 13, 393–404. <https://doi.org/10.1609/icwsm.v13i01.3239>
- [10] Ramasubramanian, S., & Jain, P. (2009). Gender stereotypes and normative heterosexuality in matrimonial ads from globalizing India. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 19(3), 253–269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01292980903072831>