

INTERFAITH MARRIAGES: IN THE LIGHT OF ISLAMIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

The present study intends to investigate the various aspects associated with interfaith marriages practiced among the Muslim communities. There are concomitant factors that need some understanding where two partners belong to different faith. Islamic teachings also differ for both men and women who wish to marry outside their belief system. In Islam, men are allowed to marry women of the book (*ahl e kitab*); these females belong to either Islam, Christianity or Judaism. However, Muslim women can only marry Muslim men. Various issues arise in result of such marriages, these include conversion of the spouse, socialization of the children, identity of the parents and children etc. Social and cultural elements also intersect with the lives of such couples and families. Future of the children is likely to get affected by the religious ideology they intend to follow. Forced conversions are discouraged in the Islamic ideology, however some individuals change their faith just to marry the person of their choice. Mutual understanding can make things work in married life though they face various challenges due to social and religious bindings. Regardless of the religious ideology, political and legal frameworks also have implications for the mixed marriages.

Keywords: Interfaith marriage, Islamic ideology, People of book, Conversion, Social Identity, Child socialization.

INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at developing an understanding of interfaith marriages, its associated factors along with the challenges. The main emphasis is on these marriages among the Muslims. In general terms, legally recognized personal relationship between two individuals (man and woman) is referred as marriage; moreover, spouses following different belief systems who get married makes an interfaith marriage (Hayat and Basharat, 2019). Judaism, Christianity and Islam are said to be the divine religions; the first two among these do not encourage their followers to marry outside their faith though Islamic views regarding interfaith marriage are opposite to Judaism and Christianity. It is permissible for Muslim men to marry women who are Christian or Jew besides Muslim, however they are not allowed to marry any polytheistic and atheistic women. Conversely, Muslim women are

prohibited to marry outside their faith (Mdoka, 2018). *Nikah* is an Islamic term for marriage and considered as sacred act as per *Shariah* (Islamic law) that contains rules which concern maintenance, divorce, inheritance, marriage etc.. As per Islamic guidelines, Muslim men are allowed to marry non-Muslim women who are among people of the book. Islam has tolerant position regarding Christians and Jews compared to other non-Muslims. However, it is not permissible for Muslim women to marry outside their faith. Leeman (2009) states that Islamic scholars do agree that male Muslims can marry Christian, however this is not permissible for the women who follow Islamic ideology. The prime reason mentioned is that a man is considered an authority and head of the household and might forbid her wife from following her belief system though the same would not be the case for the opposite gender.

The terms interfaith marriage and mixed marriage can be used interchangeably. These are marital unions wherein the two partners follow different religious belief systems (Ali, 2014). Muslim men are not permitted to marry non-believing women that are polytheist, idolist and atheist though they can marry people of the book (*ahl al kitab*). These are also referred as people of scripture. It is clear from description that not all Muslims fall in the category of *ahl al kitab*. However, those Christians and Jews who are against Islamic views should not be the first choice of Muslims for marriage. The researcher is of the view that legal framework and situation of some countries such as Malaysia, do not find these marriages as suitable as these are expected to bring more harm than blessings for a couple and their family. Various Islamic countries find interfaith marriages as a challenging phenomenon resulting from globalization and modernity. It is observed that due to globalization, there has been increase in interfaith marriages that also brings along some issues that need to be addressed by the researchers and religious scholars to find some practical solutions (Hayat and Basharat, 2019).

Differences in allowance of men and women is viewed differently by scholars. Some thinkers prohibiting women from interfaith marriages is the reflection of their hierarchical position in the family and society (Azzam, 2015). Islamic countries like Indonesia consider it a human right issue (Ali, 2014). It contends, everyone should be given right to marry person of their own choice, irrespective of their religious ideologies. *Fatwas* are considered as legal opinions given by religious scholars/ leaders; these are often considered as equivalent to legal provisions for the conduct of Muslims. *Fatwas* often lack flexibility which at times become debatable and criticized by the liberal Muslim community. Indonesia experience various problems with reference to interfaith marriages as there are *fatwas* – legal verdict by religious leaders against these marriages (Ali, 2014). As there are growing number of marriages between individuals following different religions, therefore many individuals favour civil registration to make it legal. There are countries where rules for civil registration vary from the religious contract, but it is not the case for every country. Stability of any marriage depends on clarity of roles and obligations defined by religious and state laws. These encompass settlement of marriage, inheritance, child custody, financial support, mutual respect and

understanding, right to suit etc.. Interfaith marriage could create dilemma between social and religious behaviours as cultural and historical backgrounds cannot be separated from social settings.

If spouses belong to the different religions, then it is usually difficult to gain legal, social and religious recognition. Various issues that are generally associated with interfaith marriages include custody, maintenance, divorce, religious identity, guardianship, succession, rights and adoption etc. (Hassan, 2018). Some religious scholars consider interfaith marriages problematic as it is lifelong commitment involving shared obligations. Apostacy and conversion conjointly get affected in marital relation, relevant laws and legal procedures. These mixed marriages face internal and external challenges; the internal issue is basically about religious confidence and outer one is about social fidelity. Cultural variation is among the significant components in any society in this regard. Social adjustment and family support are major factors in continuing marital life of individuals following different belief system. Interfaith marriages are partially allowed in Islamic guidelines, however it is important to mention that religious beliefs and child birth status should not be affected in the result of mixed marriage.

