

INTER-MARRIAGES IN INDIA: A REVIEW OF LITURATURE

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Abstract; with the recent modernization and western education, there has been change in traditional marriage system in India. Further, socio-economic development and globalization of Indian economy has a consequence in change of marriage pattern in India. However, Literature on mixed marriage in India is mostly theoretical; those studies based an empirical evidence are mostly case studies. Discourse on interfaith marriages in India at present involves diverse narratives ranging from opposition and resistance to acceptance. These alliances deserve greater focus in terms of their uniqueness, challenges as well as everyday negotiations that form part of their lives. Therefore, there is an imperative need to have a survey of literature on intermarriages in India. Thus, present study aim to re-explore the concept of mixed marriage in India through review of literature.

Introduction

Research on marriage in developing countries has been somewhat narrow in scope because of both conceptual and data limitations. Marriage has historically been universal and remains so (Das & Dey, 1998). While age at marriage has risen slowly largely through decline in child marriages, mean age at marriage remains low. India has been a country with low age at marriage, where marriage is universal. India follows the Hajnal's Non-European pattern (1965) which is characterized by universal marriage and very low age at marriage among females. The pressure to marry early persists with rising dowry and marriage expenses in several parts of the country. Decision making regarding choosing one's spouse, whether arranged by parents or selfarranged "love" marriage, may have drastic and long-lasting implications for later family life.

In India women have a very low role in choosing their husbands and in decisions regarding marriage practices and customs to be followed. Indian women have long been recognized as having low autonomy and decision making power (Bloom, Wypij & Das Gupta, 2001; Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001; Mason & Smith, 2000; Desai, 1994). Women's limited empowerment within the household is associated with a vast number of outcomes which are higher fertility levels and discrimination in resource allocation inside the household (Basu, 1992; Dyson & Moore, 1983; Doan & Bisharat, 1990), higher child mortality (Bloom, Wypij & Das Gupta, 2001; Durrant & Sathar, 2000) and lower contraceptive use (Dharmalingam & Morgan, 1996; Kishore & Subaiya, 2005; Visaria, 1996). Lack of choice in marriage partners may set the pattern for a subsequent lack of decision-making power in the marriage.

Historically most Indian marriages have been arranged by the couple's parents and extended family. India has long been associated with the institution of parent arranged marriages where parents exert a strong influence

over the choice of partner for their son or daughter. A 1993-94 a survey of 1,842 over 1,800 ever-married rural women aged 15-39 years confirm that few women have a say in the choice of their husbands (Jejeebhoy & Sathar, 2001). Even today a clear majority of Indians first meet their spouses on their wedding day (Desai et al., 2010). While a life-course perspective has been widely used in the Western literature on marriage and family transitions, its application to non- Western settings is far more limited. While Indian women's autonomy has long been recognized to grow over her lifetime (Das Gupta, 1995), the path of dependency of later events on how earlier events transpired is not as well documented. According to Rathor (2003), inter-caste marriage has been on the rise, especially among certain socio-economic groups such as the urban youth. Mixed marriages have been increasing due to modernization and socio-economic development. Various socio-economic differences are seen among inter-class marriages and it also affects their pattern of marriages (Singh, Goli & Sekher, 2013).

According to Srinivasan and Lee (2004), a dowry "may also have been a way of compensating the groom and his family for the economic support they would provide for the new bride because women had little or no role in the market economy and would be dependent upon their husbands and in laws" (p. 1108). Dowries are still a common affair despite the significant changes that have been brought about in India. Even though many more women have been brought about in the work force, dowry still prevails in the society. Hypergamy which is defined as the practice of marrying a partner whose social status is higher than that of hers is one of the main reasons why dowry is much in many communities. Larger dowries mean increasing the family's rank in the society. To add to that, families are motivated to provide generous dowry for their daughter to ensure her safety and respect by in-laws (Srinivasan & Lee, 2004).

