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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ADVANCED LEGAL RESEARCH**

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**CONSEQUENCES AND CONTROVERSIES EMANATING FROM INTER-RELIGION AND INTER-CASTE MATRIMONIAL BONDS IN INDIA**- Shum Ritha K & G. T. Lalitha Kumari<sup>1</sup>**ABSTRACT:**

This research addresses the consequences and controversies stemming from inter-religion and inter-caste matrimonial unions within the Indian social context. The study reveals a dichotomy of outcomes. Inter-religion and inter-caste marriages often serve as conduits for social progress, leading to increased cultural exchange and understanding among diverse communities. However, it also exposes the underlying tensions and conflicts that persist within Indian society. Couples frequently grapple with societal bias, familial resistance, and legal complexities, which can culminate in marital strain and emotional distress. The research scrutinizes the existing legal framework governing such unions, identifying areas where legal provisions may be insufficient or inadequately enforced. It advocates for amendments to ensure the protection of couples' rights and facilitate smoother legal processes. Furthermore, the study explores the experiences of children born into inter-religious and inter-caste families. While they may encounter unique challenges in terms of identity formation, the research illuminates the potential benefits of exposure to diverse cultural backgrounds. This research contributes significantly to the understanding of marriage dynamics in India, providing a foundation for policy recommendations that aim to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for couples engaging in inter-religion and inter-caste unions.

**KEYWORDS:** Inter Caste, Inter Religion, Children, Society, Marriages**1. INTRODUCTION:**

India celebrated for its vibrant cultural mosaic and diverse populace, contends with intricate social hierarchies entrenched in religion and caste. Marriage, a pivotal institution in Indian society, has long been influenced by these factors, giving rise to an intricate network of inter-religion and inter-caste unions. This study probes into the intricate facets of these matrimonial connections, examining their repercussions and contentious aspects within the framework of Indian society. Inter-religious and inter-caste marriages in India

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refer to unions where individuals from different religious backgrounds or caste groups choose to marry each other. These marriages break the traditional boundaries that have historically defined social interactions in India.

In an inter-religious marriage, the spouses belong to different religious faiths. India, being a diverse country, is home to several major religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and others. When individuals from different religious communities decide to marry, they often face a range of unique challenges. These may include negotiating religious rituals, managing differing religious customs, and deciding on the religious upbringing of children. Such marriages require open-mindedness, and mutual respect, and often involve compromise to accommodate both partners' beliefs. Inter-caste marriages involve individuals from different caste groups within the Hindu social system, which traditionally has been highly stratified. The caste system categorizes people into social groups based on birth, with varying degrees of privilege or disadvantage associated with each caste. Inter-caste marriages challenge these deep-seated social hierarchies. They can face resistance from families, communities, and even society at large, due to the deeply ingrained prejudices associated with caste. Despite legal provisions and societal progress, inter-caste marriages may still face social stigma and discrimination.

The legal framework overseeing inter-caste and inter-religious marriages in India stands as a testament to the nation's dedication to secularism and individual agency. Despite notable strides, persistent societal and cultural hurdles call for sustained discourse and legal protections. This research endeavor will delve deeper into the subtleties and ramifications of these legal provisions, illuminating their influence on the liberties and decisions of individuals in contemporary India.

## **2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

Inter-religious marriages in India have been relatively rare throughout history, primarily due to the significance of religious identity in Indian society. India is a country known for its diverse religious landscape, encompassing Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism, and other faiths. One reason for the infrequency of inter-religious marriages is the deep-rooted importance of religious beliefs and practices in individuals' lives. Religious identity is often a central aspect of one's upbringing, influencing cultural traditions, rituals, and daily life. Marrying someone from a different religious background can pose challenges in reconciling these differences. Furthermore, historical periods in India have witnessed instances of religious conflict and tension. This has contributed to a certain level of social stigma associated with inter-religious marriages. Couples who choose to marry across religious lines may face resistance or disapproval from their communities, and in extreme cases, they might even be subjected to discrimination or violence from religious extremists.

