



## **INTER-CASTE MARRIAGE: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS IN INDIAN SOCIETY**

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### **Abstract**

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*Marriage is considered as the most important social custom and an important mean of social control. Today in Indian society we can see inter-caste marriages but mostly it is part of the cities. The rural parts of the country still have a long way to go. Today, there are abundant of illustrations when two individuals from very surprising foundation and way of life meet up and spend as long as they can remember content with each other, because of instruction. Instruction has expanded the outskirts of reasoning and helped individuals create explanatory forces. It has adjusted their recognition about existence, as well as about social concerns, for example, marriage and relationship. Bury standing and entomb religion relational unions fills in as a reference point light for social balance. Keeping in mind the end goal to break the dangers of position framework, it has ends up occupant that there ought to be between station relational unions .Marriage is generally subject to genuine romance and believing and once this is accomplished, standing and religion all ends up auxiliary issues. inter-caste marriages are considered a religious offence where couples suffer death threats from their own family members. India is still more or less a traditional society with rigid caste and religious system. Caste and Religion play a very important role in the selection of mates in marriages. To most Indians, it is difficult to think of marriage beyond the own caste. But it is quite heartening to notice that the force of the caste in marriage selection is gradually loosening over time as about ten percent of the marriages in India are reported to be inter-caste marriages.*

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**KEY-WORDS:** *Caste, Inter-caste Marriage, Social solidarity, religious offence.*

**TERMINOLOGY:** With the evolution of industrial revolution, the traditional socio-economic relations changed not at once but slowly. The age old economic system (where by high caste landowning families called Jajmans were provided services and products by various lower castes such as carpenters, barbers, potters, blacksmith, washer man etc. the servicing people called kamins were paid in cash or in kind—grain, fodder, clothes, animal products like milk, butter etc. ) started declining (Ahuja,1999) & (Milner,1994).The British came up with modern machines, factory system of production, new occupations, salary based service system and said good bye to the traditional patterns of livelihood. People of all castes showed some positive response towards modernity and started to make use of the new economic opportunities.

Traditionally marriages were being performed because of endogamy, often called the essence of the caste system. Inter-caste marriages were socially forbidden and were considered a violation of custom. But in present scenario inter-caste marriages are legally valid under the “Special Marriage Act 1954” and “Hindu Marriage Act 1955”. Though not very common, except Shudras inter-caste marriages are usually not disliked by the community.

**Current Scenario on Casteism in India:** After independence, Indian Constitution guaranteed equal status and the fundamental rights to all the classes of the people. Practice of untouchability was officially declared as a serious crime, punishable with severe penalties. Provisions were made to identify and protect the lower castes from exploitation and ill treatment. The physical castesim to some extent has been reduced in urban India but rural India still has a glimpse of the castesim. There is still an existence of communalism which still makes inter caste marriages difficult for the couples who opt for a inter-caste love marriage.

**Inter caste marriages in India:** Marriage may be in the same caste, or it may be inter caste. Marriages within the same caste mean that both the boy and the girl belong to the same community. Inter caste marriage means girl and boy are from different castes where one member belongs to lower caste. Inter-caste marriage is legal in India. Such marriages are sanctioned by the Special Marriage Act 1954 and are also permitted under The Hindu Marriage Act 1955. But still in India number of inter caste marriages is very less. India is a country were caste and religion rules not democracy. I am sure if survey is done Majority Indians will agree that we need more inter caste marriages, but they will never allow their own kids to marry inter caste girl. Today also Indian society does not accept such couples who marry inter caste. Society, including family members punishes them. Society ostracizes and discriminates against couples

in inter-caste marriages. Honor Killing is nothing but a punishment to boy and girl for marrying intercaste. We need a law which will give death punishment to every person who attends the Khap Panchayats which gives order to kill the boy and girl and kill them. Intercaste marriages are often crippled with unique challenges that are associated with maintaining barriers. Experts claim that it is a natural tendency of people to create barriers in their minds and around them. With a lot of globalizations and increase in academic facilities, there's nice amendment within the views of individuals. As modernization has affected each section of society, lay caste marriages have additionally received acceptance from the individuals in urban and fashionable societies. There has been wide amendment within the social situation. folks and relatives of the lovers are turning out with a lot of open minds with wide acceptance of marriages outside their own castes. However, in some regions that lack exposure to education and fashionable society culture, things have remained unchanged. There are still oppositions by the members of various castes if they encounter any incident of lay caste wedding. These societies want some amendment of views so young hearts may unite and live mirthfully. an honest relation desires understanding and devotion from boy and lady to blossom. If there area unit malpractices like class structure, then there'll be unhealthy matrimonial relations that increase the speed of divorces and mutual misunderstandings.

**Intercaste Marriages in India & The Law:** Endogamy is preferred because of excessive pride in the caste and want to maintain a differentaion from the other prevelant castes. This feeling is also coupled with the desire of keeping the blood pure when the increasing number of people claim to be in the upper layer of the castes.

But what would happen when two people from different castes/religions fall in love and what to marry, for eg: a muslim and hindu marriage, a Christian and hindu marriage, a parsi and a hindu marriage. The constitution's framers anticipated this issue and provided for their provisions in the fundamental rights backed up by the Special Marriage Act.

