

The Role of Religion & Caste in Marital Laws: Conflict and Coexistence in Interfaith Marriages

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ABSTRACT

India possesses a unique and unparalleled diversity in terms of culture, language, race, religion and caste which constitute a basic fabric and an integral part of our society. But unfortunately, there are some cultural limitations still prevalent and carried on from preceding generations based on rigid beliefs and unethical practices which have acted as hurdles for cherishing and realizing the dream of pure secular India. An inter-caste or inter religious marriage is one among them. Our society still frowns on inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. People marrying outside their caste are considered outrageous. Kerala has the highest literacy rate in India. Yet when a girl decided to convert to another religion and marry by her own choice, it became a matter of debate for the entire nation. The technological age of information, communication and social networking sites where personal relationships are chosen and shared openly all have helped to break the barriers and build secular bonds as there has been a massive spurt in inter-caste and inter-religion marriages. Data obtained from the department of stamps and registrations shows 2,624 marriages were registered in 2013-14 under the Act; the number jumped to 10,655 in the subsequent year. In 2015-16, up to January, the number had touched 8,391- a 306% increase from 2013-14 to 2014-15. It is in the light of above brief analysis this paper endeavors to discuss in part- wise 1st the social norms and sociological perceptions about inter-caste and inter-religious, 2nd the status and the law prevalent and protecting such marriages, 3rd the existing scenario the practical aspects and ground realities among the elite and poorer sections of our society.

Keywords: *Inter-caste, Interfaith, Constitution of India, Secular, Judicial Precedent*

INTRODUCTION

Religion has always played a significant role in shaping personal laws in India, influencing not only individual identity but also societal structures and relationships. Marital laws in the country reflect this influence, as they are rooted in religious doctrines governing matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and maintenance. Interfaith marriages, where partners belong to different religious communities, challenge these deeply entrenched norms and often bring legal, social, and cultural complexities to the forefront.

The coexistence of secular laws like the Special Marriage Act, 1954, and religious personal laws underscores the duality in India's legal framework. While the former provides a neutral platform for interfaith marriages, bypassing religious rituals and doctrines, the latter can impose significant restrictions. This duality often leads to conflict, with couples navigating not only legal hurdles but also societal resistance, family opposition, and sometimes threats to their safety.

This article explores how religion shapes marital laws in India, the conflicts arising in interfaith marriages due to divergent religious norms, and the avenues for coexistence within the legal system. It delves into the challenges faced by interfaith couples and examines whether the current framework fosters harmony or perpetuates division in a diverse and pluralistic society.

In Shakti Vahini v. Union of India & Ors.¹ the Hon'ble Supreme court quoted following observation-Assertion of choice is an in segregable facet of liberty and dignity. That is why the French philosopher and thinker, Simone Weil, has said: -"Liberty, taking the word in its concrete sense consists in the ability to choose." When the ability to choose is crushed in the name of class honor and the person's physical frame is treated with absolute indignity, a chilling effect dominates over the brains and bones of the society at large.

The institution of marriage is considered as an important social custom in every religious, caste, community and hence society. It is only the perceptions and sanctions that make the marriage to be practiced, accepted and adopted differently in different societies. The marriages in western societies are found to be based on more liberal views and individual choices i.e. above the lines of caste and religious. But in eastern societies like ours the institution of marriage is still influenced and dominated by the religious and caste factors. In Indian society people from generations have adopted rigid approach towards this sacred institution. Talking about inter caste and inter religion marriages in India was considered a taboo for most people in the earlier days. However, with time, things changed and inter caste marriage also became a part of the society but still not completely. People couldn't imagine marriages beyond the same caste. They had a conception that marriages are only possible in the same community and caste. Those who dared for the inter-caste marriage by violating the social norm had to face the consequence in terms of violence, social boycott, family boycott and death (Honor killing). Even in this twenty first century, honor killing is practiced in some parts of India when there are cases of inter-caste marriages. Caste is such a rigid and water tight compartment in Indian society that it is almost next to impossible to think of a marriage between a higher caste and a lower caste. The concept of caste being peculiar to Indian society and along with religious beliefs both have acted as a great hurdle for the path for the progress harmony of our country. For centuries Indian society especially, Hindu society has been divided on the basis of caste system. The problem of caste system was so deep rooted that even today also India is struggling to come out of this social menace. History is witness to the exceptional efforts that have been made by various social reformers and individuals to make India free from the clutches of caste system and religious dogma operating in social relationships.