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Whereas, Inter-caste marriages in India have a deep historical and societal context. Traditionally, Indian society has been organized into a hierarchical system known as the caste system. This system categorizes individuals into distinct social groups, with limited mobility between them. The caste system dates back over two thousand years, with its origins in ancient Hindu scriptures<sup>2</sup>. It originally served as a way to organize society based on occupation, but over time, it became a rigid social structure that dictated various aspects of a person's life, including whom they could marry. Inter-caste marriages challenged this established social order, as they involved individuals from different castes marrying each other. Such unions were often met with resistance and social stigma, as they were seen as a deviation from tradition and a threat to the existing power dynamics. Efforts to encourage inter-caste marriages gained momentum during the Indian independence movement, as leaders like Mahatma Gandhi advocated for social reform and unity. Post-independence, the Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950, enshrined principles of equality and non-discrimination, providing a legal framework for inter-caste marriages. Despite these legal protections, societal attitudes have been slower to change. Inter-caste marriages still face resistance in many parts of India, particularly in rural areas where traditional beliefs hold strong. However, urbanization, education, and exposure to diverse cultures have contributed to a gradual shift in attitudes, leading to an increase in inter-caste unions over time. Today, while inter-caste marriages are more common than in the past, challenges still exist, and progress toward complete acceptance and integration continues. It's important to note that attitudes and experiences can vary widely across different regions and communities within India. Also, there has been a gradual shift towards greater acceptance and understanding of inter-religious marriages, reflecting changing societal norms and a more inclusive outlook. However, it's important to acknowledge that the historical context of inter-religious marriages in India has been marked by a combination of religious diversity, deeply ingrained traditions, and occasional religious tensions<sup>1</sup>.

### **3. SOCIAL STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION FACED BY THE COUPLES:**

Inter-religious and inter-caste marriages in India often confront significant social stigma and discrimination, deeply rooted in the country's complex historical and cultural fabric. These unions challenge longstanding traditions and social hierarchies, which has led to various forms of bias and prejudice. In the case of inter-religious marriages, India's diversity is both its strength and a source of tension. With a multitude of religions and belief systems, the country has long witnessed a clash between different faiths. Inter-religious marriages are perceived as a direct challenge to the preservation of religious purity, as they involve

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<sup>2</sup>S.Jyothi “*Inter-Caste Marriages and Transformation of Caste: Identity, Culture and Hegemony*”

individuals from different religious backgrounds coming together in matrimony. This mixing of faiths is sometimes seen as a dilution of religious traditions and values. Furthermore, inter-religious marriages may disrupt established gender norms, particularly when women marry individuals from a different faith or lower social status. This challenges the conventional patriarchal order in which women are often expected to marry within their religious community or men of equal or higher caste, contributing to the stigmatization of such unions.

On the other hand, inter-caste marriages challenge India's deeply ingrained caste system, a hierarchical social structure that has persisted for centuries. This system categorizes people into different groups based on their birth, with each group associated with distinct occupations and societal roles. Inter-caste marriages, however, blur the rigid lines drawn by the caste system, often seen as a direct threat to the system's supposed purity. The mingling of individuals from different castes is viewed as a dilution of caste identity and hierarchy. Additionally, these marriages can disrupt traditional gender roles, especially when women marry men from lower castes, shaking the foundations of the patriarchal order that dictates women should marry within their caste or men of higher status. This deviation from the norm further adds to the social stigma attached to inter-caste marriages<sup>3</sup>.

The discrimination faced by couples in inter-religious and inter-caste marriages can manifest in various ways. In many instances, families and communities vehemently oppose these unions, leading to ostracism and isolation. Such couples may be excluded from family events, not receive invitations to gatherings, and be treated as outsiders. This isolation can create a deep sense of loneliness and social alienation. Moreover, individuals in inter-religious and inter-caste marriages may face discrimination in employment, limiting their job opportunities and prospects for advancement. Bias in housing and education also occurs, where couples may be denied rental housing or mortgages and their children may face rejection from schools and colleges due to their parents' unconventional unions. Tragically, in some cases, inter-religious and inter-caste couples become victims of violence, including horrifying incidents of honor killings.

Despite the challenges and adversities faced by couples in these marriages, there is a growing movement in India driven by young people who are actively challenging the traditional norms and values upheld by society. They seek to create a more inclusive and equitable environment where love and choice take precedence over religious or caste backgrounds. Numerous organizations also work tirelessly to support and

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<sup>3</sup>Bindu Menon *“Interfaith Marriages in India: A Study of the Problems Faced by Interfaith Couples in India”*

empower inter-religious and inter-caste couples, advocating for their rights and working to break down the barriers they encounter.