Changing Marriage Trends in India

Marriage as a 'structured and patterned set of social relations and practices' is 'embedded in norms and values' of a society (Palriwala and Kaur 2014: 4). Review of literature on the subject in India reveals that Indian youth is appropriating globalisation and structural changes in urban society by attaching new meanings. There is a growing evidence of valuing the economic potential, trustworthiness, equal temperament, physical look and intelligence of the prospective partner (Prakash and Singh 2013). While these attributes are valued in the southern part of India as well, caste and community continue to reign supreme there. In an ethnographic study on the marriage system of the Eighteen-Village Vattimas, Fuller and Narasimhan (2008) found that while endogamous marriage continued within the community, the mode of arrangement had changed with educational qualifications and employment of men and women, their potential happiness as congenial partners becoming the principal criteria for selection. Pande (2015) talks about how even in the practice of arranged marriages, some South Asian women are able to exercise agency while choosing their marriage partner. The researcher thus challenges the stereotype of the 'oppressed third world women'. Exploring preferences for arranged or love marriage, Derne (2008) concludes that while men's assessment of arranged marriages has not changed much, there is a greater recognition of the validity of love marriage as a choice that people might make. Attempts are also made to reconcile the local and the global. In a research in Hyderabad, Gilbertson (2014)

suggests that while people make an effort to adhere to local notions of respectable behaviour that is considered central to their national identity, they also attempt to align themselves with the globally oriented ideas of progressiveness and open mindedness. Therefore, while some studies have indicated that with industrialisation and urbanisation, there would be 'reduction in cultural diversity' (Ambirajan 2000), and changes in families and marriage practices (e.g., love marriages replacing family arranged marriages); some other studies stated that family-arranged marriages have remained the dominant form of marriage and have not been replaced by 'love' or self-arranged marriages in India (Jejeebhoy et al. 2013; Palriwala and Kaur 2014). However, changes are being evidenced in marriage practices and marriage preferences, and discussion on 'love' or 'self-arranged' marriages in India society is also increasingly becoming part of the discourse on marriages. This is evident through increasing literature on the love marriages, for example, by Jejeebhoy and Halli (2005 cited by Jejeebhoy et al 2013) and Palriwala and Kaur (2014). In their study across six states, Jejeebhoy et al. (2013) found 2 per cent of respondents from northern and eastern states to be from self-arranged marriages while from the southern and western states, this figure was 9 per cent. Using data on married young women, their study aimed at exploring association between the kind of marriage arrangement (e.g., self-arranged, family-arranged, etc.) and marital relations and agency. Although interfaith and inter-caste marriages in urban areas may indicate a degree of diffusion of boundaries among people from different regions, faiths and caste groups, segregation and discrimination do continue to exist and influence opportunities and choices in terms of where one would or can live or work or operate business from (Jamil 2014). It is evident, therefore, that a 'conscious social reform' is not the driving force behind changes in marriage norms (Kaur 2014: 19).

At present, factors that influence prevalence of self-arranged marriages are diverse. For women, some of these factors are higher level of education; location, that is, living in urban areas; higher economic status (Goli et al. 2013); changes in economic status or 'class transformations' (Kaur 2014); opportunities created by globalisation, for example, work in factories; need to overcome one's impoverishment (created by globalisation); need to modify one's identity of being a young, poor and single woman; and access to the ideology of romance and individual choice (Lessinger 2014). It is important to note here that contrary to the finding that associates higher economic status with self-arranged marriages, Palriwala and Kaur (2014: 14) observe that self-arranged marriages are more frequent 'at the two opposite ends of the economic spectrum—the working and upper classes' although research on upper class is very limited in this area. Similarly, although higher level of education has been found to be linked with women's choice in their marriage (Goli et al. 2013; Jejeebhoy et al. 2013), this was not so for women in rural north India (Jeffery and Jeffery 1994). In the research by Jeffery and Jeffery among Jats in Bijnor district (in Uttar Pradesh), women respondents perceived little control over their involvement in marriage arrangements irrespective of being educated or illiterate. Fieldwork for this research was, however, primarily done in 1982–83 and 1990–91. It is possible that level of education may be influencing assertion of choices in marriage as indicated in other studies.

