
DIGITAL COURTSHIP OR LEGAL RISK? A STUDY OF CONSENT AND FRAUD IN ONLINE MATRIMONIAL PLATFORMS

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ABSTRACT

The recent growth of online matrimonial sites has greatly changed the conventional institution of marriage in India where, the partners were picked through family-mediated means but now, through digitally facilitated interactions. Although these platforms provide more autonomy, accessibility, and effectiveness in matchmaking, they also bring up intricate legal issues related to the legitimacy of consent and the rate of deceit. The title of this paper is, Digital Courtship or Legal Risk? A Critical Study of Consent and Fraud in Online Matrimonial Platforms, attempts to accomplish a thorough socio-legal examination of how online space is transforming the ideals of free and informed consent in matrimonial affairs. The paper discusses the conceptual basis of the online relationships, consent, and deception, where false representation of material facts, i.e., marital status, identity, financial status, and personal history, may vitiate consent and void marriages under the Hindu marriage act, 1955 Section 12(1)(c). It also delves into the increasing rate of matrimonial fraud including identity theft, emotional abuse and financial abuse, which are backed by recent statistical patterns and case law. The paper, based on the review of judicial rulings, such as those where the concealment of marital history, fraudulent inducement, and platform liability were involved, illustrates that Indian courts are becoming more convinced in the use of online matrimonial profiles as the main source of dependence in establishing marital consent. Simultaneously, the study points to the existence of major legal issues, such as the lack of a specific regulatory framework, the complexity of evidence in digital communication, the jurisdiction problem and the uncertainty surrounding the issue of intermediary liability. The paper adopts a critical view and claims that the current legislation framework is ineffective to deal with the new risks that digitally mediated matrimonial arrangements present. It highlights the necessity of more robust verification procedures, data protection standards, and more responsibility of matrimonial platforms. Placing the issue of consent in the digital sphere, the study fits into the wider discussion of the intersection of family law, cyber law, and technology, suggesting a sensible approach that would prioritize the personal autonomy of people and prevent exploitation and fraud.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence, growth and evolution of internet in late 1980's especially in India has transformed the picture of India in every aspect. This digital revolution has profoundly impacted the initiation and sustainment of intimate relationships too. The emergence of online platforms for finding potential partners in form of online dating platforms and online matrimonial sites have led to development of a new field of study intersecting consent, technology, deception and validity of such relationships.

In today's society, it is ubiquitous for young people to try to establish themselves in romantic relationships to improve their quality of life and to feel satisfied and complete, as it is within our human nature. Since meeting people the natural way has become a little complicated, there has been a considerable rise in online dating and the use of dating apps since the pandemic.¹ Online digital platforms including dating apps and matrimonial websites has enhanced the scope of human interactions, breaking the geographical and social barriers. These platforms has successfully expanded the scope of finding potential matches but at the same time it has given rise to new forms of challenges, especially concerning deception and consent.

The major challenges include – Deception and misrepresentation of identity, ambiguity and uncertainty on consent, false promises of marriage, concealment of facts, emotional and psychological harm, evidentiary challenges, lack of effective statutory framework.

A clear example of how technology can be both a boon and a bane is increasing concerns regarding online matrimonial fraud and online dating apps. Online platforms have completely changed the way people meet possible life partners in India. These platforms provide convenience and more options, but they have also made room for sophisticated scammers who take advantage of people's emotions, trust, and the stigma associated with failed relationships.²

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

MEANING OF ONLINE RELATIONSHIPS

¹ Deja-Nelle Smith, "How Deception Plays a Role in Online Dating and Dating Apps" 15(2) Canadian Journal of Family and Youth 23-32 (2023).

² Sakshi Tripathi, "Online Matrimonial Frauds: A New Frontier for Family Law in India", Lawctopus Academike, Aug. 20, 2025, available at: <https://www.lawctopus.com/academike/online-matrimonial-frauds-a-new-frontier-for-family-law-in-india> (last visited on January 15, 2026).

With emergence of digital media, the concept of online relationships has emerged replacing the traditional way of meeting. An online romantic relationship is defined as an intimate interpersonal relationship between individuals who have met online. In many cases, these individuals know each other only through that type of medium.³ While online relationships expand social connectivity and autonomy in partner selection, they also raise concerns regarding authenticity, trust, and informed consent due to limited physical verification.

MEANING OF ONLINE PLATFORMS

The term “online platform” has been used to describe a range of services available on the Internet including marketplaces, search engines, social media, creative content outlets, app stores, communications services, payment systems, services comprising the so-called “collaborative” or “gig” economy, and much more. In this report, an online platform is defined as a digital service that facilitates interactions between two or more distinct but interdependent sets of users (whether firms or individuals) who interact through the service via the Internet.⁴ In the context of intimate relationships, online dating apps and matrimonial websites allow individuals to create profiles, exchange messages, and form connections based on self-disclosed information.

MEANING OF CONSENT

Consent is defined as the voluntary agreement to an action, devoid of fear, force, or misconception. It's essential to distinguish between consent and mere submission. While every consent involves submission, not every submission constitutes consent. Valid consent must be given by individuals capable of understanding and agreeing to the action. Consent given under fear, misconception of fact, or by individuals incapable of understanding the nature of their consent, such as those of unsound mind, intoxicated, or under 12 years of age, is not recognized as valid consent under the law.⁵ In online relationships, consent is often formed through digital communication and representations, making it vulnerable to vitiation when material facts are concealed or falsely portrayed.

³ S. M. Wilermuth and S. Vogl-Bauer, "We met on the net: Exploring the perceptions of online romantic relationship participants" 72(3) *Cyberpsychology & Behavior* 211-227 (2007).

⁴ OECD, *An Introduction to Online Platforms and Their Role in the Digital Transformation* (OECD Publishing, Paris, 2019).

⁵ De Facto Judiciary, "Consent (IPC)", May 11, 2024, available at: <https://www.defactojudiciary.in/notes/consent-ipc> (last visited on April 5, 2026).

MEANING OF ONLINE DECEPTION

Proliferation of web-based technologies has revolutionized the way content is generated and exchanged through the Internet, leading to proliferation of social-media applications and services. Social media enable creation and exchange of user-generated content and design of a range of Internet-based applications. Here, we consider deception as a deliberate act intended to mislead others, while targets are not aware or do not expect such acts might be taking place and where the deceiver aims to transfer a false belief to the deceived.⁶ Online dating and in matrimonial cases, deception can be fake identity, fraudulent profiles, hiding the marital status, financial fraud, and false marriage promises. This kind of deceit has a direct impact on the validity of consent and may result in legal implications of family and criminal law.