To address the social stigma and discrimination faced by these couples, it is essential to promote awareness and education regarding the importance of religious and caste tolerance and acceptance. By dispelling misconceptions and fostering understanding of different faiths and caste backgrounds, we can pave the way for a more inclusive society where individuals can freely choose their life partners without fear of prejudice or persecution. Support for organizations that actively promote inter-religious and inter-caste harmony is another crucial step. These organizations serve as advocates for the rights and dignity of such couples, working to change societal attitudes and discriminatory practices. Additionally, challenging and eliminating discriminatory laws and policies against inter-religious and inter-caste marriages is vital to ensure equal treatment under the law. Finally, the transformation into a more inclusive society necessitates a collective effort to challenge prejudice and discrimination wherever they arise, fostering diversity and inclusion in all aspects of Indian society, from educational institutions and workplaces to cultural and social structures. In doing so, India can move closer to a future where couples of all religions and castes are respected and accepted, and where love and choice transcend divisive boundaries<sup>1</sup>.

#### **4. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK BY GOVERNMENT:**

In India, the legal and policy framework governing inter-religious and inter-caste marriages is intricate and multifaceted, reflecting the country's rich cultural diversity and longstanding traditions. The Special Marriage Act of 1954 primarily governs inter-religious marriages, allowing individuals of different faiths to marry without conversion. However, couples must provide notice of their intent to marry, followed by a 30-day waiting period to address any objections. A significant landmark case in 2018, the *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India*<sup>4</sup> Supreme Court judgment, reinforced the fundamental right to choose one's life partner, irrespective of caste or religion. Despite these legal provisions, societal and familial pressures often lead to discrimination, harassment, and even violence against inter-religious couples, making social acceptance a considerable challenge.

Inter-caste marriages also face a complex legal and societal landscape in India. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, of 2006, addresses child marriages but doesn't specifically focus on inter-caste unions. The deeply entrenched caste-based discrimination and rigid societal caste system contribute to challenges faced by inter-caste couples, including resistance, social exclusion, and violence. Various Supreme Court judgments emphasize the role of inter-caste marriages in breaking down the caste system, with notable cases

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<sup>4</sup>2018 7 SCC 192

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like *Dr. SubhashKashinath Mahajan v. The State of Maharashtra*<sup>1</sup> in 2018 highlighting their importance. Some Indian states incentivize inter-caste marriages with financial benefits and support to promote social integration.

Despite these legal provisions and court decisions, deeply rooted social norms and prejudices continue to pose substantial challenges for inter-caste marriages. Couples often encounter opposition from their families, communities, and local authorities. The most significant challenge remains the deeply ingrained societal and cultural biases, leading to honor killings and violence against couples defying these norms. Family and community pressures exacerbate these challenges, causing emotional and psychological distress. Furthermore, the lack of awareness about legal rights and options hinders informed decision-making.

Therefore, India's legal and policy framework promotes individual freedom and the right to choose a life partner. The Special Marriage Act of 1954 and Supreme Court judgments underscore the significance of these marriages in fostering social integration and dismantling prejudices. However, the persistent societal norms and biases continue to impede progress, making awareness-raising, support, and societal attitude changes essential for genuine freedom and choice for individuals in India.

#### **5. SOCIAL SCHEMES FOR THE COUPLES:**

Promoting inter-caste and interreligious marriages is pivotal for creating a more inclusive and harmonious society, symbolizing love transcending social and religious boundaries and challenging deep-rooted prejudices. Notably, the 'Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Scheme for Social Integration through Inter-Caste Marriages' in India, named after the Constitution's architect, offers financial aid of up to Rs. 2.5 lakhs to eligible couples opting for inter-caste marriages. State governments like Karnataka have similar schemes, providing up to Rs. 50,000 in financial support for such marriages. These initiatives alleviate the economic burden on couples and facilitate building a life together, regardless of their caste backgrounds. In tandem with financial assistance, the government and NGOs are committed to raising awareness about the significance of inter-caste marriages. Through campaigns, workshops, and counseling services, these efforts help couples overcome societal and familial resistance while emphasizing the benefits of unity in diversity and the eradication of caste-based discrimination<sup>5</sup>.

Interreligious marriages also play a crucial role in fostering societal acceptance, and the 'Special Marriage Act, of 1954, in India, allows individuals from different religions to marry without conversion, preserving freedom of choice and religious tolerance. However, interreligious marriages can encounter practical challenges due to societal norms and prejudices. To address these issues, various organizations and

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.iipa.org.in/new/upload/report1.pdf>

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community-based initiatives offer counseling and legal aid to interreligious couples, facilitating their navigation through the complexities of marriage and family acceptance. Furthermore, they play a pivotal role in sensitizing communities about the importance of interreligious marriages in promoting religious harmony and cultivating an environment of tolerance and mutual respect.