Intermarriages in India

The Indian subcontinent also has a long history of inter-ethnic marriage, dating back to ancient history. Various groups of people have been intermarrying for millennia in South Asia, including groups as diverse as the Dravidian, Indo-Aryan (Indic), Iranian, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto- Burman peoples. This was particularly common in the northwestern and northeastern parts of the subcontinent. In the northeast, Northern Indian men (of largely "Indic" stock) often intermarried with North-East Indian women (of largely "Mongoloid" stock). There are even cases of Indian princesses marrying kings abroad. For example, the Korean text Samguk Yusa about the Gaya kingdom indicates that in 48 AD, King Kim Suro of Gaya (the progenitor of the Gimhae Kim clan) took a princess (Princess Heo) from the "Ayuta nation" (which is the Korean name for the city of Ayodhya in North India) as his bride and queen.

However, in contemporary India, interracial marriages are more likely to involve spouses from the same social class (Pavela 1964). Previous studies are evident that Marriage in India is still predominantly endogamous than exogamous: within same caste, same religion, and same economic group. One of the critical aspects of mixed marriages in Indian context is inter-caste marriages. The concept of caste system discrimination is like a bane on the path of India's progress. In India, lower castes are not only deprived socially but also economically too. For centuries, Indian society has been divided on the basis of caste system. The problem of caste system was so deep rooted that it took years for the Indians to come out of that idea. Even today also India is struggling to come out of this social menace. History reveals that efforts have been made by various social reformers and individuals whose name doesn't appear in the pages of history to make India free from the clutches of caste system, untouchability and race discrimination (Malhotra *et al.* 1977). And when we talk about Indian marriages, which are intercaste and inter- religious, it seems like a taboo to most of the people.

However, in India, marriage among different economic groups is not a regular custom. Existing socio-economic customs work around in the marriage proposals among the families. Another important custom of Hindu marriage system in India is marriage among blood relatives. This system is operates differently in North and South Indian states. In North India, virtually, the marriage among close blood relation is prohibited. Contrastly, in South India marriage among blood relatives is a common practice.

However, with the recent modernisation and western education, there has been change in traditional marriage system in India. Further, socio-economic development and globalisation of Indian economy has a consequence in change of marriage pattern in India. However, Literature on mixed marriage in India is mostly theoretical; those studies based an empirical evidence are mostly case studies (Kannan 1963; Corwin 1977). Therefore the present study aim to re-explore the concept of mixed marriage in India and to identify possible research gaps on which further research can be carried out in the context of new laws passed by different state governments in India related to different intermarriages and the future of such marriages.

Inter-caste Marriages;

Marriage is almost universal in India, and there are various crucial considerations for mate selection. Some of the most important ones are caste, religion, mother tongue, economic condition, etc. Among them, caste similarity between the two uniting families is the foremost important consideration. Such similarities are regarded as the backbone of a successful marriage. Caste, unlike the class, is prescribed and not ascribed. It is pre-decided at the time of birth itself, and one cannot change it throughout life. It is also embedded in the Hindu religion. Hence, it is deeply rooted in Indian culture and society. Compounding the caste interplay, monogamy is the prevalent form of marriage and divorce not readily acceptable to the majority of communities. So, it is quite essential to choose a life-partner carefully. As a result, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are socially condemned and frowned upon (Srinivasan and James, 2015). Kannan (1963) studied 149 inter-caste marriages in the city of Bombay. He found that inter-caste marriage is steadily increasing only recently and that has assumed a significant component since 1956. The age of the women at the time of her marriage, the freedom given to her to choose her partner, the range of female education are some of the important factors influencing the inter-caste marriages in Bombay (Kannan, 1963). A study based on matrimonial advertisement data shows that, in a section of the families, the caste barrier is being changed and people come forward for inter-caste marriages. The friends and relatives in most cases play all foul means to stop such unions; but this tendency to oppose intercaste marriages registered in West Bengal, have increased from 700 in 1955 to 5800 in 1969. Brahmins which are at the top of the caste hierarchy are most opposed to inter-cast marriages. Kayasthas, Baidyas and other Hindus are increasingly becoming more liberal towards inter-caste marriage. Also post graduates are most liberal for inter-caste marriage as compared to under graduates and graduates (Sarkar, 1970).

