

LIVING

Mixed Marriage : How's the State of Affairs?

EVER since their existence in this planet humans have been travelling. This wanderlust has not only led to discoveries of new and exotic lands but also to the creation of mixed races. In this century there is perhaps not a single race that can be called completely "pure" no matter what neo-Nazis and their kind say.

Nowadays mixed marriages are very common even in the most conservative of families. So much so that many parents are almost resigned to the fact that their daughter or son living abroad will marry a foreigner. Others are so paranoid that they make sure their offspring is married off to a native first before venturing into the unknown world.

The numbers of mixed marriages, however, are steadily on the rise as more and more people go abroad for education or work.

So what are these marriages really like? Do they work or do they inevitably lead to disaster? The statistics on this question would probably be more or less 50-50. That is to say, as many mixed marriages fail as they work out. Well actually this can be applied to all marriages mixed or not. Some say that the differences in culture cause tremendous friction, others insist that they only serve to make the relationship more interesting and rewarding.

The difference in culture, of course, can lead to painful consequences. Michelle, a French born business executive married to a Bangladeshi banker and living abroad, says that she went through a tremendous cultural shock when she came to Bangladesh. "I just could not believe it," she says rolling her eyes. "I had to sit in a room decked with jewelry from head to foot, for hours while women peered into my face and asked me all sorts of personal questions like if I was pregnant or not!" Other things such as the blatant chauvinism in our society also offended her, so much so that she has decided never to come back to Bangladesh. For Shahnawaz, her husband, the choice is a cruel one. It is either to stay with Michelle and always live away from his par-

ents and motherland or forget the marriage completely.

Another sad case is of Ava, a German and Aziz, a Bangladeshi engineer. They met in Frankfurt as students, going to the same university. After a three-month long affair the couple decided to tie the knot. After the initial shock, Aziz's parents asked the couple to visit them in Sylhet, their home town. "Although I knew it would be different, I just could not get used to the constant lack of privacy. I hardly ever saw Aziz alone. Just about anybody male or female, would

by Aasha Mehreen Amin

come into my room," Ava recounts.

But, as we know, the grass is not greener on the other side. The person from this side of the globe faces as many problems when he/she marries and lives with a spouse whose home is a thousand miles away. Farida, a Bangladeshi woman working for a local NGO, was once married to an Australian. She says she faced a lot of problems from her in-laws: "They just could not accept me." The rea-

son: "I think it was because I wasn't white and I was just too different from them."

The reception on this side of the globe is usually much warmer. Foreigners in Asian countries are treated with great respect, almost to the point of slavishness, perhaps because of that hidden fascination for white skin although one should not underestimate the general hospitality of people of the Asian countries.

Children from mixed marriages go through a roller coaster ride. At times they are flying sky high because of all

the adulation showered on them for their unusually striking good looks. At other times they are caught in the middle of the two cultures of their parents, never really knowing what their identity is. The parents, knowingly or unknowingly, begin a tug of war with their kids as the rope, each imposing his/her culture or religious beliefs over their offsprings as much as possible. Luckily, the kids are too smart to let this nonsense go on for too long and they make their own choices either leaning more toward the Western way of life — or the Eastern way.

But mixed marriages are not always doomed to fail. There are plenty of stories with happy endings to be optimistic. Sadia, a Bangladeshi married to Gary, an English banker, does not have to say that she is extremely happy. Married for almost two years and with a beautiful baby girl, the couple is still very much in love. This has a lot to do with Sadia's exposure to the West since she was a child and Gary's genuine interest in her culture. Apart from adopting Sadia's religion, Islam, Gary has also learnt quite a bit of Bangla and all the norms and graces of Bangladeshi culture. This has made him extremely popular with his in-laws much to Sadia's delight. On her side, Sadia is also very solicitous with her own in-laws and has resigned herself to life in a country far away from her homeland and from her parents.

The key to this kind of success seems to lie in attitude. When two people from different cultures decide to start a life together they should be ready to make significant adjustments. Having an open mind and accepting their partners for what they really are (culture, religion and all) are good starting points. This is of course more easily said than done since it may mean almost a metamorphosis of one's personality. But as romantics would say, where there is love there is a way.

