

South Asian Focus

Published every Thursday at 7700 Hurontario St. Unit 201, Brampton, L6Y 4M3 by The Brampton Guardian, a division of Metroland Media Group Ltd.

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Malton crematorium still generating heat

A crematorium planned in Malton continues to generate heated debate within the community. The latest to bring in was Jagmeet Singh, the NDP MPP for Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

The newly elected MPP used his first question in Ontario's Legislative Assembly to push Ontario's Minister of Health to support a review of crematorium guidelines in Ontario.

We ourselves feel a frank and forthright discussion should be held by all the parties concerned.

What are the facts of the case? A new crematorium is proposed in a high-density, residential area of the Peel Region. No guidelines exist in Ontario to keep communities safe from what health experts warn are high levels of toxic carcinogens created by crematoriums. Singh himself points out that strict guidelines for crematoriums in residential areas exist throughout Europe. He is now urging the government to investigate the health risks and protect Ontario residents with similar guidelines.

Those proposing the crematorium say any emissions from the facility will be minimal and pose no health hazard. Additionally, they point out the crematorium will principally serve residents in the immediate area, so there is obviously need for such a facility.

What has however been left unstated in all of the above is, we feel, simply that most residents would rather not have dead bodies being paraded in their backyards. But that said, current legislation also offers no guidelines on the health impacts of crematoriums. Safe operating guidelines are left up to municipalities who lack the resources to adequately determine the health impacts of crematoriums.

Meanwhile a community petition circulated by Concerned Citizens of Malton has gathered over 1,700 signatures demanding an immediate review of crematoriums by the Chief Medical Officer. It is now well past time the authorities took a closer look.

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A new look at marriage

Special to Focus

GUEST COLUMN

Marriage is one of the many aspects in a culture that allows a society to preserve its traditional values.

In India, marrying within your caste is encouraged because it continues to place you in society. It is a system of differentiating between the poor and rich, and assigning the expected societal roles to each member of the Indian society.

Historically, the caste system has dominated Indian thinking for centuries. Thus there is no wonder that many Indian parents are very adamant their child marry someone who belongs to their caste.

However, what happens when a Canadian child born to traditional Indian parents, chooses to marry an individual not only outside their caste, but someone who is part of an entirely different culture?

The scenario goes something like this: At first, the parents become extremely angry and feel absolutely ashamed. Then, some parents may even go to the extent of disowning their child.

But why are some Indian parents so disapproving of inter-racial marriages?

Perhaps it is simply because an inter-racial marriage is not supported by the caste system. It would be very difficult to define and assign status to a foreigner.

Or maybe it is the fact that Indian society is centred around the idea of reputation.

There is no denying Indians care a lot about how they are perceived by their relatives and friends. Even if Indian parents love their child immensely and would agree to an inter-racial marriage, the parents would have to deal with how their relatives and friends will regard them. In other words, the fear and shame of not being accepted by their society makes it difficult for parents to be open-minded toward their child.

The challenge of accepting and adapting to a new culture may also lead Indian parents to frown upon an inter-racial marriage. Different customs, a language barrier, or even conflicting cultural differences may all lead to misunderstandings, frustrations and unhappiness for the parents.



RAJNESH SHARMA

But the question remains: Should Indian parents be disapproving of inter-racial marriages? Or should they support their child's desires and decisions? Moreover, is it really fair for Indian parents to expect their Indian-Canadian child, who has grown up in an entirely different time and place, to follow in their footsteps when it comes to the idea of marriage?

Parents need to stop resisting change and accept the possibility of inter-racial marriages. Instead of being disappointed, angry and walking the path of misery, Indian parents need to cherish and support their child's perspective on marriage. It will not be an easy path to accept these new views — but it calls for being open-minded, which is a great virtue.

It is time to stop worrying about what others may think of you, instead think about your child's happiness. If your child is extremely happy to marry a non-Indian, then why shouldn't you be happy?

Besides, there are several advantages to inter-racial marriages. The possibilities of learning a new language, customs and traditions. Also, the responsibility of a successful marriage now depends on your child — whose future it is. Traditionally arranged marriages have led some couples to hold resentments against their parents for making poor choices for them. This will no longer be the case if your child decides to choose their own marriage partner.

Today in Canada, the possibility of inter-racial marriages is quickly becoming a reality, as young Indo-Canadians are finding the courage to inform their parents of their decisions.

Parents need to be prepared for this possibility. They need to understand that their child does love them, but has chosen their own path in life when it comes to marriage.

So parents, please learn to accept change and celebrate your child's marriage choice. Direct your energies in a positive direction, which will eventually lead to happiness for all.

— Rajnesh Sharma is a writer/photographer and frequently travels to gain insight into cultural issues; Contact rajnesharma2011@gmail.com

South Asian Focus welcomes Letters to the Editor on topics of interest to South Asian readers. All letters must be signed and include an address and daytime phone number. Focus reserves the right to publish or not publish, and to edit letters for length and libellous statements. Letters should be addressed: Letters to the Editor, South Asian Focus, 7700 Hurontario St., Unit 201, Brampton, Ont. L6Y 4M3. They can also be e-mailed to letters@southasianfocus.com.

Information on a wide range of subjects is provided in our columns in good faith and in the larger interests of the community; for more specific information readers are advised to seek professional counselling directly from the respective industry experts.

International content from Indo-Asian News Service, unless otherwise indicated.

IN BRIEF

FREE LINC AT INDIARAINBOW: Registration is now open for free English language classes (LINC) for newcomers to Canada who wish to learn or improve their English conversational and communication skills.

Classes offered by not-for-profit India Rainbow Community Services of Peel are available Monday to Friday in the morning afternoon and evening.

Childminding for children aged 19 months to 6 years is available. Public transportation assistance is provided to eligible candidates.

Classes are conducted in Brampton (21 Regan Road, at McLaughlin & Lowry Drive).

Dedicated LINC classes for seniors are also conducted in Brampton (245 Queen Street, at Queen & Kennedy).

For details call 905-459-4776, or visit www.indiarainbow.org

STEP IT UP AT DAEI: A new Dance Academy for the Entertainment Industry (DAEI) has been set up by two big names from East and West.

Bollywood choreographer Longinus Fernandez (of Slumdog Millionaire fame) has partnered So You Think You Can Dance Canada's Tre' Armstrong to open the new DAEI dance studio in Brampton (12 Rutherford Road South, Unit 2).

At the launch this weekend, the organizers also held a seminar on the business of film/TV/stage in Canada and India, followed by lessons on Hip Hop and Bollywood dancing.

For further details visit www.aewdaei.com

FREE CALENDAR: Ontario Minister of Consumer Services Margaret Best has just released the ministry's annual 2012 Smart Consumer Calendar.

The calendar, available free, has information about many day-to-day purchasing decisions and common consumer issues, including understanding gym membership contracts; dealing with collection agencies, water heater and other door-to-door salespeople; etc.

It is available in seven languages, including Punjabi and Tamil.

To order copies visit www.serviceontario.ca/publications or call 416-326-5300 in the Toronto area or toll-free at 1-800-668-9938.

C-SASIL FUNDRAISER: Non-profit service provider for the disabled Canadian-South Asians Supporting Independent Living (C-SASIL) holds its annual fundraiser Sunday, Dec 11, from 5pm at Shingar Banquet Hall (2084 Steeles Ave E, Brampton).

The evening will feature lots of entertainment, cultural dances, henna painting, raffles and more.

For tickets and other details visit www.c-sasil.blogspot.com, email c_sasil@yahoo.ca, or call 905-799-7274.