People also vary on their level of religiosity (Brandt and Van Tongeren, 2017). Unfortunately, many strong believers happen to be more intolerant and hostile towards other religious groups (Koopmans, 2015). Commonalities in perceptions and having similar beliefs blur the group boundaries and improve the overall group attitudes (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2014). For instance, Muslims and Christian find many commonalities among religious beliefs, therefore have comparatively positive attitudes toward inter-religious marriages. It is observed that educational factor does not seem to affect attitudes toward interfaith marriages as found in a study of Ireland (O'leary, 2001). The findings suggest that religiosity and historical factors are important for them. Families, close friends, and relatives are found to have impact on such decisions through their approval or disapproval. This is commonly found in non-Western Muslim majority areas/ regions whose people strongly believe in religious socialization, community life and family integrity (Centre, 2013).

A study reveals that marriages across faith are more common in urban localities with higher education and better economic status in South Asian countries such as India (Goli, Singh et al. 2013). Marriage is structured by set of social relationships and practices; these have roots in norms and values of the society (Palriwala and Kaur, 2014). Many among the youth value the economic potential, reliability, physical appearance, compatible mind sets, intelligence in their partners (Prakash and Singh, 2014). In socio-cultural perspective, the phenomenon of allowing men to marry outside their faith and not permitting women to do so is also backed by general norms of the society. In societies where women are symbol of honour, and honour killings are done because of the societal norms, interfaith marriages are strictly prohibited for females. Parents and communities have influence on mixed marriage and that can be explained through normative model. (Broderick, 1993). As per this model family and social system follow the self-regulation norm. Self-regulation

works at various levels; first is individual level as a person is socialized according to certain norms and in case of violation there could be feeling of guilt. At family and friends' level, conformity is monitored, and punishments and sanctions are employed in case of deviation. Societal level is third one where formal penalties and coercive measures are employed to direct the behaviour. (Broderick, 1993). Ideological dilemma is often posed by interfaith marriages that affect almost every aspect of their lives (Ansari and Anjum, 2014). Dressing, eating habits, social values are few to mention among the many other religious practices.

Interfaith marriages are usually where partners develop a level of understanding and liking for each other. Regardless of religious differences and societal bindings, they find it workable. A study of Bangladesh reveals that not all interfaith marriages are love marriages, some of these unions are result of unstable social and political scenarios (Rahman, 2016). Moreover, influx of migrants to prosperous countries and financial issues of the developing countries also results into the mixed marriages of the migrants with the natives of the host country (Çiğdem, 2015). This typically happens to the second generation of the immigrants and not the first one. Pew Research Centre Poll (2007) of Muslims in the USA shows almost half of the women and 70% among the men find interfaith marriages as acceptable. Furthermore, women who marry non-Muslim men usually are ostracized by the family and community members (Leeman, 2009). It is not very convenient to live in a foreign culture, not to mention about religion alone. As the foreign culture influences social practices through value system while the latter has its impact on overall life aspects and opportunities. With reference to formal rules, it can be safely stated that no law emerges in space, it is a collective awareness of people that regulate their behaviour through institutionalization of norms. Traditional and religious values keep on influencing law of any country. It is also mentioned that no law can be completely separated from social, cultural and political scenarios (Nurcholish, 2015).

Countries where Muslims are in minority, Muslim women also marry men of other religions. Among the various societal factors, academic qualifications of the potential partners are often associated with the professional status (Jawad and Elmalı-Karakaya, 2020). Almost all Islamic scholars have consensus on prohibition of female Muslims to marry any non-Muslim. Social and cultural challenges are also faced by the couple who belong to different faiths. Sociological viewpoint on interfaith marriages contends that the differences in the value system may lead to disagreement and conflicts in a relationship (Aini, 2008). Traditional Islamic norms also suggest that a sensible person prefers to marry someone having similar traits inclusive of values and beliefs; differences of religious beliefs are likely to affect the normative guidelines for its family members.

Concept of family mainly comes from the union called marriage (Kurttekin, 2020). Family is usually referred as a smallest form of social structure; its extended forms are clan, community, ethnic group, race and tribe (Muntaqo, 2020). In a social structure, there is hope, expectations, traditions, social rules, and a consensus over all these that makes a cultural system. These makes three layers of society

that are individual, social structure and cultural system. Interfaith marriage in view of Islamic ideology has long been debated; relevant issues that need to be addressed include social involvement, adaptation at personal level also within extended families and future of children (Abdelnour, 2020). Implications of interfaith marriages are not only for the married partners but also for the families of both sides and the next generation (Ali, 2017). Such marital unions include socialization of children besides spousal rights and duties. Scholars also argue that major religion of the country where the couple resides has an impact on the upbringing of the children; for instance, if they are living in a non-Muslim country and mother is non-Muslim too then there is a greater possibility that children will follow non-Muslim ideology (Elmali-Karakaya, 2022).

