

Marriage of Convenience

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In an attempt to control fraudulent marriages in Canada, Immigration minister Jason Kenny held town hall meetings in Ontario, Vancouver, and Montreal etc apart from visiting immigrant rich countries like India, China and Philippines in an attempt to gauge the magnitude of the problem in the last few months. How far his visits and meetings will be successful is yet to be seen as the issue has been highlighted for decades now with no respite.

He appears determined to crack down on the practice and offer long lasting solution by taking a leaf from laws in Australia and the US where sponsored spouses must pass through a probationary period before getting permanent resident status. US offer a very good solution where the spouse is given conditional visa for one year and if the marriage is successful, it can be extended for one more year before the couple can apply for Green Card. This period can expose the phony unions.

However, some believe that such condition where a waiting game is played may result in spousal abuse thus resulting in unnecessary burden on the tax payers. Lengthy investigations result in delays and costs undoubtedly yet there is no way out of it. While victims suffer years of depression and suffering, the accused leads a new life in new country without a problem as he understands the laws and knows fairly well that deportation is too long a procedure to worry about.

'Marriages of convenience' are the worst human scam happening in the country under the very nose of the law. The authorities know about it, the victims are ready to testify and provide documentary and other evidence yet it continues blatantly thus multiplying the number of victims every year. Immigration companies in an attempt to make a quick buck are encouraging these sham marriages while unethical community newspapers openly advertise about 'paper marriages' with no commitments.

One fails to understand why is the government of Canada taking so long to change its laws to curb the menace of sham marriages despite acknowledging the fact that the scam occurs every day. Time and again victims have demanded Canada follow American laws where the sponsored spouse is given a conditional visa and divorce is sought in the country where marriage is solemnized. Marriage should not be treated as Family Reunification as the couple is yet to form a family and yet to prove that they respect the laws of the land.

Once divorced they should not be entitled to sponsor a spouse again in the country where he/she were married for the first time at least for years from the date of landing. The fraud itself should be punishable. People try to defraud the system time and again as there is no punishment and history of the accused is not recorded for

future purposes unless a major crime takes place. It is high time that the process of deportation be simplified and CBSA empowered with effective and workable tools. Immigrant Consultants found misguiding and cheating people should be barred from practicing and their history should be recorded.

More than four years ago, The Asian Outlook Magazine was the first community publication which had boldly published cases of victims who had similarly been defrauded. Some of those cases still remain unresolved while new ones are cropping up every day.

While rigorous measures are called for, people making their decisions too have to be more assiduous. It is nothing but asinine to think that their country of origin has remained the same as they left decades or years earlier. The World Wide Web has made the world a small place and in countries like India, Philippines and China, where every other person is literate, understanding and abusing Canadian laws is no big task. If there are people who get cheated into marriage from Canada, there are thousands of girls, especially in India, whom Canadian citizens marry, ask for a hefty dowry and flee to Canada with impunity while the gullible brides wait for decades to be reunited with their Canadian husbands, who may have remarried someone else and repeated the same scam. Laws may help, yet decisions are taken at community level and every citizen who marries out of the country has to share the blame for not doing their homework. *Krishan Bector (Canadian Marriage Fraud Victims' Society)*