The **Special Marriage Act, 1954** replaced the old Act III, 1872 with the three major objectives:

1. To provide a special form of marriage in certain cases,
2. to provide for registration of certain marriages and,
3. to provide for divorce.

When foreigners want to marry an Indian, or there is an intercaste marriage within Indians, this is the only act that comes to their rescue. With the changing scenario of the country, women liberalization, and the change in society has made it necessary to laws to adapt with the change.

### **FUNCTIONS OF MARRIAGE:**

**1. Regulation of sexual Relations:** Marriage is the instrument of regulating the sexual relation of human beings.

**2. Marriage leads to the establishments of society:** Marriage insists on the couple to establish a family of procreation. It is the marriage which determines the descent of the new boom individual. Inheritance and succession follow the rule of descent.

**3. Marriage provides economic co-operation:** Marriage makes division of labour possible on the basis of sex. Partners of marriage distribute and divide work among themselves and perform them.

**4. Marriage aims at social solidarity:** Marriage not only brings two individuals of the opposite sex together, but also their respective families and groups. By marriage it is possible to minimize the social distance between groups and strengthen their solidarity.

**5. Social Control:** There is a great saying that “Matches are made in heaven.” At the point when two individuals meet, and their marriage is solemnized, it is believed that this is God’s will. Marriage might be in a similar standing or between standing. Relational unions inside a similar position imply that both boys and girls have a place in a similar group. Between bury station relational union implies that young boys and girls are from various standings in which one of the youth has to compromise and descend in his caste status while the other one ascends. Marriage is a consecrated establishment that unites both the men and women in a devout connection.

**CASTE:** Originally the word "Caste" emerged from the Spanish word “Casta” which means 'breed, race, strain, or a complex of hereditary qualities (Bhushan & Sachdev, 1999). The word “Casta” itself is derived from the Latin word “Castus” which means ‘pure’ (Rao, 2004). The Portuguese applied the word caste to the classes of people in India, known by the name of 'jati.' The English word 'Caste' is an adjustment of the original term 'Casta' (Bhushan & Sachdev, 1999). According to Henry Maine "Castes started as natural division of occupational classes and eventually upon receiving the religious sanction became solidified into the existing caste system. The caste system comes into being when it becomes an integral part of religious dogma which

divides the people into superior and inferior groups with different responsibilities, functions and standards of living."

### **WHAT IS INTER CASTE MARRIAGE?:**

The castes and sub-castes are strictly endogamous. In traditional Indian society, the members of each caste and sub-caste were to marry within their own endogamous group. Until recently, any violation of this rule was a serious offence, the punishment for which was usually excommunication from the caste. Inter-caste marriage i.e., the union of a man and a woman belonging to two different castes was inconceivable till recent times. When we talk about Indian marriages, which are inter-caste, it seems like a taboo to most of the people. But in order to eradicate the caste system and racial discrimination, it is important that there should be inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Marriages are regarded as the most important social custom and the best means to remove the barrier of caste system. Today in Indian society though we can see inter-caste marriages but mostly it is part of the city culture. The rural parts of the country still have a long way to go.

**Methodology:** The study is based on the survey of 300 respondents from district Firozabad, Uttar Pradesh. Exploratory research design is opted for the purpose.

### **Discussion and Results:**

From the Study, it can be concluded that no doubt there is still vast caste rigidity in the society but the younger generation is trying to come out of this social menace, especially the population which is educated and also the people living in the urban areas. Hence, it can be concluded that with a good education system and social empowerment imparted through the governmental organizations as well as non-governmental organizations this impartial and inhuman social evil can be eradicated which is need of the hour in the current scenario.

- The study also revealed that majority of the people almost 47% think that provisions of Hindu Marriage Act should be amended in order to include customary norms within the prohibited categories, 32% had contradictory view while 21% respondents had no opinion about the same.
- It was found that 70% of the respondents were against promoting inter-caste marriage while as 20% respondents were of the view that inter-caste should be promoted among the masses. On the other hand 10% of the respondents had no say as they were confused.

- A total of 55% of the people were of the view that Special Marriage Act is beneficial to the society, 26% had opinion that it is not so, while 19% had no opinion about the same.
- The study also revealed that there has been an increase in inter caste marriages, around 47% have a positive response regarding this statement, 38% respondents said that there is no increase while rest 15% (45) have no opinion about the inter caste marriage.
- Majority of 38% (114) respondents had an opinion that mass media is an influential factor in increase of the inter caste marriages, 34% (104) thinks that government schemes and regulations is the main factor in such increase while 28% (84) consider education as the main factor in bringing about the social change.

Inter-caste marriages face big hurdles in the light of their decision to defy all and maybe the basic norms of society. Here are a few problems distinct to an inter-caste marriage :-

1. Problems in adapting to a new environment, culture and rituals.
2. Inability to convince parents and in laws.
3. In many societies inter-caste marriages are considered a religious offence where couples suffer death threats from their own family members.
4. The ongoing discord between the families can lead to a mutual disharmony and misunderstanding between couples.

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