VITIATED CONSENT

Vitiated consent is one that sounds good but, on the surface, but in which the consent is invalid since it was not deeded freely, knowingly and voluntarily. Consent agreement cannot be meaningful in law, unless it is an autonomous and informed decision. Where consent is obtained by deception, coercion, undue influence, mistake or fraud, the law deems such consent as not valid. Indian legal doctrine (codified in the Indian Contract Act, 1872 and criminal law principles now codified in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023) vitiates consent when the consent is taken by force, misappreciation of fact, fraud or falsification of material particulars. Validity therefore does not only rest on external agreement but integrity of the decision making process underlying the same.

When it comes to the sphere of on-line relations such as dating apps, marital sites, and social media communications, anonymity, editing of identities, and selective self-representation greatly raise the risk of vitiated consent. Vitiating consent can also be done through a person who is secretive about an existing marriage, lies about identity, religion, age, and even socio-economic status, or who causes a relationship by establishing a false promise of marriage when he or she has no intent of fulfilling the promise. Such vitiation can in family law cases warrant annulment of marriage, repudiate relational consent, or contribute to criminal charges of cheating or personation.

⁶ D.B. Buller and J.K. Burgoon, "Interpersonal deception theory" 6(3) Communication Theory 203–242 (1996).

Key factors that vitiate consent in online relationship disputes may include:

- (i) fraud and intentional deception
- (ii) misrepresentation of material facts
- (iii) impersonation or fake digital identity
- (iv) coercion or undue influence
- (v) misconception of fact affecting the core decision
- (vi) lack of capacity or informed understanding, and
- (vii) abuse of a position of trust or dominance.

Modern jurisprudence in digital interactions emphasizes that a court should take a critical look into the informational context in which consent was provided such as platform design, disclosure, and verification, to understand whether consent was truly informed and voluntary.

CONCEPT, NATURE AND GROWTH OF ONLINE MATRIMONIAL PLATFORMS

CONCEPT OF ONLINE MATRIMONIAL PLATFORM

Marriage in India is a pivotal stage in an individual's life, marking the beginning of social adulthood. Historically, matchmaking has been a process conducted face-to-face with strong involvement from family and relatives, with parental guidance being highly favoured. The onset of the digital age has however led to some considerable changes in this process and social media has received a substantial dimension in the process. The concept of increasing social networks and applications such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, matrimony-specific websites and applications, such as Shaadi.com and Bharat Matrimony have transformed the matrimony process in India in the past decade. Over the past decade, the proliferation of social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, combined with specialized matrimonial websites and apps such as Shaadi.com and Bharat Matrimony, has transformed the way Indians approach matrimony. These online platforms are a form of convergence between tradition and technology that permits individuals with more liberty and options in

choosing their life companions but still meets cultural norms and family demands.⁷

Matrimonial online websites are online sites that aim to help the search of an appropriate life partner in the ultimate aim of marriage. In contrast to casual dating services the websites are managed on a structured platform that focuses on long term commitment, family, cultural harmony and the social-economic background.

Matrimonial websites serve as a new development of the old arrangements of marriage between India and within the South Asian communities around the world. They merge with technology like match making using algorithms, profile-filters, confidential communication services with the remaining factors used in the traditional times like faith, caste, community, and horoscope matching, education, career, and family status.

NATURE OF ONLINE MATRIMONIAL PLATFORM

Online matrimonial websites are digital intermediary technology-based commercially operated systems that are used to perform marriage oriented matchmaking utilizing structured profiles, algorithmic compatibility systems and other socio-cultural filtering systems that are governed by contractual duties and regulatory frameworks.

- **Intermediary and Facilitator Nature**

The service of matrimonial sites online is more of an agent. They are not direct negotiators or solidifiers of marriages but have an online backbone that allows people to be connected and communicate with each other, evaluating or not. Such sites only have the role of hosting profiles generated by the users, giving the search and filtering option and facilitating contacts in the potential matches. They therefore become facilitators and not guarantors to the marital outcomes.

- **Contractual and Consumer-Oriented Nature**

The contractual nature of the relationship between the service provider and the platform exists. When registered on the site, the user commits to a legally binding agreement, facilitated through terms of services, privacy and refund and subscription terms of service which vary

⁷ Mamta and Monika Saxena, "Indian Matrimony and Social Media in Digital Era: Analytical Perspective" 46 Tuijin Jishu/Journal of Propulsion Technology 834-836 (2025).

according to the site. Cable memberships will create consumer users of online services, but this will place such platforms in consumer protection legislation. Arguments can be based on misrepresentation, lack of service, and unfair trading practices.

- **Commercial and Corporate Nature**

Majority of matrimonial sites are a commercial platform and business oriented model. Typical business model of online matrimonial websites are subscriptions, premium services provided with additional options, profile certification and spotlight to increase interaction and targeted advertising. Thus, they are a component of the large digital market and e-commerce community.

- **Socio-Cultural and Institutional Nature**

Matrimonial websites are so culturally entrenched, particularly within a nation such as India. They maintain and electronically recreate arranged marriage criteria like religion and caste/community, language and geographical background, family status, and financial security that are a part of traditional arranged marriages. Therefore, they are an update on old-fashioned methods of matchmaking and not a break with tradition.

- **Technological and Algorithmic Nature**

Notable features that the online matrimonial platforms rely on technology tools, including AI based compatibility algorithm, the option to filter the search, automated matchmaking suggestion, data analytics. Their working process is data-driven, and they belong to the open area of algorithmic governance of personal relationships.

- **Risk-Prone and Regulatory Nature**

The internet matrimonial sites would be susceptible to issues related to identity frauds, fraud, misrepresentation, financial frauds, emotional abuse, ambiguous position of consent, post rejection stalking or harassment. No organization of law that might be used to regulate such challenges exists and thus it is hard to take such challenges to court by the victims themselves.

- **Hybrid Nature (Traditional + Digital)**

Essentially, online matrimonial sites have a hybrid nature since they follow the principles of

arranged marriages but have integrated modern form of technology like use of digital platforms rather than the traditional method of matchmaking. It consists of the various systematized marriage parameters including the caste, religion, family position, horoscope compatibility and other modernising it without losing the support of tradition. Such a mixed format sets them apart of dating apps and general social networking sites.