(The names of people have been purposely changed to respect their right to anonymity.)



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EVER the most organized and unflappable of us have days that can only be described as "one of those." You suddenly find yourself stuck in the office for an extra hour, coping with a crisis — or your normally well-oiled home routine falls apart at the seams — and you're left with just 15 minutes to pick up the pieces and look great.

If there is a golden rule for situations such as these (apart from trying not to let them happen) it is: Don't panic. Panicking is a waste of precious time.

Our check list below will help you take the right steps in the right order. The amount of time you spend on each step will

Ten Quick Ways to Pick Yourself up with Ease

by Sylvia Saleem

differ from woman to woman. If you know, for instance, that you can't do your eye make-up in anything less than 20 minutes, don't try. Leave it on and work around it.

1. Take a deep breath and start here: tuck your hair out of the way under a towel. You

won't have time for heated rollers or the like; forget them. Your best bet is to hide your hair under a colourful wrap of scarves or to pin it severely back and concentrate on a super make-up instead. If you happen to have a short, beautifully shaped haircut that looks good wet or dry, shampoo your hair when you shower, and comb it sleekly into shape after blotting dry.

2. Check your nails. Is your polish chipped? Take it off with a wad of cotton wool soaked in remover (don't rub — just press the cotton wool over each nail for a few seconds to soften the polish, then wipe slowly off). Nails are always on show when you shake hands, hold a glass or reach for a biscuit. Better off have plain unpainted ones than to spend the evening trying to keep your fingers out of sight. Remove polish before you bathe, so every trace of remover is washed away.

3. Strip off all your make-up. If you take ages to put your eye make-up together, then don't touch it. Just remove everything else around it. Otherwise, use handy little oil-soaked pads for whisking off eye make-up and lipstick, and take off all traces of foundation and powder as well. A party face starts with a fresh make-up, and when you look good, you feel good. So don't skip this step, it is important. Follow cleanser with a wipe-over using a cotton pad soaked in tonic or freshener, leaving skin really clean.

4. Shower. A vital part of your ready-in-a-jiffy programme, a three-minute shower does more than cleanse your body — it helps relax and refresh you as well. Use one of the new gel-type body shampoos for a really quick clean up, or any of the liquid bath concentrates that you can drizzle on to a wet sponge and work into a lather all over your body. Stimulates skin, sloughs off city grime, gives you an all-over glow. Finish off by directing a

strong spray of water, either as hot or as cold as you can bear, on to the back of your neck for a few seconds. Wonderfully relaxing!

While you're still in the bathroom, here's a one-minute exercise for you to try, to complete the unwinding process. Just allow your body to dangle loosely down from your waist, keeping your legs apart and every muscle as limp as possible. Sway from side to side like a tree in a strong wind, then s-l-o-w-l-y pull yourself upright again.

5. Sthl in the bathroom, towel dry and work body lotion into your skin, moisturizer over your face. The steamy atmosphere in the bathroom is great for ensuring maximum penetration of lotions and creams; after a bath or shower, your pores are open and relaxed, your skin receptive. This is the time to mist your favourite cologne over your body. Conditions couldn't be more favourable for getting the most out of moisturizers and fragrance than here and now. Emerge scented, softened and really relaxed.

6. Work on your face. Start with foundation and smooth a light film over your face (use a damp sponge for sheer, even coverage but don't experiment if you haven't tried the sponge method before — it could cost you precious minutes getting the hang of it). Set foundation with a light dusting of translucent loose face powder, brushing the excess off with a clean piece of cotton wool or a face brush.

7. Bring your brushes into play. Use a small one to shape quickly your brows with a brown powder shadow. Load another small thick brush with highlighter (cream, silver or gold, depending on your colouring and the occasion) and stroke this quickly on to brow-bones and the tops of cheekbones. With another small brush add a burnished berry tone or a warm pink colour and contour your face. Apply colour

to cheek hollows (brings out cheek bones, is better than applying two blobs of pink to the round part of your cheeks) and, for extra glow, dust a little colour lightly under your chin and up from your temples to "frame" your face.