Bayer (2013) conducted a study on Turkish-German couples from a socio-cultural perspective. According to the findings of the study on religious education and socialization of the children, 51 out of 60 were raised according to the teachings of Islam and only two identified themselves as Christians. Furthermore, there were some children who did not believe in any religious ideology. It was also found that men score higher in terms of religious devotion and frequency of worship than women. First concern of parents of mixed marriages after the birth of child is the selection of name since it has both cultural and religious significance attached to it. Religious ideology and loyalty are among the reflections of selected name for the child. Few factors are related with the picking the suitable name such as its pronunciation means it should be pronounced easily by both sides of the families. Moreover, by the societal members where child is expected to grow up and interact with the people outside the home. Sometimes names are solely selected by the dominating spouse according to his/her own culture (Er, 2008). Various religious traditions are also found confusing by partners following different religious ideologies. For instance, giving *adhan* to a newly born child, circumcision of a male baby or to baptize their children etc. Parents having liberal mindsets do not raise their children according to their religious belief system rather they impart social and moral values in them. Those who do follow religion, they adopt one of the mentioned ways; either they impart dominant family faith (Case, 2001) or teach them both the religions and try to establish a bond between the two. Thirdly, to shift the responsibility to the formal institutions such as mosque, school, church etc.. In some cases, parents transfer both the ideologies to their children that makes them double conscious leading to their hyphenated identity or syncretism. The main concern of the children of these couples are that they should be well educated and well behaved as they wish them to become good citizens.

Studies of mixed marriages indicate that transfer of religious elements get weakened in the next generation (Voas, 2003). It loosens or dilutes the parental background in their children (Song and Gutierrez, 2016). There are few studies that explain mixed parenting effects on the identities of their offsprings. There is little knowledge of the related aspects such as social milieu which has a significant impact on the lives of people especially if they are migrant Muslims as they move into the society with the identity of minority culture. It may lead to stigmatization of the members of minority group. The way their religious identities are represented also makes difference in their lives and social

interactions. Some youngsters feel that religious adherence leads to conflicts and division. The three aspects of identification that are addressed include religious, non-religious and spiritual. In the last form, the varied belief system can find a common ground beyond the institutionalized religious identity. In mixed families, spiritual identification reflects reconfiguration rather than loss of religious identity.

Any person who professes conversion to Islam is mostly welcomed by the religious community though for Muslims in Kenya, it is considered a positive factor even if the conversion is for the marriage purpose (Mdoka, 2018). Majority of their population is Christian whereas Muslims are in minority. Some extra effort is always required by the couples who opt for these mixed marriages. In region named Saba situated in East Malaysia, interfaith marriages are perceived as socially integrating factor between the Muslims and (previously) non-Muslims. These then get chance to unite to live a peaceful and harmonious life together (Sintang, Hambali et al. 2014).

In multinational and multiethnic countries like Kyrgyzstan, interfaith marriages are commonly found (Li, 2014). Conversion of religion is mostly due to love marriages taking place between the people of different faiths. Moreover, their social and cultural backgrounds also vary. Krotofil, (2011) studied Polish migrant women in UK who converted to Islam and how does it impact on their identity negotiation. The researcher used Dialogical self-theory as it enables the conceptualization of conversion to Islam, not only a change of religion or belief system but also requires re-negotiation of social and gender identities. This theory is basically about dialog of a person with oneself about before and after division of identity; social surroundings are also part of these dialogs. Many women who have converted to Islam acknowledges that their social behaviours and decisions have changed after conversion. Post-conversion acts are according to their Islamic ideology. Hermans (2001) have discussed this renegotiation of self and identity when go through this transformation. Another theory that may explain this phenomenon is the attachment theory. According to attachment theory there is a strong association between attachment of a child with either parent and the religious beliefs one follows in their adult life. It is also found that most of children are more attached to their mothers in their childhood, therefore there is much influence of the mother's faith on the child. Attachment theory considers two factor pertinent in this regard; first the safe place where a child can confide and secondly, a secure place where exploration can be possible (Kirkpatrick and Shaver, 1990). In most cases, children are observed to find these in their mothers, resulting in following the belief system of the maternal side.

A study of Muslim-Christian couples that was conducted in Italy analyzes how partners adopt various strategies to overcome the religious differences in the context of family (Cerchiaro, Aupers et al. 2015). Pluralization, privatization and secularization are concomitant aspects of globalization these are also linked with the plurality of family models in Italy (Allievi, 2003). These mixed marriages are often more common in religiously plural countries where interfaith couples or families become microcosm of pluralistic societies. Quantitative studies see this phenomenon in macro perspective

that means how it expands the marriage market and causes social integration by uniting people of different social backgrounds. On the other hand, qualitative work remains more focused on how partners/ spouses negotiate over the differing belief systems that affect various aspects of their lives. The latter approach is mostly employed by the disciplines including sociology, immigration, theology, family and cultural studies. Three main discourses that are discussed and assessed by the researcher in this study are religious identity, religious practices and religious education of children. These dimensions comprise of symbolic arena where partners experience cultural recognition.