A study conducted in rural areas of Andhra Pradesh found that as many as 936 people in the sample favored marriage of their sons and daughters only within their caste, while only 29 people were not very particular about marriage within the caste. This rigid or conservatism with regard to inter-caste matrimonial alliance was not confined to the few influential castes groups alone. It was uniformly prevalent among all caste and among the different level of society. On the whole it can be seen that castes both at the top and at the bottom as well as those who are trying to improve their social status are keen on confining their marital relations only to their own caste, excepting for few people who are insignificant in their numbers (Chintamani, 1973).

Another study on inter-caste marriage (Reddy et.al, 1984) shows that the scheduled caste has exhibited the highest tendency for inter-caste marriages than the other castes. The urban residence, education, employment in modern occupation and middle class economic background have tended to be a set of attributes affecting the incidence of inter-caste marriages. He further observes that inter-caste marriage takes place at fairly advanced age rather than at the young age (Reddy et.al, 1984).

Kapadia (1966) in a study of inter-caste marriages in India interviewed 513 university graduates. It was found that 51 percent parents expressed their willingness to cheer children marrying outside their own caste. Only one-third were against this departure from custom. Post graduate students were only moderately in favor of

inter-caste marriage (Saroja, 1999). Urbanization and industrialization have certain effect in braking down the barriers of caste (Prasad, 1957; Banerjee et.al, 1978). An article of times of India (1 Feb 2010) shows that in India 4750 marriages are inter-caste involving Dalits in 2008-09 while the number was slightly lower at 4205 in 2007-08 and 3945 in 2006-07. Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra lead in this direction registering around 1000 inter-caste marriages for three years.

Inter-caste marriage, though is a very pertinent and complex social issue in the Indian context, there is a shortage of literature, maybe either due to the lack of data, or controversies surrounding it. There are scattered ethnographic studies which by their very nature are not generalizable. Studies primarily are conducted in pockets and with small sample sizes. Further, some of the works (Das et al., 2011; Goli et al., 2013; Jejeebhoy et al., 2013) covering the entire country and With the globalization and socio-economic development, social norms are supposed to loosen

its noose. Increase in the level of education, change in place of residence, easy mingling with opposite sex, etc. opens the gateway for selecting a life-partner from another community. One of the famous Indian sociologists (Srinivas, 1955) noted back in 1955 that co-education is bound to make inter-caste marriages more common shortly. Further, he concluded that the caste system is bound to give way in the end, though it would be against the nature of things to expect untouchability to disappear overnight. As such study (Kales, 2014) suggests that even today the caste system is prevalent mainly in rural India, which condemns inter-caste marriage, and the couple who tries to defy this norm faces dire consequences. Also, the sporadic incidences of honor killing, especially in caste-ridden north India, negate such inference. Many parents wish to send their children to modern schools and provide all modern facilities. But when it comes to mate selection, they would like to follow the traditional pattern of marrying within the same caste. Here the problem arises. Due to strong cultural importance put into the marriage and caste system embedded in the Hindu religion, inter-caste marriages (Baas, 2007) and marriages outside the same economic status groups are not common phenomena (Goli et al., 2013). Marriage outside the caste is considered taboo, although there are no restrictions on inter-caste marriage as per the Hindu Marriage Act (Trigunayat, 2014). Such a couple is out-casted, driven out of the parental home, worse cases lead to honor killing. At the backdrop of such socio-cultural settings, it is pertinent to know which type of female and male take the high risk of breaking this arduous social norm. Although study exhibits existence of a preference for same-caste marriage in India until today (Banerjee et al., 2012; Dommaraju, 2016), traces of inter-caste marriage can be found far back in history (Banerjee et al., 2012; Chaudhry and Mohan, 2011). Cited reasons for (long distance) intercaste marriage is the poverty and inability to pay the dowry demand at the native place (Chaudhry and Mohan, 2011: 317). Another study by Goli et al. (2013) concludes that education and economic status are two major factors contributing toward women's choice and freedom in the selection of a spouse from outside their own socio-economic group. But other study by Das et al. (2011) found education (of both women and men) to have a negative effect on inter-caste marriage, though the economic condition has a positive impact on it. However, studies suggest that today in Indian society we can see inter-caste marriages. Though mostly it is part of the city/urban culture, and they constitute a minor proportion of the total number of