8. Your eyes. These are important, so spend a little time either deepening the colour of your shadow (if you didn't remove your eye make-up) or use a soft, rich colour in cream or pencil form, and concentrate it on the eyelids, with just a bit carried under the eye as well. Blend in the edges so there are no definite lines. Now you're ready for mascara. Start at the outer corner of top lashes, continue all round eye, coating each lash. Instead of applying a second coat, simply touch the tips of all lashes with your mascara wand or brush; adds definition and makes lashes look lush.

9. Lip colour is almost as important as eye make-up. You must start fresh, say all the experts. Never pile another layer of lipstick on top of whatever's left. Use your lipstick to shape and colour your mouth — a lip brush takes longer, looks better, but this is an emergency, remember? If your hair is pinned back from your face or shaped wetly to your head; you will need a bright mouth all the more. Choose a really ripe colour — a good deep red or a rich carnation — and apply a gloss to the centre of your mouth only.

10. Slip into your clothes, brush your hair or work a little magic with some scarves and hide the whole thing. Take a long look in the mirror. You made it!

Glimpses of Ramadan

by Lavina Ambreen Ahmed

SHRILLING sound of the alarm clock and the loud sirens outside at an unusually hour between 3:30-4:30 a.m. remind us — it's Ramadan again, time to leave our comfy beds and get ready for sehri.

The month of Ramadan is of great significance to the Muslims. The Holy Quran (the religious scriptures of the Muslims) first appeared as a whole and was introduced to all the believers of Islam in Ramadan. To practice restraint, to help the needy, to close the gap between the rich and poor and create a bond of brotherhood and love are some of the messages Ramadan conveys to us.

Majority of the Muslims all over the world at this time of the Islamic calendar unite in a sole purpose, which is to practise restraint by fasting from dawn to dusk and obeying other conditions. They perform all these rituals with a quiet fervour, zeal and integrity.

Yes, like every year Ramadan is here again, bringing with it the familiar characteristics and pictures that are expected of this month.

Normally, when we picture Ramadan we think of the scorching heat of the summer; but this year's Ramadan is a refreshing change as it coincides

finally do get up and slowly get ready for the day or what is left of it at 10:30 or 11 a.m., they still bear that puffy, sleep filled look on their faces and proceed on with their daily chores with a reluctance. "It's easy to figure out, who's fasting or not, by their faces," says someone adding, "as most people are so transparent."

But what about the rest of the lazy-bones who put on weight during the sehri-iftar time? How do they burn up all that fat? Ah, you've guessed it! Shopping, what else? It's a tried and tested form of exercise in vogue for centuries now, ever since shops were invented. An effective way of burning up calories as well as burning a hole in one's wallet!

There are signs of festivity and expectations everywhere in the air as Eid, the biggest religious festival of the Muslims, is knocking at the door. After a month of fasting comes this eagerly awaited occasion. Though we do not have Santas to shower us with surprise gifts, no X-mas trees and stockings bearing presents, we have our own charms.

From beggars to the big tycoons, everyone has some expectations. Beggars beg for more alms promising the kind hearted a bright future, the rickshawpuller charges more fare as an excuse of Eid, the

ing one's way through the crowd, the lucky victor emerges from the shops with hands filled with packets and a ear to ear grin as if saying, "I've managed to come back alive — with all my things." This shopping spree starts from 11 a.m. and goes on till the late hours of night. The shops remain open even on the weekly holidays. The prices of essentials from food to clothing are higher than usual, and the way salesmen treat the customers with aloof indifference is really insulting. They know, no matter what, their wares they will sell in times of need.

Now, let us look at the afternoon scenario, when it is only half an hour or so till iftar starts. The whole metropolis takes a totally different look. There are makeshift iftar stalls at every street corner, even one in front of the British Council library. These will no doubt perish with the Ramadan season. All the fast-food joints or restaurants, usually closed in the day time (or discreetly doing business behind a curtain whatever they may sell), deal in various types of mouth watering iftar items i.e., *phajjo*, *bora*, *beguni*, *boot*, *chola*, *halim*, *jilapi* etc. in the afternoon time.