S.M. Zafar, a human right activist and a former justice of Supreme Court of Pakistan emphasized that the concept of *Ijtihad* – modifications in religious provisions according to the changing needs of time that would serve for the betterment of the people without violating the fundamentals of the religion. He is of the view that it should be talked about and applied where needed, this would protect the rights of women. Leeman (2009) further elaborates that if inter-religious marriages were banned during the era of Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), it would have been due to social conditions for that time. These no longer exist, the circumstances for the women have changed over the period.

Marriage of Muslim with Non-Believer

There are two verses in the Holy Qur'an dealing with interfaith marriages if one of them is non-believer. The first of these was revealed in the early Medinan period. It clearly indicates that a Muslim, either male or female, cannot contract marriage with idolatrous of either sex. The Holy Qur'an has underlined:

“And do not marry women who ascribe divinity to aught beside God ere they attain to [true] belief: for any believing bondwoman [of God] is certainly better than a woman who ascribes divinity to aught beside God, even though she please you greatly. And do not give your women in marriage to men who ascribe divinity to aught beside God ere they attain to [true] belief: for any believing bondman [of God] is certainly better than a man who ascribes divinity to aught beside God, even though he please you greatly. [Such as] these invite unto the fire, whereas God invites unto paradise, and unto [the achievement of] forgiveness by His leave; and He makes clear His messages unto mankind, so that they might bear them in mind.” (Al-Qur'an, 2:221; trans. Asad 1980:87)

Classical traditionists believe that mushrikat include only Polytheist of Arabia. Qatadah, Sa'id bin Jubayr, Hasan Basri, Ibrahim Nakha'i and 'Amir Sha'bi say that mushrikat mentioned in the Qur'an refer only to Arab Polytheist women. (Alusi, 1:512)

The philosophy of this Qur'anic commandment has been explained by contemporary jurist Dr. Yusuf al-Qardawi:

“This verse proclaims that a Muslim may not marry a mushrik woman nor a Muslim woman marry a mushrik man, because there is a great, unbridgeable gulf between the two systems of belief. Islam invites people to the garden of paradise, while shirk (idolatry or polytheism) leads them to the Fire of Hell. While Muslims believe in God, His messengers and the Hereafter, Mushrikin associates others with God, reject His messengers, and deny the Hereafter. Marriage means living under one roof in harmony and love; how then would it be possible for such conflicting beliefs and practices to coexist peacefully together in one abode?” (Al-Qardawi,1999:183).

Elucidating different categories of Mushrikin, Dr. Muhammad Hamidullah observes:

“It is forbidden for a Muslim to marry a woman who does not believe in God or idolater or Polytheist” (Hamidullah, 2016:205).

The author believes that agnostics are also included in the same category.

In Makkan period, if one person of the married couple was believer and the other non-believer, the marriage was not dissolved. The migration of Muslim community to Madinah resulted in separation of such couples and the non-believers residing in Makkah were allowed to join their spouses after embracing Islam and migrating to Madinah. The Qur’an elucidated the commandment in its text as follows:

“O you who have attained to faith! Whenever believing women come unto you, forsaking the domain of evil, examine them, [although only] God is fully aware of their faith; and if you have thus ascertained that they are believers, do not send them back to the deniers of the truth, [since] they are [no longer] lawful to their erstwhile husbands, and these are [no longer] lawful to them. None the less, you shall return to them whatever they have spent [on their wives by way of dower]; and [then, O believers,] you will be committing no sin if you marry them after giving them their dowers. On the other hand, hold not to the marriage-tie with women who [continue to] deny the truth, and ask but for [the return of] whatever you have spent [by way of dower] - just as they [whose wives have gone over to you] have the right to demand [the return of] whatever they have spent. Such is God's judgment: He judges between you [in equity] - for God is all-knowing, wise.” (Al-Qur’an, Al-Mumtahina 60:10; trans Muhammad Asad,1980:1163).

Marriage of a Muslim man to a woman from the people of Scripture

The people of scripture (ahl al-kitab) have been dealt separately from other non-Muslims. Both verses quoted above clearly talk about the invalidity of marriage with a spouse who is idolater, unbeliever, polytheist or agnostic. However, the Qur’an permits the Muslim men to marry the virtuous women from the people of scripture in the following verse:

Today, all the good things of life have been made lawful to you. And the food of those who have been vouchsafed revelation aforetime is lawful to you, and your food is lawful to them. And [lawful

to you are], in wedlock, women from among those who believe [in this divine writ], and, in wedlock, women from among those who have been vouchsafed revelation before your time - if you give them their cowers, taking them in honest wedlock, not in fornication, nor as secret love-companions. But as for him who rejects belief [in God] - in vain will be all his works: for in the life to come he shall be among the lost. (Al-Qur'an, Al-Nisa 5: trans. Asad, 980:208)

This verse permits Muslim men to marry such non-Muslim women who possess the following characteristics:

- a. She should be from the people of scripture (Ahl al-Kitab) who is either Jewess or Christian.
- b. She would be a chaste lady (muhsinah) who has not been indulged in fornication.
- c. Such relationship should not be adultery or secret love-companionship.

