

Inter Religious Marriages

After reading view on Sant Bhindranwale: Holy Martyr or Antihero [SR: Sep. 2007], quite a few friends have asked us, to express our views on Inter Religious Marriage. I am a Sikh and my wife, Mrs. Irmengard Singh is a Germany Christian.

Not a long time back, the gurdwaras in Malaysia would perform the Anand Karaj in our shrines only, if both the parties were Sikhs. The non-Sikh spouse must be converted first, before the marriage in the Gurdwara.

Let us first look back historically. Around 400 years ago, the Anand Karaj was given legal sanctity by the then Government of India. Prior to it, the marriages were performed in 'temples', which were accepted. Let us not go behind the legal sanction.

The conversion of the non-Sikh spouse before marriage may smack of Islamic forcible conversion of a *kafir*. But Sikhism does not advocate compulsion, only persuasion. The use of religion for political ends, is an entirely different matter. No doubt, it can be misused, but name the party, which does not employ it, for its benefit. This impact will be reduced, as the standard of living, education and knowledge becomes wide spread, among both our sexes. The male domination over dames will vanish, as females become economically independent.

Example is the "Namdhari Sikh" to be treated at par, as a "Sehajdhari Sikh", to increase your vote bank. Therefore please do not shun the non practising Sikhs, but welcome them to the Sikh fold.

A Sikh girl marrying a non-Sikh boy, faces problems from her community. Same goes for Muslim, Parsi and Hindu maidens. It is based on the age-old patriarchal society, where male dominates in every sphere of life, with female to obey and follow him. I say, encourage our Sikh girl to practice our ways and impress upon her non-Sikh husband. It shows equality of sexes, which is bound to increase, with our women standing on their own feet, in every way, including financially and educationally. Change with the changing times and grant equal status to our opposite sex, by using foresight and far sight.

To which religion, the children of inter religious marriage belong? As per practice, the religion of the father is adopted. Personally I do not subscribe to that view. The best example is my own. I am married to a German Christian for 51 years and we have a fully grown-up adult son. The son understands the liberalism in religion. The spiritual philosophy searches the supreme ultimate and is not concerned with the practices of a community, where the clergy steps in, overtakes the society and tries to impose its will and interpretation. The interpretation will vary, with changing times to fit in with altered conditions. One example, is Ten Commandments.

Our Gurus have shown their way to God and have never called it the only way. The philosophy is rich and interpretations fit in with changing times. Let an individual be convinced, on his own, which will be life lasting. The doors must be kept open for all, including all offsprings. We have to win the hearts, without any compulsion.

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Population of Sikhs

In the January 2008 edition of *The Sikh Review*, Dr Dalvinder Singh Grewal has come up with the figure of 9 crore Sikligar and Vanjara Sikhs in India. But if you go through REF[2] of list of Scheduled Tribes and

Scheduled Castes in India, the total listed Sikligars and Vanjaras (irrespective of their religion) do not add up to anywhere near even the one crore figure.

Unless proven wrong, I am highly doubtful about figures presented by Dr. Grewal. For example, the Sindhis are listed as 0.2 million, but in reality they are 2.20 million. Also, Sindhis have hijacked RSS and unwittingly they have also been showing their affiliation to Sikhism, much to the chagrin of Sikh community where the Sindhi controlled RSS is seen to be interfering in Sikh affairs!

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A Man with Two Faces

The Sikh Review

[SR October, 2007 (p 69) and January 2008, (p 65-68) provide different perspectives about Mr Shekhar Gupta, the first as a person, and the second as editor of a reputed Newspaper started by Ram Nath Goenka. This is confusing for an ordinary reader since one pleads with the Sikh Panth to honour him, while the other, himself is a journalist, paints him in a different light.

S. Patwant Singh has been fighting for human rights for Sikhs for the past two decades, as far as people like me know it. The other person - a senior surgeon in medical profession, as well as a devout Sikh. No doubt, Sikhs believe in human rights of every person whosoever he/ she may be. Did people among credulous Sikhs gain anything by doing things that divide Sikhs into self seeking groups while people inimical to Sikhs take advantage of it?

Perhaps it is the psychology of minority communities, including Jews, that, in their self interest, they are easily way of falling into the trap set up by enemies of their own people. Hitler used Jews against their own relatives in Germany. In the famous case of Rosenbergs, in USA in the last century, the real brother of Mrs Rosenberg, who was on TV a few years ago, admitted his involvement against his own sister who met the death penalty. This tendency amongst Sikhs has been exploited by the British as well as other rulers of India.

The question arises how much time Sikhs will require to unlearn this habit and learn to be decent human beings who are not for sale.

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