¹. AIR 2010 SCC 2311

Marriage is a sacred institution that binds a man and a woman in a holy union, giving their relationship deeper and practical significance in social status of the parties. When marriage takes place, two souls come together, opening new chapters in their lives. However, people's selfishness has tainted the sanctity of these relationships. When God created man and woman, He did not assign them any caste. So how can humans divide God's creation into castes and communities? This issue dates back to the times of kings and queens, when the caste system was practiced. In the past, it was customary to marry within the same caste. Anyone who dared to defy societal norms faced severe punishments, and entire communities were ostracized from interacting with families where inter-caste marriages occurred.²

THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

In India society there is no more important occasion in a family than a wedding, which conjointly brings out each and every possible social commitment, connection bond, customary regard, devoted notion, and financial asset. The general ancient practice prevalent in Indian society is that organizing a marriage is a basic duty of guardians and different relatives of both lady and other side. Marriage co-operations involve some redistribution of riches and additionally constructing and rebuilding social realignments, and, obviously, result in the natural multiplication of families³. From the immemorial times of Kings and Queens, caste-system is practiced in India. Ancient and the Medieval periods of India are witness to the facts that, it was customary to marry in the same castes. If anyone dares to disobey the rules of the society he was confined to serve punishments. Whole community was barred from keeping any sort of relation with those going against social norms. Customs and religious practices were so strict and ruthless that sometimes boys and girls were killed by their own family members due to societal pressures. Indians had a traditional mindset and could not conceive of inter-caste marriages beyond their own caste, community, and religion. Marriages had to be within the same caste and community, and anyone who pursued an inter-caste marriage faced consequences such as violence, social ostracism, family rejection, and even death. The caste system has been an inflexible part of Indian customs for ages, creating biased and unfair rules within Hindu traditions. This discrimination has damaged society and created divisions among people of different castes. Despite the world advancing, some people in India still adhere to strict caste rules. In Hindu society, marriages are often dictated by caste, and inter-caste marriages are considered sinful and are not approved by elders. Elders in Hindu society oppose inter-caste marriages for various reasons, including fear of societal norms and loss of reputation, cultural differences that might prevent the couple from settling down and following each other's traditions, concerns that children from inter-caste marriages will not be perfect, and the torture the family and couple might face from society.⁴ In several Indian states, inter-caste marriages are discouraged not only out of fear of diluting personal values but also due to concerns about distributing property to people from other sects. An empirical study conducted in rural Andhra Pradesh found that 936 people in the sample preferred their sons and daughters to marry within their caste, while only 29 were not very particular about caste in marriage. This conservative attitude toward inter-caste matrimonial alliances was widespread, not limited to a few influential caste groups. It was uniformly prevalent across all castes and social levels. Overall, it was concluded that castes at both the top and bottom of the hierarchy strive to improve their social status by confining marital relations to their own caste, with few exceptions. Brahmins, at the top of the caste hierarchy, were most opposed to inter-caste marriages. However, Kayasthas, Baidyas, and other Hindus are becoming more liberal towards inter-caste marriage. Additionally, educated and urban classes were

². Ambedkar.B.R, *castes in India: Their mechanism, genesis and development*(2002), In the essential writings of B.R. Ambedkar, ed valerian Radrigues, 242-62 "New Delhi, Oxford university press.

³. Kanaskar and Ghimire, Conducted a study on *intricacies of inter-caste, marriages between Dalits and. Non-Dalits in Nepal's*". Journal of marriage and family V.62(2), pp. 238-268.