Muslim men are instructed to pay due dower (mahr) as is paid to Muslim wives and their relation should be announced through marriage. The secret relationship without marriage should not be allowed.

The experts of Qur'anic exegesis have quoted examples of companions how they understood and acted upon this verse. The famous commentator Ibn Jarir Tabari has interpreted the verse as follows:

“O believers! You are permitted the virtuous women from amongst believers that you may marry them and the chaste women from the people who have been given scripture before you and they are the Jews and Christian who follow what is in the Torah and the Injil. O you who believe in (the Prophethood of) Muhammad (peace and greeting be upon him) from Arabs and all people that you may marry them too.”(Tabari,9:581)

According to Abu Bakr Jassas,'Uthman b. 'Affan married Na'ilah who was a Christian.Talha b.'Ubaidullah married a Jewish lady from Syria and Hudhaifah also married a Jewish woman. (Jassas, 1405, 6:410)

From these examples of the companions it is evident that nikah can be contracted to the chaste women from the people of the scripture.

Dr Jamal Badawi, Professor Emeritus at Saint Mary's University Canada writes that the Qur'an allows a Muslim to marry a Christian or Jewish woman. Marriage is the closest human relationship and is described in the Qur'an a relationship characterized by peace, love and compassion. (Badawi, 2015:31)

Muslim woman's Marriage to a man from the People of the Book

Muslim scholar including commentators of the Qur'an and Hadith have inferred from the teachings of both basic sources that a Muslim women can neither marry a Muslim male..... either any

infidel/polytheist or nor any male from the people of the book. Imam Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari(d.310AH) in his exegesis has transmitted the following Hadith on the authority of Jabir bin 'Abdullah (God be pleased with him). The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) is reported to have said:

“we marry the women of the people of the Book but they do not marry our women”(Tabari,15:190).”

This hadith has also been quoted by Allamah Muhammad Shams al-Haqq Azimabadi in his commentary on Sunan Abi Dawud. (Azimabadi, 1950, 13:13)

Imam Abu Bakr Abd al-Razzaq(d.211AH) in his Musannaf and 'Ali al-Muttaqi al-Hindi(d.975AH) in his Kanz al-'Ummal quoted the following words on the authority of 'Umar b.Khattab (God be pleased with him):

“A Muslim may marry a Christian woman and that a Christian man may not marry a Muslim woman” (Abdul al- Razzaq, Hadith, 10058/16524) (Kanz al Ummal, Hadith, 45846)

In Kanz al-Ummal the following hadith is transmitted on the authority of Jabir b.' Abdullah (God be pleased with him):

Women of the people of the book are permitted to us and our women are prohibited to them. (Kanz al-'Ummal, Hadith 45847/45848)

A marriage between a man and woman of different faiths can be based only on the husband's respect for his wife's beliefs; otherwise, a good relationship can never develop. Now, the Muslim believes that both Judaism and Christianity originated in divine revelation, although later distortions were introduced into them. He also believes that God revealed the Taurat to Moses and the Injeel to Jesus, (Taurat refers to the original scripture revealed to the Prophet Moses by God, and Injeel to the Prophet Jesus. These are not to be confused with either the existing Torah or Old Testament, or the four Gospels of the New Testament. (Trans. and that both Moses and Jesus (peace be on them) were among the messengers of Allah who were distinguished by their steadfast determination. Accordingly, the Christian or Jewish wife of a Muslim lives under the protection of a man who respects the basic tenets of her faith, her scripture, and her prophets, while in contrast to this the Jew or Christian recognizes neither the divine origin of Islam, its Book, or its Prophet (peace be on him). How then could a woman live with such a man, while her religion requires of her the observance of certain worships, duties, and obligations, as well as certain prohibitions. It would be impossible for the Muslim woman to retain her respect for her beliefs as well as to practice her religion properly if she were opposed in this regard by the master of the house at every step (Qaradawi, pp.159-60).

Maulana Amin Ahsan Islahi observes in his exegesis *Tadabbur- i- Qur'an* that a Muslim woman is not allowed to contract *nikah* with any non-Muslim man whether he is from amongst the people of the Book or any other non-Muslim (Islahi,1999,2:466).

According to an Indian modernist scholar Maulana Wahiduddin Khan, a Muslim woman is not permitted to marry a non-Muslim man in any circumstance, but Muslim men have been allowed under certain conditions. The wisdom of this permission is that woman possesses such conscience that is influenced by her nature. It is hoped from her that after starting her practical life (as a wife of a Muslim), she would accept influence of her husband and Muslim society and in this way this marriage would result in her coming under the fold of Islam (Wahiduddin, 2002:243).