marriages (Ahuja and Ostermann, 2016; Das et al., 2011; Goli et al., 2013; Trigunayat, 2014). It is said that those who defied inter-caste marriage by violating the social norm had to face the consequences in terms of violence, social boycott, family boycott, and death of the boys and girls (honor killing) (Das et al., 2011). Studies exhibit a higher prevalence of inter-caste marriage among lower caste women (Ahuja and Ostermann, 2016) because interest in inter-caste marriage is rooted in a desire for upward mobility and governed by the principle of exchange (Ahuja and Ostermann, 2016). It is also substantiated by the findings that lower caste people in rural North India evaluate their lives to be worse than higher caste people and this difference is not explained by poverty (Spears, 2016).

Inter-ethnic marriages

Inter-ethnic marriages between European men and Indian women were very common during colonial times. However, evidences from other western part of the world suggest increase mixed marriages (Aldridge 1973). Accordingly, some evidences also found in Asia: an investigation into mixed marriages between Arabs and Jews in Israel, discussed the efforts that are made by the religious authorities, in cooperation with the ministries concerned to prevent mixed marriages between Arabs and Jews in Israel (Institute of Palestine Studies 1972). Interracial marriage in Southeast Asia dates back to the spread of Indian culture, including Hinduism and Buddhism, to the region. From the 1st century onwards, mostly male traders and merchants from the Indian subcontinent frequently intermarried with the local female population. From the 14th to 17th centuries, many Indian traders settled down within the maritime kingdoms of Southeast Asia and intermarried with the local female populations. Many Indian traders, merchants and missionaries travelled to Southeast Asia (where Indianised kingdoms were established) and often took local wives from the region. The Indian subcontinent also has a long history of inter-ethnic marriage, dating back to ancient history. Various groups of people have been intermarrying for millennia in South Asia, including groups as diverse as the Dravidian, Indo-Aryan (Indic), Iranian, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto- Burman peoples. This was particularly common in the northwestern and northeastern parts of the subcontinent. In the northeast, Northern Indian men (of largely "Indic" stock) often intermarried with North-East Indian women (of largely "Mongoloid" stock). There are even cases of Indian princesses marrying kings abroad. For example, the Korean text Samguk Yusa about the Gaya kingdom indicates that in 48 AD, King Kim Suro of Gaya (the progenitor of the Gimhae Kim clan) took a princess (Princess Heo) from the "Ayuta nation" (which is the Korean name for the city of Ayodhya in North India) as his bride and queen.

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Inter-community marriages;

Arranged and intra-community marriage remains the dominant nuptial form across the Indian subcontinent, from the most remote rural villages to the bustling urban municipalities. Not surprisingly, therefore, most representations and analyses of matrimony in South Asia focus on practices that reflect the normative marriage pattern. (K. Saroja 1999), pp. 183–92).