⁴. www.srjis.com (visited on 29 Nov 2010)

found to be more liberal regarding inter-caste marriages compared to their uneducated and rural counterparts.⁵

Like caste religious has also far deeper and broader effects on overall attitude, thinking, perception and lifestyle of person. The challenges for inter-religious married couples are therefore more complex and dominant. The extent of challenges couples face with inter-marriages in India depends on whether they were able to convince their parents to agree to their marriage. Some couples elope while others manage to convince their parents to agree to their marriage. However, the overall history of such type of marriages reveal that their struggle to get married doesn't really ends with just the marriage but also face continuous challenges that need hard work and patience to navigate.⁶ Thus most common problem that couple confronts in inter-religion marriage is stern parental disapproval and social criticism. An inter-religious unions have the tendency to provoke the communities of opposite religious groups and often result in communal clashes. A number of such incidents of communal disharmony have been reported all across the country because of inter-religious marriages. Inter-religious marriages have thus always been a difficult terrain. They challenge various norms and customs and arouse passions of religious fundamentalists. The "threat" of such intimacies has often resulted in "constructed" campaigns, expressing the anxieties and fears of conservative forces. In India, the Hindu rightwing has been adept at generating panics around expressions of love, including Valentine's Day, homosexual love, and inter-caste and inter-religious romance, portraying them as major threats to cohesive community identities and boundaries. The latest construct by the Hindu right is the so-called "Love Jihad" or "Romeo Jihad" organization, purportedly initiated by Muslim fundamentalists and young Muslim men to convert Hindu and Christian women to Islam through deception and false expressions of love. In regions like Kerala, Karnataka, and Delhi, groups such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Sri Ram Sene, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, and Hindu Janjagru thi Samiti have held meetings, distributed pamphlets, and even filed court cases, claiming that this organization, as part of an Islamist conspiracy, has devised plans for coercive and deceitful religious conversions by winning over young women. They also allege that Muslim youth are receiving foreign funds to purchase designer clothes, vehicles, mobile phones, and expensive gifts to entice Hindu women. The consequences of such a campaign include fostering hate, promoting anti-women sentiments, and creating panic. Many protests have arisen against this malicious campaign, with various human rights groups, student organizations, and secular bodies voicing their concerns over the hate campaign propagated by Hindu organizations.⁷ There were investigations indeed, but no substantial evidence was found if such conversions were carried out by deceiving the non-Muslim girls. A long investigation jointly conducted by Cobra post and Gulail into the so-called phenomenon of "love jihad" revealed that some rightwing Hindu organizations combine and their sister outfits use violence, intimidation, fraudulent means, emotional blackmail and drugs to rescue Hindu girls from their Muslim husbands who allegedly trick them into marriage. The campaign against "love jihad" is part of a broader strategy to instill hatred against a particular religious community by creating a perceived threat to the majority Hindus. The Gulail investigation revealed a systematic effort to use the "love jihad" phenomenon to polarize communities along communal lines. "Love jihad" combines patriarchy and communalism, aiming to restrict the freedom of choice for Hindu girls while simultaneously portraying the Muslim community as the enemy. Isolated incidents of inter-religious couples eloping is depicted as a conspiracy by the Muslim community to trap Hindu women and

⁵. Sarkar, B.N., 1970, *Casteism in matrimonial engagements in West Bengal*, Tech. Report No. Demo Research and Training School, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

⁶. <https://www.jodilogik.com/wordpress/index.php/love-marriages-in-india/> (last visited 30 November 2024)

⁷. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260468360>, Hindu Women, Muslim Men: Love Jihad and Conversions, Article in *Economic and political weekly* · December 2009 by Charu Gupta.

increase their population. This creates a sense of insecurity and perceives Muslims as a threat, leading to communal tensions.⁸

RELIGIOUS PERMISSIONS ON INTERRELIGIOUS MARRIAGES

Islam: Islam generally opposes interreligious marriages, but under certain conditions, it allows Muslim men to marry non-Muslim women and raise their children as Muslims. Specifically, a Muslim man is permitted to marry a woman who follows a monotheistic religion, such as Judaism, Christianity, or Sabianism, provided their children are raised as Muslims. However, Islam strictly prohibits Muslim women from marrying non-Muslim men.

Hinduism: In traditional Hinduism, interreligious marriage is unacceptable. Marriages even between different castes within Hinduism are uncommon, let alone with people from other religions. The four castes (Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras) do not typically associate socially or intermarry.