Therefore, online matrimonial websites are a vibrant combination of technology, business and culture in the institution of marriage. Their algorithm-driven systems modernize traditional matchmaking practices without completely displacing arranged marriage principles. Therefore, it represents a hybrid structure.

GROWTH OF ONLINE MATRIMONIAL PLATFORM

For centuries Indians have put emphasis on family relationships instead of personal autonomy. Children from a young age are conditioned to put family interests before their own interests. Marriage being one of the most important social institutions in India is heavily influenced by the traditions. Hence, arranged marriages are still quite common in India. In Indian society, marriages are perceived to have long lasting implications on the families. Therefore, many people opt for arranged marriages as they provide a sense of emotional security and economic stability.⁸ However, over past few decades, there has been a shift in family structure, from joint families to nuclear families. This led to the absence of social networks that generally helped in the arranged marriage process. Also, with the boom of the internet, the traditional role of the joint family and marriage brokers was replaced by online matrimonial portals. Introduction of technology in this field has led to a blend of traditional and modern marriages.

The advent of technology has transformed the traditional matchmaking system, allowing it to be less time-consuming while giving individuals more autonomy and control over their choices. Now, people are no longer confined to relying solely on the recommendations of relatives, friends, or intermediaries. The modern generation is more inclined towards using online sources to find partners being more autonomous in the choice of partners. In India, marriage portal websites have brought a whole new world in the field of matchmaking because the internet has provided a new avenue of searching life partners. With the internet providing a new avenue for finding life partners, the rise of matrimonial portals has opened up an

⁸ N. Seth and R. Patnayakuni, "Online Matrimonial Sites and the Transformation of Arranged Marriage in India" 329-352 (Jan. 2008).

entirely new world for matchmaking in India. Even the women have become relatively more alright with online matchmaking. Globalization, changing lifestyles and changing working conditions are some of the reasons attributed to these changes. Currently, India boasts more than a hundred online matchmaking portals, with major players such as shaadi.com, Bharatmatrimony.com, Simplymarry.com, and jeevansathi.com dominating the market. These virtual platforms offer interactive matchmaking services that attract users by providing a wide array of features and facilities. Users can access vital information instantly and conveniently, benefiting from these services in a hassle-free manner.⁹

Matrimonial websites primarily begin for non-resident Indians as the internet adoption was poor in India during the 90s. Also, the conservative Indian society was skeptical about the matrimonial companies. The companies identified the gap in the traditional marriage process and the changing mindset of Indian society which gave birth to matrimonial portals in India. By 2000s the matrimonial portals started gaining popularity. The complex process of arranged marriages was simplified by the introduction of these portals. Such websites blended the traditional arranged marriages and love marriages with the help of technology.¹⁰

Matrimonial websites gained popularity among people with traditional beliefs, but still preferred to find their partners on their own. The online matrimony industry blossomed in huge business opportunity because of its unique features. These portals have huge database with global presence. The higher the prospective profiles, the higher the customer satisfaction. These websites have made searching for a life partner more convenient and secure. Today, many companies provide relationship managers that assist in the matchmaking process. Matrimonial companies are also aiming towards becoming one stop shop solution for their clients by providing services from matchmaking, wedding planning, designing and printing wedding cards to honeymoon packages.¹¹ This is becoming a competitive advantage for them, which help them to differentiate themselves from competitors.

⁹ J. K. Pal, "Social networks enabling matrimonial information services in India" 2(4) International Journal of Library and Information Science 54-64 (2010).

¹⁰ "How matrimony industry is growing with Online Matrimonial", Medium, Jan. 20, 2017, available at: <https://medium.com/@solutionswebomania/how-matrimonyindustry-is-growing-with-online-matrimonial-85692bbe8f1e> (last visited on March 2, 2026).

¹¹ H. Gupta, "Amazing Facts About Matrimonial Sites", Hatke Shaadi, May 15, 2015, available at: <http://www.hatkshaadi.com/blog/2015/05/amazing-facts-aboutmatrimonial-sites/> (last visited on March 20, 2026).

MAJOR COMPETITORS IN ONLINE MATRIMONY SECTOR

The online matrimonial industry is highly competitive and is dominated by following four competitors

- Shaadi.com – Shaadi.com is one of the oldest matrimonial portals in India. It was founded in July, 1996. The company has around 250 centers across India with more than 10 million registered users. Shaadi.com is known to use big data analytics to analyze the user behaviour on the website and calculate the compatibility of the couples and provide recommendations to users
- JeevanSaathi.com – JeevanSaathi.com is popular in Northern and Western India. It was founded in December, 1998. The members can opt for different packages by paying a varying amount of fees with respect to the service they want.
- BharatMatrimony.com – BharatMatrimony.com was found in December, 1999. It is well known for its regional portals across India and these portals operate in 15 different languages. The services provided include wedding directory, pre-marriage counseling, blood testing services etc.
- Niche Players - With the success of matrimonial websites that catered to the mass market, various portals catering to niche segments started gaining popularity. SecondShaadi.com is a website that caters to individuals who are divorced or widowed, thus giving to remarriage which still is a social taboo. Ultra Rich Match, Elite Matrimony, VIP Shaadi and many more similar websites are known to cater to the elite class Vows of Eternity is a matrimonial portal with a global presence and caters to the upper class. It is headquartered in New York and has its branches in London, Singapore, Delhi and Mumbai. There are several other websites that cater to specific caste, religion, education level, etc.¹²

CONSENT IN ONLINE MATRIMONIAL PLATFORM

Digital consent generally means controlling all your activity and information in the Digital

¹² Sneha Pingle and Chandrashekhar Kaushik, "A Study on Digitalization of Matchmaking for Marriages in India" 2(2) The Management Quest (2020).

space or online world. It also involves one's liberty to make free and informed decisions about sharing and connecting online their personal information, data and identity. General Data Protection Regulation.¹³ (GDPR), Article 4(11), 2016 - Digital Consent means "consent of the data subject means any freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous indication of the data subject's wishes by which he or she, by a statement or by a clear affirmative action, signifies agreement to the processing of personal data relating to him or her."

In the Indian context, digital consent is supported by the Supreme Court's ruling in Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India, which held that the right to privacy is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution. This also includes control over one's personal information online. So in simpler terms, it just means controlling all your personal information including its acceptance and denial of access online to others.¹⁴

Consent in matrimonial arrangements refers to free, voluntary, and informed agreement to enter into a marital relationship. Traditionally, consent was established through direct interaction between families and individuals. But in internet matrimonial sites, consent is usually swayed by the data presented in the online profiles, which contain personal information like age, marital status, religion, occupation and family background.