Inter-community marriage is defined as any marriage across lines of caste, linguistic-cultural group and/or religious sect that is *not* consistent with any traditional system of communal kinship relations. South Asia scholars may be sceptical of a discussion of patterns of kinship variation in pan-Indian terms, since extensive cultural differences clearly exist among and within various regions. However, while sweeping generalisations about social behaviour across the subcontinent are typically inaccurate, the emerging picture of inter-community marriage in contemporary India challenges traditional conceptions of geographic and cultural boundaries in at least two ways. Firstly, people who inter-marry tend to live in densely populated cosmopolitan cities or towns, where socio-economic and cultural divisions are more likely to be relatively fluid. Secondly, most scholars would agree that the majority of people in India view family connections and concomitant life events (especially birth and marriage) as supreme and sacred points of convergence between the earthly and spiritual realms (M.S. Das and V.K. Gupta, 1993).

Inter-faith marriages;

An analysis of the trends of mixed marriages in India during 1981–2005 has shown that in terms of percentile, the number of marriages across lines of caste and faith had doubled during this period even while the absolute number of such marriages is not very large. The data from this study also indicated that marriages across faith were greater in urban areas, among those having higher education and those having a higher economic status (Goli *et al.* 2013). Concomitantly, in terms of marriage preferences for the next generation, Robinson (2007) reports mixed and slow changes bordering ambiguity. Undoubtedly India is also a context where many couples crossing boundaries of faith have faced stiff resistance that has demanded intervention on the part of the highest judicial body with the Supreme Court seeking protection for such couples (Dasgupta 2007). It is in the midst of these developments that the current article positions itself where it explores the journey of interfaith couples in negotiating spaces within a context that is transitioning.

Within the broad category of self-arranged marriages lie interfaith marriages. For individuals who choose interfaith marriage, love is their sole motivation and relationship is generally viewed in terms of individual compatibility (An-Na'im 2005). However, such marriages involving Hindus and Muslims are generally impacted by past experiences or 'the burden of the vexed history of Hindu-Muslim relations' as Chopra and Punwani (2005: 50) call it. These past experiences also fuel fears among parents regarding the future of their children in inter-religious marriages. Examples of this have been presented by Ansari and Anjum (2013) in their study. Ansari and Anjum (2013) through their study also brought out that the mothers were more willing to accept their daughter's marriage outside community as compared to the fathers. In several cases in the study, fathers refused to talk about their daughter's marriage stating that they had nothing to do with their daughter's marriage. Also, in the qualitative study by Saheli (2007), some women were open to marrying their sons outside community but not the daughters. Out of 45 women who participated in this study, 5 were firmly against their children marrying outside community due to 'fears of different traditions, customs, food habits, etc.' (p. 71). Considering the perception of interfaith marriages to be okay for males but not for females indicates gendered responses of the society towards intercommunity marriages which anyway often face resistance as discussed in more detail in the next section which brings up the aspect of women as symbols of honour and 'honour killings' as a one of the societal responses to interfaith marriages.

India, as a country, has provisions for people to marry outside their communities without being forced to follow any one particular personal law in the process of marriage. Special Marriage Act, 1954 (i.e., SMA) ensures such a space to those who may belong to different faiths or communities and may want to opt for a civil marriage and marry without any religious rituals. While interfaith couples have the option to use SMA to solemnise and register their marriage, they also face societal norms against their alliances that are sometimes labelled as immoral, unholy or acts based on lust (Ansari and Anjum 2013; Mody 2008). Response to such alliances may also go to the extent of killings (generally termed as 'honour killings') and excommunication of individuals who attempt to cross their community's boundaries (Chowdhry 1997) as seen in Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi's rural belt. Although some of the Khap panchayats have relaxed marriage norms and one of the Khaps has also allowed inter-caste marriages (Kaur 2014), interfaith marriages, in the recent times, are also being opposed through targeted campaigns aimed at polarisation of society on religious grounds. One such example is the campaign called 'Love Jihad' which is targeted at protecting Hindu girls from Muslim boys (ET Bureau 2014; Mishra 2014; Puniyani 2014). This campaign not only represents the patriarchal values where women are often symbols of the honour of their communities but also attempts to promote myths and stereotypes about one community (Muslim in this case). Mody (2008: 277) too notes that intercommunity marriages involving Muslims are specifically targeted by Hindu nationalist groups.⁹ A panel discussion¹⁰ in Delhi criticised attempts that politicise the right of adults to choose their marriage partners. In this context, it is pertinent to mention that the Supreme Court of India¹¹ and high courts have stated that an adult is free to decide whom to marry, and through which process, but without forced conversions (Arora 2014). The Supreme Court has also