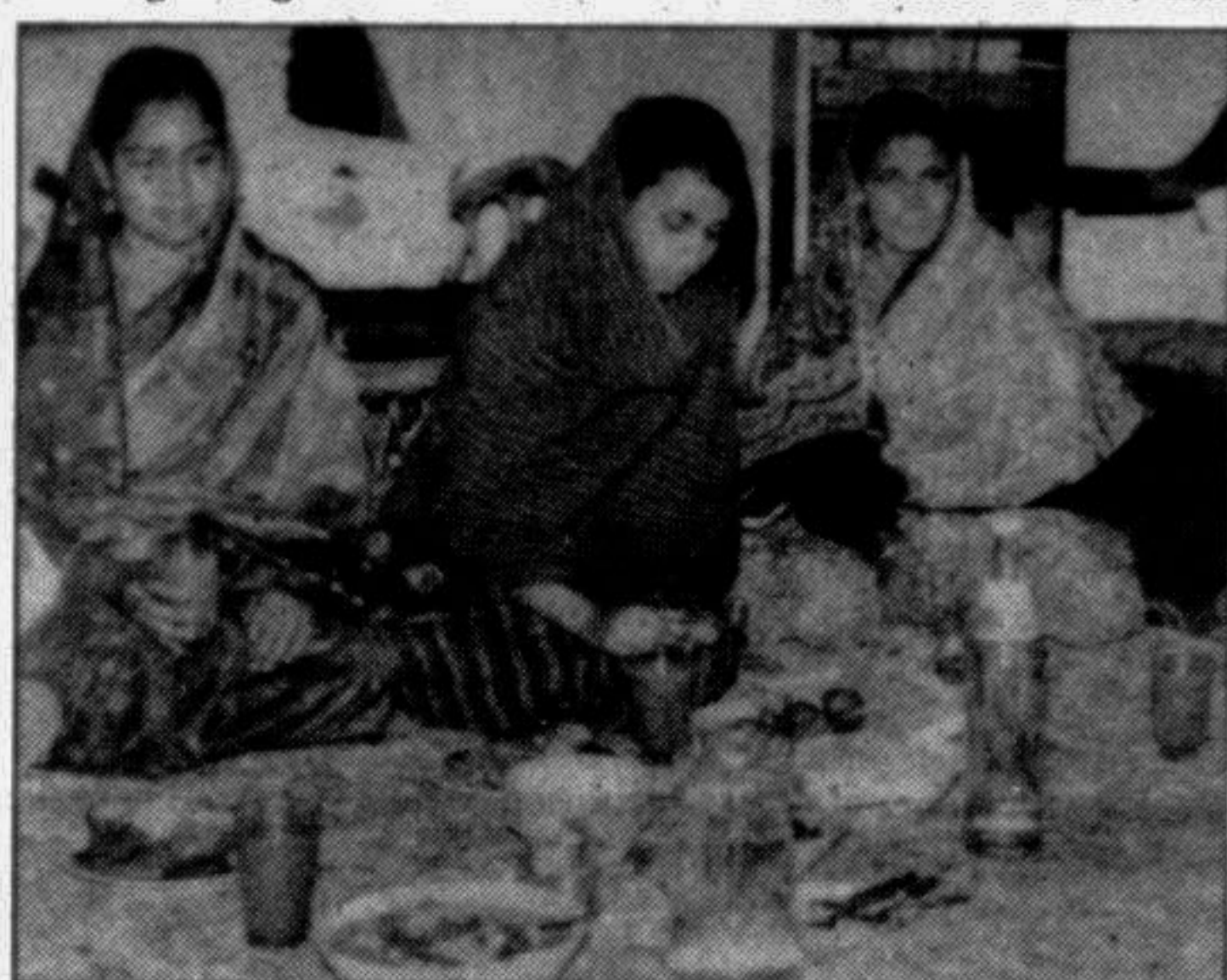
The men tirelessly prepare those iftar items that are a relief to the busy people who do not have time to make their own iftar or are adventurous enough to try out stall food, even at the risk of a major stomach upset. That the average Bangalee loves to eat is never so obvious as it is this time of the year. The fact that most of these food are prepared in unhygienic surroundings don't seem to bother them. Thus, the iftar items are sold within minutes of display, like a hard to resist sale.