Javed Ahmad Ghamidi was asked in an American University Chicago in September 2017 about the permissibility of a Muslim woman's marriage to a man from the People of the Book. He opines that any male or female who belonged to *Ahl al-Kitab* but believes in polytheism should not be brought in wedlock with any Muslim. He believes that the People of the Book possess polytheistic views, so they cannot marry any Muslim. According to him, if some Muslim woman marries a man from *Ahl Kitab*, she has violated the Divine injunctions and would be held answerable in the life hereafter. She may be punished sometimes in this world or her punishment can be deferred to the Day of Judgement.

Permissibility of Muslim Woman's Marriage to *Ahl al-Kitab*

Some contemporary writers are raising the issue that if a Muslim man can contract marriage to a Jew or Christian lady then Muslim woman should also be allowed to marry a man from the People of the Book. In 2016, Johanna Marie Buisson published an article entitled "Interfaith Marriage for Muslim Woman". She tried to prove that Muslim women are deprived of the right to marry *ahl al-kitab* while Muslim men possess liberty to contract marriage to any woman belonging to the people of the Book. She observes in the opening of her article:

Some contemporary authors, Muslim thinkers, and the exegetes of the Qur'an such as Asma Barlas, Amina Wadud, Riffat Hasan, Khaleel Mohammed based in the United States, Asma Lamrabet in Morocco, Amel Grami in Tunisia, Abdel Kader Merabet in Algeria, Kussay Fakhir Al-Mousawi in the United Kingdom, and many others) challenge the classical interpretation of verse 5:5 in the name of Qur'anic internal consistency and coherence, linguistics, and reason. (Buisson, 2016)

All the Muslims mentioned in the above paragraph are not religious scholars but they have been considered experts of the exegesis. In religious controversy, only experts of Qur'anic sciences, hadith and Islamic jurisprudence can be considered authority. Buisson has gone so far that has presented an alternate reading of verse 5:5 as under:

"This day are things good and pure made lawful unto you, The food of those who received the scriptures (before you) is lawful unto you and your food is lawful unto them, and so are (your)

virtuous believing women (lawful unto them), and so are the virtuous women of those who received the scriptures before you (lawful unto you) ...”

This is clearly distortion of the meaning of the Qur’an and to interpolate in it what is not mentioned in its text.

Ayse Elmali-Karakaya argues that the permissibility of Muslim women’s interfaith marriages mainly focuses on the egalitarian aspect of Islam and the changes in understanding of marriage in today’s modern societies. Accordingly, if Islam permits Muslim men to marry ahl al-Kitab women and identify them as believers, then Muslim women can also marry ahl al-kitab men as they are believers just as Kitabi women.

This argument is strange and debatable. If a Muslim woman has not to pray salah during her days, men cannot claim any such relaxation. A Muslim man must earn livelihood and provides sustenance to his wife and family whereas woman is free of any such responsibility. So equality in every aspect is not necessary.

If Muslim women are allowed interfaith marriages with ahl al-kitab, it will open new door for marriage with the follower of other religions. Ayse Elmali- Karakaya has already raised the point that there was not any consensus on the identity of the ahl al-kitab and which religious groups should fall within this category. Different religious groups, such as Hindus, Sabeans, Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Magians, were either included or excluded from this category of non-Muslims at different times depending on the theological preferences of Muslim scholars, often based on on the geopolitical context in which they lived. Of course, such extension in the definition of ahl al-kitab would also enlarge the permissibility of any of the adherent to the above mentioned religions. So allowing Muslim women to marry ahl al-kitab would be permitting them to any of the non-Muslim.

Issues Resulting Interfaith Marriages

Interfaith marriages result in various problems not only during the life but even after the death of any of the couple.

1. Matrimonial Ceremony

If a marriage is being contracted among a Muslim and a lady from the people of the scripture (ahl al-kitab), where the ceremony would be held...in a mosque or a church. According to a hadith narrated by Imam Tirmidhi, the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) is reported to have said:

“Publicize this marriage, and hold it in the Mosque, and beat the duff for it.” (Tirmidhi, Hadith 1089)

Following this hadith it is better to arrange matrimonial ceremony in the mosque and marriage should not be held in a church or synagogue. Another option would be to do so neither in mosque nor in the worship place of Jew or christian lady.

Another prerequisite of such marriage is the presence of two men from Muslim community and bride's guardian who should belong to the religion of bride. According to Kitab al-Umm, Imam Shafe'i is of view:

“For nikah with a woman from the people of the scripture, there is compulsion of two Muslim witnesses and the guardian should belong to woman's religion.” (Shafe'I, 5:8)

Aslam, the freed slave of 'Umar, said: When 'Umar went to Syria, one of the leaders of the Christians made food for him and called him. 'Umar said: We will not enter your churches because of the images that are in them - meaning the statues. Narrated by 'Abd al-Razzaq in al-Musannaf (1/411 and 10/398).