criticised the practice of Khap/Katta panchayats taking law into their own hands, for example, in *Arumugam Servai vs State of Tamil Nadu* [reported in 2011, 6 SCC 405 cited by Arora 2014].

As evident from the discussion till now, law works for as well as against love marriages (Mody 2008). While legalisation of marriage and intervention of courts can offer safety to a couple, law can also be used by families to deter and break such marriages.

Despite the stiff resistance, there is evidence that marriages across religion, caste or community have been taking place in the past as well as present. As shared in an earlier section of this article, analysis of data on mixed marriages from a nationwide survey indicated that percentage

of inter-caste and interfaith marriages almost doubled between 1981 and 2005 (Goli et al. 2013). From 1.6 per cent in 1981, interfaith marriages were found to have increased to 2.7 per cent in 2005. In Delhi, around 35 marriages are registered under SMA each year (Iqbal 2014a).

Presence of interfaith marriages in the context of societal resistance makes it imperative for us to understand such relationships with greater depth. Individuals choosing interfaith marriages are aware that the society is likely to oppose. They sometimes or often live with the cost of their decision, in terms of being isolated and living with 'pain where parents have cut off or limited their interaction and not accepted the marriage or spouse....' (Ansari and Anjum 2013: 155). They are also aware that in spite of legal and constitutional support to interfaith marriages, institutions and stakeholders such as caste panchayats, police officers, lawyers and sometimes even judges 'uphold localized notions of sovereignty often in contravention of constitutional law and even of the rule of law' (Baxi et al. 2006: 1239). Yet such marriages do occur and are often sustained.

DISCUSSION

Caste and religion are integral components of Indian society since the time immemorial. These two systems create water tight compartment between communities and bring division, hatred and tension among various social groups. Marriages within the same caste and same religion is the norm of the Indian society. To think of marriages between different castes and different religions is a difficult and socially unacceptable proposition. Recently the process of modernization, democratization and development has brought lots of positive changes in Indian society.

Analysis of large-scale survey (India Human Development Survey 2011–12) data exhibits an inconsequential rise in this social incongruity since 1951 to attain 4.5% in 2012. It is most prevalent in the northeastern region (11.6%), but least prevalent in caste-ridden central India (1.8%). Multi-variate statistics exhibit that if women are allowed to choose their life-partner, caste takes a rear-seat in marriage contemplation. It is quite prominent among the women who selected the husband by themselves and knew the husband at least one year before the marriage. Contrary to general notion, education is not able to promote inter-caste marriage. Odds of inter-caste marriage taking place in Dalit (lowest social standing) households is much lesser than the higher caste. Resilient targeted efforts are necessary to promote inter-caste marriage which may loosen the noose of the caste system in India.

Conclusion

Most of India's intermarriage research shows that India's marriage system is still overwhelmingly endogamous, and that inter-caste marriages and marriages outside the the same economic community are not common. However, most Indian marriages are outside the same blood caste. In inter-caste marriage, socio-economic disparities are predominant, and various socio-economic and demographic factors also influence the intermarriage trend in India. Mixed marriages are a common trait of those who are politically, educationally, and culturally advanced by and wide. The literature also found that couples with different racial and ethnic identifications recorded by spouses faced greater difficulties than their same-ethnic counterparts. Interethnic couples carry more complicated relationship backgrounds to their partnerships, including past cohabitations, relationships and children, and they are often more likely to have undergone a parental divorce from these spouses.

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