Late at night it is almost ethereal to see the street side restaurants illuminated with sehri arrangements, houses too are alight, some neighbourhood even buzz with activity, and in the lateness of the hour it only adds to the Ramadan attraction.

What, with all this eating and shopping, the true meaning of Ramadan might get overshadowed, but the true pious and religious lot always treat this holy month with the right amount of solemnity and set great examples of restraint.

But, the main thing the Ramadan accomplishes in doing is to bring harmony and togetherness in a family, as the busy breed of the 90's people hardly find time to spare a few moments with each other. So, sehri and iftar can be an ideal place for chatting with one's family members and catching up on everyone's life.

Only days left before Eid comes and let's hope we don't forget what Ramadan represents once the month ends and also wish that every Muslim, irrespective of social status, can forget all their miseries for one day and have a truly happy Eid.



Having "Ifaar" together in a family

with the pleasant spring time weather.

Let us visualize an everyday Ramadan morning. Is it any different from any other day? No matter how imperceptible, one has to admit there are some changes. The morning starts a little later than usual, time schedules of the universities and other educational institutions (if not closed) as well as some offices are readjusted. No crazy traffic jam in the city streets, no buzz of people going to their work, a handful of joggers roaming the parks and sidewalks (must be a sad time for the muggers, who keep a watchful eye on the morning joggers). In other words, the empty, barren look of the city resembles a "ghost-town" in the early morning. Even when these sleepy heads

house maid looks forward to nice new clothes and even the street kid living in a *basti* has some desires.

The children too are happy with their new things, teenagers and young people keep themselves busy with planning a month ahead what they will wear, what they can do and where they'll go. Mothers and wives on the other hand carefully go through recipes, trying to introduce sumptuous and exotic new dishes for Eid, while fathers and husbands fume thinking about the extravagance of this occasion.

The mad rush at the shopping centres proves that fasting or not fasting, necessity comes first, which in this case is to get what one wants first. By pushing, shoving and fight-

Seed Cake

1 lb. flour
1 lb. soft sugar
1 lb. butter
6 eggs
1 teaspoonful baking powder
1 teaspoonful caraway seeds

Beat the butter to a cream, then add the sugar and beat them together for a few minutes. Add one egg and a little of the flour and beat for a few minutes. Continue until all the eggs and the flour have been beaten in, then add the caraway seeds and sprinkle in the baking powder last of all. Pour the mixture into a lined cake tin and bake in a moderate oven for about 2 hours.

Iced Sandwich Cake

8 eggs
the weight of 8 eggs in sugar
the weight of 4 eggs in flour
1/2 teaspoon baking powder

Cookery

essence of vanilla
water icing
FILLING:
1 tablespoonful butter
2 tablespoonfuls soft sugar
2 tablespoonfuls raspberry or strawberry jam

Beat the ingredients up. Pour the mixture into two shallow round tins that have been lined with buttered paper and bake in rather a quick oven for about 15 minutes, or until it is well risen and firm to the touch. When the cakes are ready, turn them out and allow to cool. Then spread the top of one cake with the filling and place the other cake on it. Cover the cake with a thin layer of the icing.

To Make the Filling — Beat the butter and sugar together, then mix in the jam.

Rice-flour Cakes

1 lb roasted and sifted rice flour
1 lb soft sugar
5 eggs
a few drops of essence of lemon

Put the sugar and yolks of eggs into a basin and beat them together until light and frothy. Have the whites of eggs beaten to a stiff froth and stir them in alternately with the flour, then add the flavouring. Pour the mixture in to a tin that has been greased and dusted out with flour and sugar, fill it only half full, and bake in rather a quick oven until well risen and firm to the touch. It will take from 30 to 40 minutes.

N. B. This mixture will make a good Jam Sandwich or Swiss Roll.

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A glimpse of a fashion show — Star photo



Dolly Sharma & Mohan Bhandary on Zee TV



Prabha Sinha & Surendra Paal on Zee TV