Ibn 'Aidh narrated in Futuh al-Sham that when 'Umar came to Syria, the Christians made food for him and called him, and he said: Where is it? They said: In the church, and he refused to go. He said to 'Ali: Take the people to eat lunch. So 'Ali took the people and entered the church, and he and the people ate lunch, and 'Ali looked at the images and said: What would be wrong if Amir al-Mu'minin entered this place? Al-Mughni (8/113).

2. Purification of Kitabiyah wife

The etiquettes of purification in Islam and earlier Semitic religions are not same. A Muslim woman has to purify her body after menstrual period, bleeding after delivery and after sexual relation. But such bath is not mandatory for the women from the people of the scripture. According to Fatawa al-Hindiyah, a Muslim husband cannot force his kitabiyah wife to do ghusl(ablution) after any of these. (Fatawa al-Hindiyah,1:281)

3. Funeral Rituals of non-Muslim Spouse

If a kitabiyah wife of a Muslim husband dies in his life, her funeral would be made according to the teachings of her religion. Imam Shafi'i writes in his Kitab al-Umm that if the wife belonging to the people of book dies, her Muslim husband can perform her ghusl(ablution),can bury her in grave but he cannot pray her funeral prayer. (Shafi'I, 5:8)

4. Identity of Progeny

The offsprings of an interfaith marriage would follow the religion of their father. They would be considered Muslim according to Islamic teachings.

Imam Muslim has reported on the authority of Abu Hurairah who heard Allah's Messenger (upon whom be peace and greeting) as saying:

" مَا مِنْ مَوْلُودٍ إِلَّا يُولَدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ "

No child is born but upon Fitrah. (Muslim, Hadith 2658d)

Imam Bukhari has also transmitted this hadith on the authority of Abu Hurairah who related that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) said:

"Every child is born with a true faith (i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone) but his parents convert him to Judaism or to Christianity or to Magainism. (Bukhari, Hadith1385)

5. Freedom for Religious Practices

Islam does not allow any kind of religious oppression on a Jew or Christian wife. The Qur'an says:

" There shall be no coercion in matters of faith."(Al-Qur'an 2:256 trans. Asad 98)

According to the Covenant of the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace and greeting) with the Monks of Mount Sinai, it was concluded:

"If a Christian woman enters a Muslim household, shall be received with kindness, and shall be given opportunity to pray in her church; there shall be no dispute between her and a man who loves her religion. Whoever contravenes the covenant of God and acts to contrary is a rebel against his covenant and his Messenger" (Morrow, 2017, 2: 3).

In the covenant of the Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace and greeting) with the Christians of Najran, such religious liberty was guaranteed:

"If a Muslim takes a Christian woman as a wife he must respect her Christian beliefs. He will give her freedom to listen to her [clerical] superiors as she desires and to follow the path of her own religion. Whoever, despite of this order, forces his wife to act contrary to her religion in any aspect whatsoever he will have broken the alliance of God and will enter into open rebellion against the pact of his Messenger and God will count him among the impostors" (Morrow, 2017, 3:17).

Forceful conversion of a Jew or Christian wife is not allowed in Islam. The Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace and greeting) has guaranteed the Assyrian Christians in the following words:

"The Muslim shall not force Christian women to accept Islam, but if they themselves wish to embrace it, the Muslim shall be kind to them."

“If a Christian woman is married to a Muslim and does not want to embrace Islam, she has liberty to worship to her own church according to her own religious belief, and her husband must not treat her unkindly on account of her religion.”

“If anyone disobeys this command, he disobeys God and his Prophet and will be guilty of a great offence” (Morrow, 2017, 3: 32).

Imam Malik b. Anas says that a Muslim husband may not prevent his Christian wife from eating pork, drinking wine and going to her Church (Malik bin Anas, 2:219).

6 . Custody of child in case of separation

In hadith literature, we have a precedent of the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) and the method to decide the fate of a child for upbringing. Imam Abu Dawud has transmitted hadith according to which Rafi' bin Sinan has related:

He (Rafi' ibn Sinan) embraced Islam and his wife refused to embrace Islam. She came to the Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) and said:

My daughter, she is weaned or about to wean. Rafi' said: My daughter. The Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) said to him: Be seated on a side. And he said to her: Be seated on a side. He then seated the girl between them and said to them: Call her. The girl inclined to her mother. The Prophet (upon whom be peace and greeting) said: O Allah! guide her. The daughter then inclined to her father, and he took her (Abu Dawud, Hadith 2244).

The same hadith has also been quoted by Imam Nasa'i in his Sunan with a little difference as follows:

He became Muslim but his wife refused to become Muslim. A young son of theirs, who had not yet reached puberty, came, and the Prophet seated the father on one side and the mother on the other side, and he gave him the choice. He said:

"O Allah, guide him," and (the child) went to his father. (Nas'I, Hadith 3495)

The hadith has been regarded as sahih by Imam Hakim (Bulugh al-Maram, Hadith 218)

Now-a-days such disputes are decided by the courts according to the law of a country.

