

VISION FROM TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE

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It is a small thing. Today it has become a common thing. Such things happen regularly in small and big cities. But for that young man's mother living in a village it is not a small thing by any reckoning. It has been a traumatic experience for her. The young man has taken a step which his mother could not even imagine! His mother cannot believe it! How can such a step be taken by my well-behaved and obedient son? The mother cannot understand it!

The son of that mother has not done anything very unbecoming. He has only informed his mother and father that he has decided to marry a girl, whom he thinks, will be a suitable life-partner to him. But for the mother the unthinkable thing is that, the girl is from a different religion and culture. It does not matter to her that the girl has a very good character. She is a very cultured and sociable person. She is well educated and she has a good job. But the fact that she is of another religion and culture, hurts her constantly as a pebble in her shoe pricks her. The pebble in her shoe can be thrown away; but what can she do when her dear son is determined to marry the girl of another religion and culture?

The mother says that she and her husband are leading a very religious life. We regularly go to temple and worship God performing religious rites. We pray for our son and for his welfare. Then, where did we go wrong that our only son thinks of marrying a girl outside our religion and culture? Does he not know that marriage is not only between a boy and a girl but also that their families, their communities and their cultures are involved? Before he decided to marry the girl, did he consider about his parents, his friends and his relatives? What will the people in our community think now?

The mother is deeply pained with by these and similar questions. It is traumatic for her to think about her dear son's mixed marriage with a girl of a different community and religion.

The people of all religions and cultures desire that their young men and women marry within their own communities and religions. Naturally the people have respect and high regards for their own religions and cultures and are proud of them. So they are keen that their children marry within their own religion and culture and preserve their traditions.

Then, today the marriage breakdown cases among young people are alarmingly very high. If the rate of divorces are very high among the young people married within the community and religion, then what will be cases of mixed marriage of people belonging to different religions and cultures? The parents and elders in the communities are really worried. So it is natural and I understand the trauma and agony of the mother of the young man.

I can speak of Christian religion that it does not encourage in the least the mixed marriage of Christians with the persons of other religions. On the contrary, Christian religion opposes tooth and nail the mixed marriages because the Christian who contracts mixed marriage does not usually practice his/her religion. Christians believe that the persons who marry from outside his/her religion either do not practice his/her religion or go to the religion of the life-partner.

The Christian religion sees many more difficulties and problems in mixed marriages than in the marriages contracted within the religious community. The Christians are afraid that the mixed marriages end in divorces more frequently than otherwise. I know cases of Christian parents who oppose the mixed marriages of their son or daughter with all their might and even drive him/her out of their house and cut off all relationships if their ward dared to go ahead in contracting a mixed marriage.

Today there are more cases of marriage-breakdowns and divorces among the Christian men and women than in the past. This is all the more reason for the Christians to be cautious about mixed marriages and even strongly oppose them. All the same, I do not think, it is proper, to oppose tooth and nail if a son or daughter, after knowing a person well for a considerable time and after mature consideration, inform the parents the decision to marry that person in a mixed marriage.

In such a situation what is needed, is to render help to the proposed couple. They need counselling about various aspects of marriage from the points of religion, spirituality of sex, family, etc. The aspirants of the mixed marriage must also be helped to overcome the possible difficulties and problems of mixed marriages.

The mixed marriages are not bad in every way. There are also many positive sides. As the mother, who desires to stop her son marrying outside her religion, says, “marriage is not only between a boy and a girl but also their families, their communities and their cultures are involved”. In mixed marriages the life-partners’ family, religion, community and culture – all things are very different. But one needs not consider them as Herculean task which cannot be done. Instead one can think of them as opportunities to profit from them with appropriate steps.

The young men and women who come to me for advice about their desire to marry outside their religion and community, I tell them to study and know well the family, community, religion and culture of their proposed life-partner. I advise them to be open to accept and assimilate what is noble, what is enriching and what is uplifting in them. I wish that not only the aspirants of mixed marriages but also their family people also make an effort to know and accept those things. Remember, the Bible says, “A person will reap exactly what s/he sows” (Gal 6,7).

Any religion and culture can contribute to the enriching of a person. Take my own example. The study of different religions and cultures as well as living or intermingling with persons of other religions and cultures have immensely enriched my life and my vision. I believe that my own life and vision has certainly been enriched by the life and message of Lord Jesus in the Christian religion and culture. These richness of my life and vision have certainly found expressions in my articles and books. I am happy to note here that my reader-friends and the critics of my books have greatly appreciated the values in my writings, which are fortified by my life and my world vision.

In mixed marriages there are certainly many problems and obstacles like the opposition of relatives, isolation from old friends, the difficulties of accepting the religion and culture of the life-partner, and the absence of public acceptance, etc. So mixed marriage is certainly a great challenge. So it is a step to be taken only after much thought and understand everything involved in it. The aspirants to mixed marriage must be firm in their decision and must be willing to face

and overcome every obstacle on the way. The decision and willingness call for a lot of love and care for one another and for all concerned people.(contact the author: ciss@satyam.net.in)

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