The validity of this information is paramount since people depend on such depictions in decision-making on marriage. In case the information provided is false, or intentionally hidden, the consent given will not be legitimate because it was not founded on the disclosure of truth.

A marriage is voidable in case of consent procured out of a material fact about the respondent through fraud as per involving Section 12(1) of (c) as in the Hindu marriage Act 1955. Delhi high court in case of X VS Y has ruled that hiding material information, including of previous marriage, during building a profile with a matrimonial site constitute fraud and vitiate consent. The Delhi High Court has further explained that consent in marriage could not be taken to a mere formality but it had to be free, voluntary and informed. An individual hiding such worldly detail like his previous marriage is not only lying to the other party, but also weakening the sanctity of the marriage itself.

¹³ Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council, art. 4(11), 2016 O.J. (L 119) 33 (EU).

¹⁴ Aarushi, "DIGITAL CONSENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA: A SOCIOLEGAL STUDY OF CULTURAL BARRIERS AND ONLINE VULNERABILITIES" 7 International Journal of Law Management & Humanities 1100.

The other aspect of consent in online matrimonial websites pertains to the privacy of data and usage of personal information. The user provides personal information that is sensitive such as photographs, religious affiliation, caste, occupation and contact information through a voluntary upload process. Such information is regularly presented or uploaded through these platforms to enable matchmaking.

Nonetheless, there has been fears whether or not users give specific and informed consent to such processing and disclosure of data. Investigations on the privacy policies of matrimonial websites show that not all sites specifically state how the information of the user will be distributed or presented, and such statements may not be used to meet the requirements of a legal definition of informed consent.

The growing abuse of the marriage sites has made the courts concerned about the absence of regulatory provisions on management of such services. Madras High Court has noted that there should be clarity in the rules and systems of verification of online matrimonial websites in order to ascertain authenticity of personal information and simplify fraud.

The court implied that governments ought to develop policies that entail verification of fundamental data and information like age, marital status and identity among others before profiles can be posted in these sites. These measures would assist in safeguarding the users against being deceived, and also make sure that consent in matrimonial negotiations is informed and authentic.¹⁵

DECEPTION IN ONLINE MATRIMONIAL PLATFORMS

Marriage in India is a sacred tradition, based on faith and family reputation. That trust was supposed to be maintained in a new format through the rapid transition to online matrimonial platforms (more than 15 million active users in 2025). Rather it has turned out to be the ideal location to carry out one of the most vicious cybercrimes in the country Matrimonial cyber fraud which is a calculated combination of extended emotional grooming, false personalities and massive financial fraud. What started as a few isolated instances of fake NRI groom this century turned into advanced transnational networks running out of South-East Asian scam

¹⁵ Suchita Shukla, "Madras HC Directs Framing of Rules to Regulate Matrimonial Websites, Denies Pre-Arrest Bail in Matrimonial Fraud Case", Verdictum, Aug. 28, 2023, available at: <https://www.verdictum.in/court-updates/high-courts/madras-high-court-calls-for-regulations-on-online-matrimonial-websites-denies-pre-arrest-bail-in-matrimonial-fraud-case-1492006> (last visited on March 10, 2026).

centres, and exploiting AI deepfakes, voice cloning, and digital arrest strategies to collect thousands of crores of money per year. With recorded losses exceeding ₹22,000 crore in 2024 alone and constituting the single largest category of financial cyber fraud in India, This offence combines crimes against property, person, and the social institution of marriage itself.¹⁶

The COVID-19 lockdowns catalysed an explosion, as digital isolation amplified online interactions. The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) noted a 30% jump in matrimonial and romance scams from 2020 to 2021, with losses exceeding ₹500 crore annually by 2022. The Maharashtra's NCRB data for 2022 highlighted matrimonial fraud as the top cybercrime against women, often intertwined with sextortion. In Tamil Nadu, 230 complaints were filed in 2022, rising to 156 in just seven months of 2023, with fraudsters using foreign numbers for "honey-trap" extortion.¹⁷

FORMS OF DECEPTION ON MATRIMONIAL WEBSITES

- **Misrepresentation of Marital Status**

One of the most common forms of deception on matrimonial websites is the concealment or misrepresentation of marital status. Individuals may falsely claim to be unmarried while actually being divorced or previously married. The **Delhi High Court** has ruled that misrepresenting marital history on a matrimonial website constitutes material fraud. In a case where a husband described himself as "never married" on a matrimonial portal, the court held that concealment of a previous marriage invalidated the consent given by the spouse and justified annulment under matrimonial law. The court emphasized that such misrepresentation strikes at the root of **free and informed consent**, which is an essential requirement for a valid marriage.¹⁸

- **False Representation of Financial or Professional Status**

The other common type of lies is inflating or lying about the financial status, earnings and other professional statuses. People can pretend to have a prestigious job or earn a lot of money to

¹⁶ V. Chithra, "The Matrimonial Cyber Fraud in India: Legal Framework and Emerging Trends", Record of Law, available at: <https://recordoflaw.in/the-matrimonial-cyber-fraud-in-india-legal-framework-and-emerging-trends-2/> (last visited on March 10, 2026).

¹⁷ Regulation 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council, art. 4(11), 2016 O.J. (L 119) 33 (EU).

¹⁸ "Concealment of Marital History and Misrepresentation on Matrimonial Portals: Delhi High Court's Interpretation of Section 12(1)(c) of the Hindu Marriage Act", The Legal Affair, Aug. 25, 2025, available at: <https://thelegalaffair.com/news/concealment-of-marital-history-and-misrepresentation-on-matrimonial-portals-delhi-high-courts-interpretation-of-section-121c-of-the-hindu-marriage-act/> (last visited on March 10, 2026).

make their profile more appealing to potential connections. Courts have come to learn that the issue of financial stability is quite an important aspect in marriage choices. Courts have thus regarded intentional misrepresentation of income or professional status as material misrepresentation which can vitiate concession.

- **Identity Fraud and Fake Profiles**

A more serious form of deception involves the creation of fake profiles using stolen photographs or false identities. In such cases, fraudsters may impersonate professionals such as doctors, military officers, or foreign residents to gain the trust of victims.