1. Forbidden Food in the House

A Muslim husband cannot forbade his Jew or Christian wife to eat any food whether it is halal or haram in Islam. She can take such food outside her husband's house freely but she has to be a little careful in using and keeping haram food. Ibn Qudamah observes:

He may order her to refrain from drinking wine but cannot force her to do so. (Al-Mughni, 7:312)

She is under no obligation to avoid what is forbidden in Islam. She has to abide by the commandment of her religion for eating food. According to Dr Muhammad Hamidullah, She may drink wine (Hamidullah, 2016:205)

However, on the same dining table it become very difficult to consume such things that are abhorred by one of the married couple. The husband may want that she should shun away from all such food products that are forbidden in Islam. In such situations, kids are confused and asked such questions that could not be answered easily.

2. Celebrations of Religious Festivals

In an interfaith marriage, both the spouses have different religious festivals. If they are not tolerant to each other's festivals, such marriages would not be successful. If the husband is a Muslim, he will celebrate two Eid festivals and his Christian wife would rather prefers her own festivals, i.e. Christmas, Easter and Good Friday. Each would like kids to accompany on his/her religious festivals. Fasting days and etiquettes in Islam and other Semitic religions are different. One spouse's religious obedience may be a hindrance in conjugal relations of the other.

After the birth of an infant, there may be insistence from a Catholic wife for Baptism or the grandparents may like to baptise the new-born that is to immerse the infant in water by a priest in a Church. It would also affect the relations of the spouses in an interfaith marriage.

3. Inheritance of Spouses

In interfaith marriages, one spouse does not inherit the property of other. A Muslim husband can neither inherit from his Jew or Christian wife nor can his non-Muslim wife inherit from him. It has been proclaimed by the Prophet of Islam (upon whom be peace and greeting) in a lucid manner.

A Muslim is not entitled to inherit from a non-Muslim, and a non-Muslim is not entitled to inherit from a Muslim (Muslim, Hadith 1614).

Besides the above quoted hadith from Muslim, Imam Bukhari has also related the following words from the Second Caliph of Islam:

Umar bin Al-Khattab (God be pleased with him) used to say, "A believer cannot inherit (anything from an) infidel." (Bukhari, Hadith 1588)

There is one exception for a Muslim husband who can give by will up to 1/3rd of his property to his Jew or Christian wife and vice versa. Such restriction on inheritance would not be acceptable for a non-Muslim wife. If she is living in any country where Shari'ah is not implemented, she may inherit under the law of inheritance being practiced in that country.

4. Muslim Dress Code

Muslims have a dress code different from other nations. Females have to cover their whole bodies except hands, feet and face, and males have to cover at least from navel to knees. The Muslim women have to cover their bodies with an over-garment referred to as jilbab in the Qur'an. A non-Muslim wife cannot be allowed such dress in which she is exposing her bodies or letting her daughters to wear such dresses. A Muslim husband may object his Jew or Christian wife on wearing sleeveless, shorts or bikinis. So a lady in wedlock of a Muslim husband from the people of the book should care for her husband's culture.

5. Cultural Values

All Religions influence the cultures of its adherents. The Muslim culture has also been affected by Islamic teachings. Many Western customs are unacceptable for a Muslim husband which are freely practiced by the Jews or Christians. Mixed parties usually include dancing and drinking that are not considered 'unlawful' by the Muslims. Hugging and kissing cheeks of each other irrespective of sex would surely be intolerable for a Muslim husband. He may object his non-Muslim wife to go to bars.

6. Dichotomy among Kids

Kids learn religion from the environment and society. A man usually does not spend much time with his children whereas a non-Muslim wife may spend her maximum time with her children. So a Christian or a Jew mother would inculcate her religious values in children of a missed marriage intentionally or unintentionally. On the other hand, it would be the desire of a Muslim father to impart his kids Islamic teachings by hiring a Hafiz/ Qari or sending kids to an Islamic centre. Such children are usually confused in religious matter as they have sympathy for both parents. Such religious dichotomy affects their personality adversely.

CONCLUSION

The growing diversity of the world communities along with constantly migrating populations to one region to another has reduced the emphasis on the differences compared to similarities of the values and beliefs. Globalization has also minimized the physical distance among the people of different faith by providing them various virtual spaces. Therefore, many people find their spouses and develop mutual understanding regardless of their religious ideologies. In this paper, it is found that interfaith marriages are outcome of various factors, at macro level globalization is one important element, and on the micro-level, individual interactions at personal level matter. As Islam allow men to marry women of other faiths (Christianity and Judaism) whereas women are prohibited to marry any non-Muslim. This is often interpreted by the scholars as reflection of hierarchical position of women in a social system following certain ideology. However, it is also found that socialization of children is mostly done by their mothers, therefore often children follow the belief system of the mother. This paradox is being observed in the couples of interfaith marriages with reference to socialization of their children. Many also prefer to find middle ground and let the child adopt some

aspects of both parents' religions. It is found that social, cultural, political, and legal aspects are pertinent to understand the prevalence and challenges of interfaith marriages. Scholars present both liberal and conservative viewpoints on the matter. Spouses must face certain challenges and work on negotiated identities to have smooth functioning of their marital life.

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