Religious leaders and institutions can contribute to encouraging interreligious marriages by providing their blessings and support to such unions. They can set an example for their followers by emphasizing love and unity over religious differences, while organizing interfaith dialogues and workshops to promote understanding and acceptance among different religious communities, reducing the stigma associated with interfaith marriages. It's essential to acknowledge that promoting inter-caste and interreligious marriages comes with challenges, including resistance from families, communities, and legal obstacles. To overcome these hurdles, the government and civil society must collaborate to create a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Therefore, schemes and initiatives supporting inter-caste and interreligious marriages are commendable steps towards building a more harmonious and inclusive society. They provide financial assistance, create awareness, offer counseling services, and address the challenges faced by couples marrying across caste and religious lines. These efforts are vital in breaking down the barriers of prejudice and discrimination, fostering a society where love transcends social and religious boundaries. However, such initiatives must continue to evolve and expand to create a more accepting and diverse society where individuals can choose their life partners without fear of discrimination or bias<sup>1</sup>.

## **6. CHILDREN IN MIXED MARTIAL BONDS:**

Children born to parents in interreligious and inter-caste marriages in India form a mosaic of diversity and unity. They are exposed to a rich blend of cultures, traditions, and values, shaping their upbringing and their role in reshaping India's social fabric. In such marriages, children often gain a profound understanding and tolerance for different faiths, contributing to a more inclusive and harmonious society. However, they may also grapple with questions about their own religious or cultural identity, requiring guidance to navigate this intricate path.

In inter-caste marriages, children experience a convergence of diverse traditions and customs, celebrating various festivals, speaking multiple languages, and encountering a wide range of family practices. While this diversity enriches their lives, it may also lead to a sense of cultural ambiguity. Therefore, parents play a vital role in providing a strong foundation of identity and values. These children can be effective advocates for dismantling caste-based prejudices, as they grow up witnessing the power of love transcending social

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boundaries. Societal bias and discrimination can pose challenges for children in interreligious and inter-caste marriages. India's diverse society doesn't always embrace these unions, subjecting such children to various forms of bias, from schoolyard teasing to more substantial societal barriers. They may grapple with questions about their identity and where they fit in, emphasizing the need for supportive parents and strong role models from both sides of the family. In interreligious marriages, children experience the beauty of interfaith dialogue and understanding, yet they may also face complexities. They often must decide which religious practices to follow, influenced by their family's approach. Some families expose their children to both faiths, allowing them to make their own choices, while others may adopt a single religious practice. Nevertheless, children in these marriages tend to exhibit a flexible outlook, finding common ground between their parents' beliefs and promoting unity over division.

In inter-caste marriages, children serve as living evidence that caste doesn't define a person's worth. However, they may still need to address questions about their background and explain their unique family dynamics. Education and awareness play a significant role in dispelling ignorance and prejudice, ultimately driving society toward a more inclusive mindset. Children in inter-caste marriages also play a vital role in challenging and breaking down the persisting caste-based discrimination in some regions of India. Moreover, children of interreligious and inter-caste marriages have the potential to drive change within their communities. They bring firsthand experiences of unity, tolerance, and acceptance, effectively challenging stereotypes and gradually reshaping societal norms. They can emerge as advocates for social progress, championing love, respect, and understanding as the foundation of a diverse and inclusive India.

Supporting children in interreligious and inter-caste marriages involves providing them with the resources to navigate their unique backgrounds. This includes education about their cultural and religious heritage, guidance in dealing with societal biases, and instilling strong values of respect and acceptance. Parents play a pivotal role in this process as the primary influencers in their children's lives. Children born to parents in interreligious and inter-caste marriages in India embody a bridge between diverse traditions and backgrounds. They hold the potential to be agents of change in a society grappling with divisions and prejudices. While they may face challenges related to societal bias and questions about their identity, their experiences and perspectives can ultimately contribute to a more inclusive and harmonious India. It is the collective responsibility of parents, communities, and society to nurture and support these children, ensuring they develop a strong sense of identity and a commitment to unity and acceptance<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup>Dr. Rajiv Kumar "Nurturing the Next Generation: Challenges and Opportunities for Children in Interreligious and Intercaste Marriages in India"

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## **7. IMPACT OF CASTE AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS IN THESE MARITAL BONDS:**

In India, caste and religion are two fundamental social institutions that greatly influence the occurrence of inter-caste and interreligious marriages. Both institutions hold a strong presence in Indian society and culture, exerting significant influence over people's perspectives and actions regarding inter-caste and interreligious connections.

