



Published 13 Feb, 2010 12:00am

Indians get particular about online marriage

[MUMBAI From the overweight and transsexuals to people with HIV and those supposedly afflicted by negative planetary positions, the](#)

YouTuber Aun Ali reaches home safely, lawyers say

[Next Story »](#)

And with Valentines Day on Sunday, the specialist sites are seeing a rise in hits.

“Theres always an increase in activity around this time of year,” said Megha Singhal, who with her sister runs a portal for larger lonely hearts — www.overweightshaadi.com.

“Valentines Day is still a big deal here. Everyone wants a date,” the 21-year-old economics student told AFP from New Delhi.

Marriage — or “shaadi” in Hindi — remains a cornerstone of society in conservative India, with hundreds of matchmaking sites concentrating on finding their members suitable life partners rather than casual dates.

Long-established portals like www.shaadi.com, www.bharatmatrimony.com and www.jeevansathi.com offer general searches. Would-be brides and grooms can be selected by age, caste, religion, language or where they live.

But Singhal and others say that niche matrimonial sites can often be more effective.

Yazdi Tantra, a computer consultant in Mumbai, runs www.theparsimatch.com, one of a number of websites for the dwindling community of followers of the ancient Zoroastrian faith.

“Essentially, Parsis like to marry within the community. It saves time rather than trawling through other multicultural sites to get a profile,” he said.

Sanjeev Pahwa, head of the New Delhi-based firm Strikeone Advertising, said targeting niche groups made business sense as he realised smaller start-ups like his couldnt compete with the major players.

The result was www.bposhaadi.com, for call centre workers working unsociable hours, and www.govtshaadi.com, targeting state sector employees looking for love.

Another came about from the belief in Indian astrology that a Manglik — a person born when Mars was in an inauspicious position in the skies — is a bad match for marriage but that two Mangliks can cancel out its negative effects.

Now, www.manglikshaadi.com has more than 14,000 members, he said.

Since starting five years ago, Pahwa has introduced more sites, including for people with disabilities and the over 30s, who have preferred to further their careers before getting married.

Elsewhere, there are sites for hijras — transsexuals and transvestites commonly

known in India as eunuchs — people with HIV and those who shun the officially banned, but still widely practised, dowry system.

Satya Naresh, who set up www.idontwantdowry.com, said the site is helping to break down traditional attitudes and a practice that can place an intolerable financial strain on families.

“Weve been very successful in changing the mindset of people and hope it continues,” he said from the southern city of Hyderabad.

For these Internet entrepreneurs, web access in India — although still small at about 14 percent for broadband connections — is good news for those looking for love.

“The Internet does make the access to a pool of suitable people much easier than matrimony in other times,” said Singhal.

Nishant Shah, director of research at the Centre for Internet and Society, based in the IT hub of Bangalore, said the phenomenon reflected online behaviour already seen elsewhere in the world.

“As more and more people are going online theyre going to replicate tight and personalised communities which are very local and bound by existing structures at the same time as trying to look more globally,” he explained.

“The matrimonial sites are fairly indicative of that. We find people not going on to general websites but very narrow ones.

“Its not just matrimonial sites. Facebook, for example, looks like a very large community of users but when you look at friend networks you realise people connect in small and specialist networks.

“It reflects the old idea of birds of a feather stick together.”



[Read Comments](#)