Law enforcement agencies have reported several cases in which individuals created multiple fake matrimonial websites or accounts to lure victims and extract money under the pretext of arranging marriages. In one cybercrime investigation, authorities uncovered a network operating several fraudulent matrimonial websites and defrauding hundreds of individuals across different states.¹⁹

- **Financial Fraud through Emotional Manipulation**

Many matrimonial scams involve developing emotional relationships with victims and later requesting financial assistance under false pretenses. Victims are often persuaded to transfer money for medical emergencies, travel expenses, or business investments.

Recent reports indicate that victims have lost significant amounts of money after trusting individuals they met on matrimonial platforms. In one instance, a woman was allegedly cheated of nearly ₹40 lakh by a person she met through a matrimonial website who falsely promised marriage and exploited her trust.²⁰

- **Intersection of Consent & Deception**

Agreement is a central tenet of marriage law. The consent to a marriage must be free, voluntary and informed to be legally valid. Consent obtained as a consequence of deliberate

¹⁹ "Bhopal Cyber Con Behind Fake Matrimonial Websites Arrested", The Times of India, Dec. 3, 2024, available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bhopal/bhopal-cyber-con-behind-fake-matrimonial-websites-arrested/articleshow/115910517.cms> (last visited on March 10, 2026).

²⁰ "Rohtak Man Befriends Andhra Pradesh Woman on Matrimonial Site, 'Marries' Her, Cheats Her of ₹40 Lakh; FIR Filed", The Times of India, Mar. 11, 2026, available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/andhra-woman-travels-to-rohtak-after-man-sexually-exploits-cheats-her-of-rs-40l/articleshow/129413006.cms> (last visited on March 10, 2026).

misrepresenting of material facts by one of the parties is defective in law.

In online matrimonial sites, dishonesty nullifies the core matrimonial consent. This dependency on online profiles implies that people tend to take crucial life choices relying on the data they see on the Internet. When such information is misleading, then the given consent is not informed.

Indian courts have always believed that having hidden material facts like prior marriage, existence of children or financial status is fraud. This deceit has a direct impact to the consent to marry the other party and thus vitiates consent in matrimonial law.

The overlap of trade-off between deception and consent on online matrimonial sites, therefore, reflects the importance of transparency and verification on matrimonial decision-making to make them accurate with the foundations of truthful information.

MAJOR LEGAL CHALLENGES

The matrimonial websites have revolutionized the conventional matchmaking procedures greatly because they have allowed people to seek their prospective life partners via online mediums. These sites enable individuals to form profiles, interact with their potential partners, and organize marriages with people in different regions. Increased rise of such platforms has, however, come with many legal issues surrounding fraud and privacy, cybercrime, liability of the platform and operational jurisdiction. The lack of particular laws that might define matrimonial websites makes the system even more problematic and concerns the issue of user protection.

- **Fraud and Misrepresentation**

Fraud and misrepresentation are one of the most conspicuous cases of online matrimonial platform that occur in legal aspects. The information posted in online profiles is commonly used by the users as they make crucial marriage decisions. This information can be false or even intentionally misleading though. People can hide their past or present marriages, number of children, debts and career history in order to appear more appealing to their potential mate.

The Indian courts have realized that this necessity of concealing material facts may constitute fraud and the consent cannot be effective in matrimonial relationships. Courts have pointed out

that any deceit in the history or earnings of marriage in matrimonial pages can be invalid in Section 12(1)(c) of the Hindu marriage Act of 1955 and therefore consent, obtained through fraud, shall not be regarded as an authentic one.²¹

- **Cybercrime and Matrimonial Fraud**

The increasing use of online matrimonial platforms has also resulted in a rise in cybercrime and financial fraud. Criminals often create fake profiles on matrimonial websites and establish emotional relationships with victims to gain their trust. Once trust is established, victims may be persuaded to transfer money under various pretexts such as travel expenses, medical emergencies, or visa processing.

Several incidents reported in India illustrate how fraudsters exploit matrimonial platforms. For example, cases have been reported where individuals posing as professionals or government officials deceived victims and extracted large sums of money through false promises of marriage.²² Law enforcement agencies have also uncovered organized cybercrime networks operating fake matrimonial profiles and call centres to target victims seeking marriage alliances, demonstrating the growing scale of such scams.²³

- **Privacy and Data Protection Concerns**

The other significant legal issue is connected to privacy and data protection. Matrimonial websites make users reveal lots of personal data like pictures, contact information, religion, family history, and career information. Although such information is needed in order to conduct the matchmaking, it also presents the user with possible dangers.

It has been noted that the information posted on matrimonial sites may at times be used against an individual in the form of harassment, blackmail or stalking, especially when sensitive

²¹ Sankalp Tiwari, "Deception, Consent, and the Digital Age of Marriage: Effect of False Advertising on Matrimonial Site", LawyersClubIndia, Aug. 26, 2025, available at: <https://www.lawyersclubindia.com/articles/deception-consent-and-the-digital-age-of-marriage-effect-of-false-advertising-on-matrimonial-site-17949.asp> (last visited on March 10, 2026).

²² "Man Befriends 28-Yo on Matrimonial Site, Dupes Her of ₹26 Lakh", The Times of India, May 7, 2025, available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/indore/man-befriends-28-yo-on-matrimonial-site-dupes-her-of-rs-26l/articleshow/120942634.cms> (last visited on March 10, 2026).

²³ Partha Behera, "Cyber Shield Op Busts Massive Online Matrimony Scam; 11 Held in Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh", The Times of India, Oct. 5, 2025, available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/raipur/cyber-shield-op-busts-massive-online-matrimony-scam-11-held-in-jharkhand-and-chhattisgarh/articleshow/124481969.cms> (last visited on March 11, 2026).

information was left on the sites and accessed by unknown parties.

Since the introduction of Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, the legal provisions are now aimed at protecting the personal data in India. Nevertheless, the issue of enforcing matrimonial sites to meet the data protection benchmark and securing an informed consent on behalf of the users is a legal dilemma being pursued.

- **Liability of Matrimonial Platforms**

Another important legal issue concerns the liability of matrimonial platforms for fraudulent activities carried out by their users. Many matrimonial websites claim that they merely act as intermediaries that provide a platform for users to interact and are therefore not responsible for the actions of individual users.

In one case, the Bombay High Court held that a matrimonial website could not be held liable for fraud committed by a user when the platform had already provided warnings and safety guidelines to its users. The court observed that users must exercise caution when interacting with unknown individuals online.²⁴ This raises complex legal questions regarding the extent of responsibility that matrimonial platforms should bear in preventing fraud and protecting their users.