In the realm of social organization, the caste system prevails, establishing a structured hierarchy whereby individuals are allocated into distinct groups determined solely by their birth. Caste is determined by the transmission of hereditary lineage across successive generations. Within caste groups, individuals are generally expected to partake in endogamy, whereby they are anticipated to unite in matrimony solely with others from their caste group. Inter-caste marriages are commonly perceived as a threat to the caste system. The act of marrying across different castes challenges the established social boundaries that have long separated various caste groups. The consequences of this situation may include being socially ostracized, experiencing violence, or even facing mortality. Caste institutions can shape perspectives and interactions between individuals, thereby influencing inter-caste marriages. Take, for instance, individuals belonging to diverse castes who are accustomed to the belief that they cannot harmoniously coexist. They could also possess divergent anticipations regarding the institution of marriage and the dynamics of family life. Building and maintaining relationships can become challenging when individuals come from diverse castes.

Religion is a fascinating topic that has been a significant aspect of human culture throughout history. It encompasses a set of beliefs and practices that provide individuals and communities with a framework for understanding the meaning and purpose of life. Religion plays a crucial role in shaping moral values, guiding ethical behavior, and providing a sense of comfort and solace in times of hardship. One of the most distinctive features of religion is its diverse nature. There are numerous religions practiced around the world, each with its unique set of beliefs, rituals, and traditions. From major world religions like Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism, to indigenous and tribal religions, each offers its answers to questions about the ultimate reality, the nature of God or gods, and the afterlife. Religious beliefs often revolve around concepts of faith, spirituality, and the supernatural. Followers may engage in prayer, meditation, or worship rituals to connect with higher powers, seek guidance, and express devotion. Some religions also emphasize the importance of morality and ethical conduct, teaching followers to treat others with kindness, compassion, and respect. Religion can also provide a sense of belonging and community. Many people find solace and support in religious institutions, such as churches, mosques, synagogues, or temples, where they can connect with like-minded individuals, share experiences, and partake in communal activities. Religious festivals and ceremonies are often celebrated as a way to strengthen bonds and unite communities<sup>1</sup>.

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However, it is important to acknowledge that religion can also be a source of conflict and division. Throughout history, religious differences have sparked wars, persecution, and violence. The intersection of religion and politics can sometimes lead to power struggles, discrimination, and marginalization of certain groups. It is crucial to promote tolerance, understanding, and respect for diverse religious beliefs and practices, fostering an inclusive society where individuals can freely express and practice their faith. Hence, religion continues to have a profound influence on individuals and societies worldwide. Whether through providing a moral compass, offering a sense of belonging, or fostering personal growth, religion remains a fundamental part of human existence. By promoting mutual respect and acceptance, we can strive towards a world where religious diversity is celebrated and peace prevails.

In India, religion holds significant importance as another vital social institution. Most Indians practice Hinduism as their primary religion, however, notable religious minorities in India include Christians, Muslims, Sikhs, and Jains. It is common for religious identity to be intricately linked with caste identity, making interreligious marriages a potential disruption to both social and religious conventions. Interreligious marriages encounter disapproval from both religious families and communities on many occasions. It is possible that religious leaders could discourage interreligious marriages, whereas families may exert pressure on their children to only marry within their religious community. There are instances where interreligious couples might encounter severe dangers, including violence and potentially fatal consequences.

Religious institutions hold sway in interreligious marriages as they shape perceptions and dynamics among individuals. For instance, individuals from varying religious backgrounds may be ingrained with the notion that they possess divergent values and convictions. Marriage and family life can also be experienced with varying expectations. Building and maintaining relationships can become challenging for individuals belonging to diverse religious beliefs. The Influence of caste and religious institutions on marriages between different castes and religions can be described as intricate and diverse. Moreover, these institutions tend to create substantial obstacles for individuals seeking inter-caste and interreligious relationships. Additionally, they have the potential to play a significant role in providing support for couples who come from different castes or religions.

For instance, there is a growing trend among religious institutions to extend support to interreligious couples. For instance, interreligious marriages are now being conducted in certain Hindu temples. In addition, certain Christian denominations embrace the practice of interreligious marriages. Despite advancements in society, numerous caste and religious institutions persist in their opposition to inter-caste and interreligious marriages. An instance of this can be seen in certain caste communities, where couples

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who intermarry outside of their caste may face ostracization. Interreligious marriages still encounter opposition from select religious leaders.

