

Aufgabenstellung

1. Point out those aspects that
 - a. refer to the social and cultural background of Dharam and Ninotchka.
 - b. establish parallels and allusions to W. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.
2. Compare the causes of the tragic developments in the case of Dharam and Ninotchka and in *Romeo and Juliet*.
3. Examine the author's use of language with regard to the effect of her article on the reader.
4. The *National Youth Agency in Britain* (NYA) runs a website which offers support to young people. There is a page on arranged marriages, especially among Indian families, in which it says:

"Supporters of the custom say that divorce rates are lower than among western society because parents are better able to choose a suitable partner for their children. The counter argument suggests that the pressure of society as a whole and from the two families concerned keep the marriage together whether it is successful or not. Divorce therefore is not an option."

In an email to the NYA, discuss these arguments and state your opinion. Support your standpoint by referring to texts studied in class.

Material: Lovers against a dynasty

The Hinduja

Last weekend Dharam Hinduja, 22-year-old scion of one of Britain's wealthiest Asian families, set fire to himself in a Mauritius hotel room, watched by his young wife. Why did he end his life in such a terrible way? Julie Flint uncovers the story of a latter-day Romeo and Juliet.

THE HOTEL Rossignol – Nightingale Hotel – is a typical little back-street hotel in the centre of St. Louis, the capital of Mauritius. Its name is the only romantic thing about it. Its best room costs less than £30 a night. But for the son of Britain's wealthiest Asian industrialist it was a bolt-hole, a stepping stone to a jump half a world away from the problems of colour, class and creed that

5 separated him, even in marriage, from the woman he loved.

On Saturday, 16 May, his cover was blown. Dharam Hinduja saw his photograph on the front page of the local newspaper and learned that a dozen relatives were hot on his trail, lodged only a few miles away in suites costing more than £ 800.

He must have feared discovery, despite having faked a kidnapping in India and having laid a false

10 trail in Mauritius that baffled the island's police force. With nowhere left to run, and head and heart in fatal conflict, he bought a bottle of paint-thinner, poured it over himself and set it alight, watched by his wife of four months.

Neither of them shouted for help as the flames covered 75 per cent of his body. He died in a London hospital three days later at the end of a love story more tragic than that of Shakespeare's

15 star-cross'd lovers, who managed to die together when everything else had failed. [...]

A family spokesman in Bombay said there would be a statement on Dharam's death – but not yet. “You couldn't imagine a better human being than this boy. He had all the qualities – consideration, modesty, a mind and a heart. I couldn't dream of having a better son than him.”

20 DHARAM HINDUJA was the youngest son of the three children of Srichand Hinduja. He attended Westminster School – perfecting the English his London-based parents never quite mastered – and graduated from America's Wharton Business School last year, remembered there as “a very good student, well-liked and well-mannered”. Had he lived, he would doubtless have completed his law studies at Washington's Georgetown University.

25 If his education, however, was wholly Western, his upbringing was that of a highly conservative, close-knit Hindu family. Vegetarian, teetotal and non-smoking, his parents wanted nothing but an arranged marriage for their only son. “It has worked for me and my wife”, his father said recently. “We have been very happy ...”.

30 But Dharam had already met his Juliet – Ninotchka Sargon, the youngest of 11 children of Anglo-Indian parents who would have been regarded as ‘half-castes’ or ‘chichis’ by families such as the Hinduja. [...]

On 18 January, the young couple married secretly at Chelsea Register Office in a ceremony witnessed not by family members but by two London friends. [...]

35 It is not clear whether the family knew of the marriage on 13 May, the day that Dharam's burnt-out car was found on a road near Bombay airport with charred shreds of his clothes inside. The family feared a kidnapping, but others believed Dharam was faking his own death – building a new identity, perhaps, for a new wife. [...]

40 They arrived the following morning – father, uncles, aunts and a private detective – and established their headquarters in the exclusive Royal Palm Hotel, designed in marble and stone to allow the Indian Ocean breezes to filter through. The Mauritius police, who had been searching for the couple for the past 36 hours, received a ‘stop search’ order. Their names had been found on the evening flight to Singapore; Dharam's father would be waiting there when he arrived at the airport.

At this point, the best-laid plans went astray. An afternoon newspaper, *Le Mauricien*, ran a front-page story about the family's presence, hinting at a bitter feud. [...]

45 Early on Saturday morning, Dharam Hinduja asked the hotel reception for a newspaper. On seeing his photograph, “he immediately folded the paper up and went upstairs”, a receptionist told *The Observer*. “After a moment, the chambermaid came downstairs and told me smoke was coming out of the room. I ran up and saw the bedroom door wide open and the young man and his wife in the corridor. He was burned from head to foot. The flesh was falling off him. He ran and tried to
50 throw himself over the balcony. His wife tried to restrain him, crying: ‘Don't do that. I love you. I love you. We will take you to the hospital’ ”. [...]

In the few hours that Dharam was in the Burns Unit, the full extent of the pressures on him became clear. "In Mauritius he was facing a critical period where he needed support and the girl was all he had", says a doctor who spent many hours at his bedside, seeking to reconcile everyone there.

55 "She was very beautiful, but she was immature. The family were accepting her, but she had European thinking and they wanted her to learn Asian habits. They were prepared to teach her, in their home, but she told him: 'I don't want to live with your family'".

"She wanted to get everything. She has lost everything now." [...]

60 Their mourning over, says a longtime family friend, the Hinduja's must study the lesson of their tragedy – a lesson that confronts a growing number of Asian families in foreign environments.

"They still have about 10 kids of marriageable age. How are they going to treat these kids? Are they going to push them all into a corner? Or are they going to talk to them so they are not driven into such awful actions?"

From: *The Observer*, Sunday 24 May, 1992

Annotations:

I. 2	Mauritius	island state in the Indian Ocean
I. 6	to blow one's cover (inf.)	to make sth. known that was secret
I. 20	Westminster School	one of the most famous public schools in the UK
I. 29	chichis	here: vulgar people lacking taste

Hilfsmittel:

Den Prüflingen stehen einsprachige sowie für den schulischen Gebrauch geeignete zweisprachige Wörterbücher der Allgemeinsprache (Deutsch-Englisch/Englisch-Deutsch) zur Verfügung.