- **Jurisdictional and Enforcement Challenges**

Online matrimonial relationships often involve individuals located in different states or even different countries. In situations where conflicts have to be resolved, it may be complex to establish the proper legal jurisdiction. As an illustration, a fake profile can be made in a particular state, the victim can be in another state and the site itself can be based in a different location. This type of jurisdictional complexities complicates investigation and prosecution of cyber offences. When this is accompanied by a foreign nation, or the transfer of foreign finances, it becomes even more difficult to stop it by the law enforcement agencies.

Though the online matrimonial websites added a contemporary touch to the harmonization of traditional match making and the credit offered in the form of increased a pool of people

²⁴ Shibu Thomas, "Matrimonial Website Not Liable for Online Fraud: HC", The Times of India, Apr. 11, 2015, available at: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/matrimonial-website-not-liable-for-online-fraud-hc/articleshow/46882609.cms> (last visited on March 11, 2026).

seeking your match, the systems have posed a massive legal burden. These challenges of fraud, misrepresentation, computer-related offences, invasion of privacy, liability of the platform, and headaches of jurisdiction are indicative of vulnerabilities associated with the practice of online matrimony. Lack of a detailed regulation framework which specifically covers matrimonial websites complicates further the protection of users and legal redress.

5.2 JUDICIAL DECISIONS RELATED TO ONLINE MATRIMONIAL PLATFORMS

Concealment of Marital History and Misrepresentation on Matrimonial Portals [Sameer Parekh v. Shweta Parekh]

In this case, the dispute arose out of a matrimonial alliance arranged through an online matrimonial portal. The husband, Sameer, created a profile on the platform in which he represented himself as “never married” and provided information regarding his personal and financial background. The wife, Shweta, relied on the information contained in the online profile while agreeing to the marriage. After the marriage was solemnized, Shweta discovered that Sameer had concealed material facts, including that he had been previously married and had a child from the earlier marriage. Additionally, the income information provided in the matrimonial profile was found to be misleading, as the husband had allegedly exaggerated his financial status, although he later admitted that his actual income ranged between USD 120,000 and USD 130,000. Upon discovering these facts, Shweta filed a petition seeking annulment of the marriage under Section 12(1)(c) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, on the ground that her consent to the marriage had been obtained through fraud and misrepresentation.

ISSUES

- Whether the concealment of a previous marriage, the existence of a child, and the misrepresentation of income on an online matrimonial profile constituted fraud sufficient to invalidate consent under Section 12(1)(c) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

JUDGEMENT

The Delhi High Court argued that concealment of a previous marriage and child, along with exaggerated income returns, was fraud under Section 12(1)(c). These were not technical errors but intentional withholding of material facts.

The Court rejected Sameer's claim that his parents had set up the profile. It observed that he had used the portal actively to communicate and thus was responsible for its content. Additionally, matrimonial websites specifically offer "divorced" as a category and his selection of "never married" constitutes a voluntary misrepresentation. Finally, the Court confirmed the Family Court's decree of annulment and rejected the appeal.²⁵

ANALYSIS

This judgment is particularly significant because it clarifies the application of Section 12(1)(c) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, which provides that a marriage may be annulled if the consent of a party was obtained through fraud as to any material fact or circumstance concerning the respondent.

The court further emphasized that misrepresentation through an online matrimonial profile cannot be treated as a trivial or technical error.

Importantly, the court recognized that in the digital age, matrimonial profiles on online platforms function as primary sources of information on which prospective spouses rely while giving consent to marriage. Consequently, these false statements or hiding material facts on such sites can directly nullify consent given to marriage. It is based on this fact that the court dismissed the husband on the point that the consent of the wife had been obtained through fraudulent means and more importantly the court affirmed the annulment decree which struck against marriages founded on deception in Internet matrimonial adverts as legally voidable under the Hindu Marriage Act.

Framing of Rules to Regulate Matrimonial Websites, Denies Pre-Arrest Bail in Matrimonial Fraud Case [Prasanna @ Chakravarthy v. State/

The case arose from a complaint filed by a woman doctor who met the accused through an online matrimonial website. The accused allegedly created a profile on the matrimonial platform using false information and impersonated himself as a doctor working abroad. Through this representation, he developed a relationship with the complainant and promised to marry her. Relying on these assurances, the complainant trusted the accused and provided him

²⁵ Deception, Consent and the Digital Age of Marriage: Effect of False Advertising on Matrimonial Site", LawyersClubIndia, available at: <https://www.lawyersclubindia.com/articles/deception-consent-and-the-digital-age-of-marriage-effect-of-false-advertising-on-matrimonial-site-17949.asp> (last visited on March 14, 2026).

with money and gold jewellery. Subsequently, the accused failed to fulfil his promise of marriage and allegedly cheated the complainant.

The police registered a case against the accused for offences under Sections 420, 417, 406, 354, 294(b), 323 and 506(ii) of the Indian Penal Code, along with provisions of the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Women Act. The accused filed an anticipatory bail application before the Madras High Court after his earlier request for pre-arrest bail had been rejected by the lower court.

ISSUES

- Whether the accused was entitled to anticipatory bail in a case involving allegations of cheating and fraud through an online matrimonial platform.
- Whether the lack of regulation governing matrimonial websites contributed to such fraudulent activities, and whether the government should frame rules to regulate such platforms.

COURT'S JUDGEMENT & OBSERVATION

The court held that it is a case of "online matrimonial fraud". This Court finds that there is no rules or regulations, nor even, SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) for on-line matrimonial web-site before for hoisting profiles of bride or bridegroom, as the case may be. In most of cases, the victim of this kind of on-line matrimonial fraud are woman. Hence, this Court is of the considered view that Central or State Government shall take initiation for formulation of rules governing field on this kind of matrimonial web-site to ensure, age and date of birth, the basic information about bride or bridegroom (like age, date of birth, address or duly verified before being upload in the web-site and further regulation in the nature of penal provision for suppressing material facts (namely information regarding earlier marriage, status of divorce proceedings if any divorce or not, as the result the prospective person is being put to misconception of material facts. Such a misrepresentation falls as defined under Section 90 of I.P.C and as such further it has to be treated as commission of offence and crime against woman, as in majority case, brides do fell as prey. The State Government shall form a committee to frame necessary regulations in this regard as day-in and day-out, criminal cases

are facing up after commission of cheating as defined under Section 415 of I.P.C.²⁶

ANALYSIS

This judgment is significant because the Court recognized that matrimonial websites have become a common medium for arranging marriages; but, the absence of any kind of regulation opens up the fertile grounds to fraudsters to prey on the unsuspecting people. The Court reinforced the import of matrimonial fraud victimized by the digital means, by refusing to grant the anticipatory bail.