Challenges and opportunities are abundant in every aspect of life. They provide us with the chance to grow, learn, and adapt. While challenges may seem daunting, they present us with the opportunity to test our limits, develop new skills, and overcome obstacles. These challenges push us out of our comfort zones and force us to think creatively and problem-solve. On the other hand, opportunities are like open doors, waiting for us to seize them. They offer possibilities for success, personal growth, and achievement. It is through recognizing and embracing challenges and opportunities that we can progress and make the most of our lives.

India still struggles with significant obstacles when it comes to inter-caste and interreligious marriages. Nevertheless, there are various indications of advancement. In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of inter-caste and interreligious marriages. The reason behind this is probably a combination of factors, such as the growing urbanization and education levels of the population. In India, several measures can be taken to promote and uphold inter-caste and interreligious marriages. It is beneficial to motivate caste and religious institutions to embrace policies and practices that promote inclusivity. One potential avenue for governments to foster inter-caste and interreligious marriages is through the implementation of legislation safeguarding these couples against discrimination and acts of violence<sup>7</sup>.

### **8. YOUTH'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS INTER-CASTE AND INTER-RELIGION MARRIAGES:**

Inter-caste marriages and religious marriages are unions between individuals from distinct ethnicities castes and religions, a system deeply rooted in custom beliefs and longstanding practices in India.

Globalization and expanded educational opportunities have significantly shifted societal perspectives on caste and religious dynamics. Increased cultural exchanges, international travel, and educational pursuits abroad have facilitated connections and relationships across different castes. Similarly, within India, the younger generation frequently interacts across caste, religion, and ethnic lines in educational institutions and workplaces. This increased mingling has led many individuals to enter into inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Against this evolving social backdrop, this paper examines the attitudes of educated youths towards inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Attitudes towards inter-caste and inter-religious marriages in India align with the higher educational achievements of numerous minority castes. Educational institutions serve as conduits for inter-caste and religious interactions among individuals of similar social

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<sup>7</sup>Pradeep Trivedi "Changing Attitudes Towards Inter Caste and Interreligious Marriages in India"

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standing, thereby fostering these relationships. With the proliferation of higher education among both genders, inter-caste marriages have gained significant favor among the younger populace.

It is observed there is a notable degree of acceptance for inter-caste and religious marriage, regardless of ethnic or caste background. Despite this growing acceptance, a majority of respondents still harbor reservations towards intermarriage. Overall, the responses reflect a relatively favorable outlook on inter-caste unions. However, this perspective does not always translate into actual practice, as traditional caste values and parental influence continue to wield significant influence in the realm of inter-caste marriage. Through awareness campaigns and various initiatives, the youth in our nation are actively working to educate others about the detrimental effects of this system. A society fragmented by divisions cannot thrive in the long run. Education, as a pivotal factor, has prompted individuals to transcend these boundaries.

Today's well-educated youth exhibit a positive outlook towards such marriages. Their exposure to diverse castes and religions through educational pursuits fosters strong relationships. Consequently, their mindset evolves with each succeeding generation. However, it is disheartening that older generations remain steadfast in their adherence to caste and religious considerations. Likewise, uneducated youth pose a similar obstacle to progress in this regard<sup>1</sup>.

## **9. CONCLUSION:**

In summary, this research delves into the complex dynamics of inter-religion and inter-caste marriages in India, shedding light on their multifaceted consequences, challenges, and evolving societal attitudes. It underscores the significance of the legal framework, stressing the need to protect individual agency and freedom of choice while acknowledging ongoing societal pressures and biases. Social stigma and discrimination pose significant hurdles for couples in these marriages, leading to isolation, bias in various life aspects, and even violence. The role of caste and religious institutions in influencing these unions is discussed, highlighting the challenges and opportunities they present. While educated youth in India exhibit positive attitudes towards inter-caste and inter-religion marriages due to increased exposure and interactions, the research recognizes that older generations and less-educated youth may still hold traditional views, necessitating continuous awareness and education. In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of promoting inclusivity, tolerance, and acceptance in Indian society. It calls for a collective effort to challenge prejudice and discrimination, foster diversity and inclusion, and work towards a future where love and choice transcend divisive boundaries. By addressing the legal, social, and cultural aspects of these marriages, India can progress towards a more equitable and harmonious society that respects and supports couples from all backgrounds.

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