The fact that the Court instructed the government to frame regulatory rules demonstrates the apprehensions of the judicial system towards the increasing cases of cheating that are caused by matrimonial websites. The ruling highlights the necessity to have better verification procedures, the disclosure of material facts like marital status as obligatory, and responsibility over the false representations on the online marriage websites. These controls could serve to make sure there is transparency and they prevent deception and exploitation of people during online matrimonial contacts.

Matrimonial Portals Not Liable for Online Frauds [Bombay High Court]

The complainant who was a divorcee wishing to remarry registered in an online matrimonial portal by paying the membership fee. She met a man who identified himself as a resident of the United Kingdom through a communication service that offered assistance to him and wanted to get married to her. During their communication, the man informed the complainant that he would soon arrive in India with large funds intended for investment. Soon afterward, the complainant received calls from individuals posing as officials from the customs department and other authorities who claimed that the man had arrived in India but required certain payments to clear customs duties and obtain necessary certificates. Believing these representations, the complainant transferred money to several bank accounts. In total, she was cheated of approximately ₹2.93 lakh. After realizing that the entire story was fabricated, she filed a complaint and an FIR was registered against the matrimonial website alleging that the

²⁶ Suchita Shukla, "Madras HC Directs Framing of Rules to Regulate Matrimonial Websites, Denies Pre-Arrest Bail in Matrimonial Fraud Case", *Verdictum*, Aug. 28, 2023, available at: <https://www.verdictum.in/court-updates/high-courts/madras-high-court-calls-for-regulations-on-online-matrimonial-websites-denies-pre-arrest-bail-in-matrimonial-fraud-case-1492006> (last visited on March 14, 2026)

portal had failed to warn her or inform her that the fraudster's profile had been deactivated.²⁷

ISSUES

- Whether an online matrimonial portal can be held criminally liable for cheating committed by users through its platform.
- Whether the platform's failure to notify the complainant about the deactivation of the fraudster's profile made it responsible for the loss suffered by the complainant.

COURT'S JUDGEMENT & OBSERVATION

A Division Bench of the Bombay High Court held that perusal of the terms and conditions governing the use of the website makes it clear that the company has provided certain safety tips and warns every customer/member to be aware about common scams and frauds so that they are not cheated by others. Despite the safety instructions provided by the company, the complainant put herself in the present situation due to her own negligence and carelessness.

The Court observed that despite these warnings, the complainant transferred money to unknown persons without verifying their authenticity. The judges stated that the situation arose due to the "negligence and carelessness" of the complainant, and therefore the matrimonial portal could not be held responsible for the fraud. Accordingly, the Court quashed the FIR filed against the website.²⁸

ANALYSIS

This judgment is significant in defining the legal liability of online matrimonial platforms. The Bombay High Court considered matrimonial websites as acts of intermediary, and does not actively involve themselves in matrimonial arrangements or financial transactions but simply facilitates the communication of the users. Therefore, the civil platform is not criminally liable in situations where a fraud occurs in regards to individual users unless there is a connection between the platform and fraud.

²⁷ Aishwarya Dhakarey, "Matrimonial Portals Are Not Liable for Online Frauds: Bombay HC", *LiveLaw*, Apr. 11, 2015, available at: <https://www.livelaw.in/matrimonial-portals-are-not-liable-for-online-frauds-bombay-hc> (last visited on March 14, 2026).

²⁸ Shibu Thomas, "Matrimonial Website Not Liable for Online Fraud: HC", *The Times of India*, Apr. 11, 2015.

The ruling as well, emphasizes the value of user diligence and online security in online interactions. At the same time, the lawsuit advances larger issues as to whether matrimonial websites should take on greater verification processes to eradicate fraud. With the evolution of online matrimony services, courts will be called upon to ensure that platform protection and consumer protection are weighed more often in online matchmaking systems.

LEGAL GAPS IN ADDRESSING ONLINE MATRIMONIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The rapid expansion of matrimonial platforms has significantly transformed the way individuals form marital relationships. Nevertheless, the legal system of the family legislation, as well as the digital contacts, in India has not been updated as the technology advances. Consequently, there are some gaps in resolving conflicts in the online relationship, especially on the area of consent, deception, fraud and evidentiary.

- **Absence of Specific Legal Framework for Online Relationships**

The lack of a particular legal framework governing online relationships, created by means of digital platforms, is one of the most critical loopholes in the existing legal framework. The current provisions of the Hindu marriage act of 1955, the Special marriage act of 1954 are some of the family laws written in the period when the conventional societal problems mainly dominated through the marriage construct. These laws deal with the perquisites to marriage, consent and fraud without an explicit indication of dealing with conflicts that arise as a consequence of digitally mediated relationships. When making such arrangements through the Internet in online dating and matrimonial affairs, chances are high that people tend to base their life based on online users, online profile and internet emotional communication. The fact that these laws lack any particular legal criteria through which consent given online could possibly be communicated means that often, the courts have to apply extrapolation of the traditional theory of law to technologies where it may appear that the pertinent cases are excessively new and complex to proceed with both existing statutes. This ambiguity brings about incongruent judicial treatments and confusion in establishing whether consent made based on online representations is valid.²⁹

²⁹ Aarushi, "DIGITAL CONSENT OF WOMEN IN INDIA: A SOCIOLEGAL STUDY OF CULTURAL BARRIERS AND ONLINE VULNERABILITIES" 7 *International Journal of Law Management & Humanities*, 1105-1106.

- **Ambiguity in Defining Digital Deception**

The other significant legal loophole is found in the fact that there is no explicit statutory meaning to the concept of deception that surrounds the relationship between the Internet and online relations. Despite the existence of laws that promote against fraud, misrepresentation and cheating, the laws do not work effectively to distinguish between small scale online exaggerations and material deception which directly affects consent.

Online individuals tend to adopt discriminative self presentation or exaggeration of their personal aspects. It becomes hard to find out if such conduct can be deception that is legally actionable. The courts must therefore take into consideration, that the misrepresentation is related to a material fact such as marital status, identity, marriage intentions or financial status. Nevertheless, without definite rules, there are mostly subjective interpretations and results that vary.

- **Evidentiary Challenges in Digital Communication**

Conflicts in relationships created through the internet often depend on the digital evidence of online communication in the form of messages, email, social media discussions, call logs, and screengrabs. The existing laws on evidentiary accept electronic evidence, however, proving authenticity and reliability of such evidence is a very huge burden.

Digital communications are easy to edit, delete and/or modify. Also, numerous applications involve encrypted communications or fading texts, and it is hard to retain evidence. Courts are thus forced to depend on technical verification process and certification demands which may make the legal process more complex and justice procrastinating.

- **Lack of Regulation of Online Platforms**

The online dating apps and matrimonial sites are mediators that create connections among users. However, we are still to witness the policy of rules designed universally, obligating these sites to verify the user or at least verify the correctness of the information in the user profile.

Lack of stringent dating checks enables people to falsify profiles, hide marital status, or distort personal information. This implies that the users will most likely encounter such risks of identity frauds, financial exploitation and emotional manoeuvring. The legal solution to such

conflicts is also complicated by the lack of responsibility of the platform.

- **Limited Legal Awareness and Access to Remedies**

The other loophole is the lack of awareness on available remedies on the part of users with respect to existing laws that can be used in the event of an online deception. The other group that is highly likely to fall victim to social stigmatization and is psychologically disturbed is the victims of relationship abuse via online or false marriage proposals and this is why they are unlikely to pursue legal action.

In addition, family law in conjunction with the cyber law and criminal law also make it tricky since the victims of the offenses to seek justice extremely hard to do. The unavailability of specialized legal systems to address such conflict also limits availability of viable solutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

- **Specific Legal Framework for Online Relationship Disputes**

The Indian legal system does not have any particular legal system that deals with legal conflicts brought about by online dating platforms and matrimonial websites. Part of the flaw that can be considered by lawmakers is the way that some regulation may be drafted concerning family law or cyber law that specifically focuses on issues such as digital consent, online misrepresentation, online false promises presented on a digital platform. A clear statutory framework should also be present in addition to providing legal predictability and enable the courts to effectively adjudicate cases of deception in an online relationship.

- **Mandatory Identity Verification on Matrimonial and Dating Platforms**

Making of false or misleading accounts is one of the biggest contributors to deceitful relationships on the Internet. Online platforms also need to utilize compulsory identity verification systems, such as checking with government-created identification documents. This would significantly eradicate the chances of impersonation, identity fraud and falsification of marital status or personal background.

- **Regulation and Accountability of Online Platforms**

More regulation needs to be applied to online relationship resource. The social networks ought

to have grievance redressal mechanisms which would allow groups to laud over deceit, harassment or malicious practice. Besides, a certain degree of regulation needs to be implemented through the regulative institutions regarding these platforms maintaining the transparency of the profile verification procedure and excluding the misleading information.

- **Strengthening Digital Evidence Mechanisms**

Because conflicts that occur as a result of online relationships usually have electronic records in the form of messages, emails, and social media dialogue, mechanisms of digital evidence collection and authenticity ought to be reinforced. There should be special training of courts and investigating authorities in the area of cyber forensics to be able to adequately handle and verify electronic records in the legal courts.

- **Awareness and Digital Literacy Programs**

It is also true that the number of people who commit online cheating on relationship sites is high without any knowledge of the dangers of digital deception. Publicity of awareness should also be done that would be directed towards educating people on the use of the internet Safely like checking olds, not performing any banking activities with strangers and even storing the digital communication as evidence in case of any quarrels. Greater digital literacy would enable people to make decisions that are informed in online relationships.

- **Clear Judicial Guidelines on Consent and Deception**

The question of whether consent in Web relationships was obtained by deceit or not is a common issue that courts grapple with. The judiciary can come up with more apparent guidelines of interpretation in order to differentiate between trivial overstatements and material falsification that vitiate consent. This would bring some certainty in judicial proceedings on situations that are related to online relationships.

- **Establishment of Specialized Cyber and Family Dispute Cells**

It is possible to improve the field of dispute resolution to significant levels, by establishing special units based on the consolidation of expertise in the field of cyber and family law, taking into consideration the growing number of disputes in terms of digital interactions. Such

departments could also assist victims to report internet fraud, provide legal counsel and can accelerate dismissal of incidents involving lies within internet connections.

- **Victim Support and Legal Assistance Mechanisms**

One of the consequences of being deceived in an online relationship is the emotional distress suffered by the victim, loss of money as well as deterioration of social status. Such people should be provided with greater access to legal aid services and counseling. The institution of confidential reporting systems and victim support systems would help in motivating a victim of violence to pursue justice without fear of social stigma.

CONCLUSION

Digitization of matrimonial practices is an important change in the socio-legal aspects of marriage in India. Although online matrimonial sites have democratized the process of selecting a partner and have removed geographical and social barriers, they have also created new areas of vulnerabilities, which question the main principle of free and informed consent. As illustrated in this paper, consent in online matrimonial deals is usually influenced by the digitally created identities which makes it very vulnerable to deceit, misrepresentation and fraud. Legal provisions and judicial pronouncements indicate that Indian courts have been progressive in appreciating that concealment of material facts including previous marriage, financial status or identity is fraud enough to vitiate consent. Nevertheless, the lack of a dedicated regulatory framework to regulate matrimonial platforms still poses considerable loopholes in the protection of users. The problem of intermediary liability, data privacy, fraud on the internet, and jurisdiction have not been sufficiently addressed, thus putting users at risk of emotional and financial losses. Moreover, the fact that matrimonial scams are becoming more sophisticated, with occasional organized networks of cybercrime and technological means of forgery of personalities and digital manipulation, proves that legal change is necessary. Although courts have focused on user care and disclaimers on the platforms, individual care is not enough in the context of systemic risks inherent in digital ecosystems. Considering these issues, this paper suggests a more detailed regulatory framework, such as the use of mandatory verification of user data, more stringent disclosure requirements, improved redressal of grievances, and the establishment of more specific guidelines on platform responsibility. Also, the use of the principle of data protection, combined with the governance of the matrimonial platform, could also guarantee that the consent of users is not

only obtained but is also informed and meaningful. Finally, the paper wraps up by concluding that online matrimonial websites are a much needed and desirable extension of the traditional match making services, but have to be based on transparency, accountability and legal protection. It is crucial that the integrity of consent is guaranteed in the digital age, not only to safeguard individuals themselves but also ensure the sanctity of marriage as a social institution.