Christianity: Similar to Hinduism and Islam, Christianity also opposes interreligious marriages. Christianity views marriage as a divine institution, not a human construct dependent on social institutions for its character and essential nature. A marriage between a Christian and a non-baptized person is not considered sacramental. Like Islam, Christianity also has concerns about the religious upbringing of children in such marriages.

Interreligious marriages have historically posed both an ideological dilemma and a perceived threat to various religious groups. While each religion promotes brotherhood and acceptance of others, extending these principles to interreligious marriages creates unique challenges. One primary reason organized religious bodies oppose such marriages is the fear of losing followers.⁹

THE LAWS FOR THE INTER-CASTE AND INTER-RELIGIOUS MARRIAGES IN INDIA

From the times immemorial Indian society has been stratified on the basis of caste and religious that is why endogamy is still the most preferred form of marriage. The feelings of pride in one's caste, differentiation from other castes and maintenance of pure blood lines are some of deeply motivated factors favoring endogamic practices of marriages in Indian society. Similarly, marriage across the religious and economic groups is not a common India. But in the modern India with the increasing urbanization, education and employment of women in modern occupations and the emerging middle class have had a strong influence in paving the way for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages as a result we have witnessed a huge growth of Love marriages involving choice of partners from different castes and communities which may not be approved by the family members or the society of either the bride or the groom or both on various grounds including fear of dilution of particular social understandings, moral values and division of properties amongst individuals belonging to different community or social unit.¹⁰ The constitution's framers anticipated this issue and provided for their provisions in the fundamental rights backed up by the other legal remedies. The Constitution guarantees freedom of religion, including the right to convert to any religion. In a democratic country, it is essential to allow people to freely exercise their right to marry whoever they choose, regardless of religion. In India, the right to marry is part of the right to life under the Constitution. Legally, girls

⁸. [https://www.mangalorean.com/love-jihad-the-reality/By Joseph Pereira, Mangaluru. Team Mangalorean.-October 6, 2023](https://www.mangalorean.com/love-jihad-the-reality/By_Joseph_Pereira_Mangaluru_Team_Mangalorean.-October_6,_2023)

⁹. Bambawale, Usha., *Interreligious Marriages*. (1982) Pune: Dastane Ramachandra & Co. P 67-69.

¹⁰. Caldwell, J. C., Reddy, P. H., & Caldwell, P. (1983). *The Causes of Marriage Change in South India*. *Population Studies*, 37(3), 343–361

under 18 and boys under 21 cannot marry, but beyond these age restrictions, individuals can freely choose their spouse regardless of religious differences.¹¹

In modern secular India, individuals can choose to marry within their own religion, community, or caste, or with someone from a different religion, community, or caste. Marriages within the same religion can be governed by personal laws or the Special Marriage Act, 1954, if the couple prefers. For inter-religious marriages, couples can either convert or register their marriage under the Special Marriage Act, 1954. The Special Marriage Act is religion-neutral and applies to all parties registered under it. Additionally, the Central Government has enacted the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969, which allows Indian citizens to marry abroad, whether with another Indian citizen or a foreigner. Both Acts are not concerned with the religion of the individuals and include provisions for inter-religious marriages and marriage registration. Consequently, marriages registered under this act are known as civil marriages. **Section 4** of this Act provides certain conditions necessary for solemnization of marriage which include monogamous marriage. The parties must be of sound mind and free from any mental disability. The male must be at least 21 years old, and the female must be at least 18 years old. Both parties should not fall under the prohibited degree of relationship unless the custom of one of the parties allows such a marriage. The procedure for registering a marriage under the Special Marriage Act (SMA) is straightforward. After meeting these basic conditions, an application in writing should be submitted to the marriage officer of the district where either party has resided for the past 30 days. The marriage officer then issues a 30-day notice period to allow for objections based solely on the conditions outlined in Section 4. The marriage officer has the authority to inquire into any objections. If no objections are raised within the 30-day notice period, the marriage can be solemnized in any form at the office of the marriage officer or any other location in their presence. The marriage officer records all details in the marriage notice book, which must be signed by the parties and three witnesses. The Special Marriage Act gives wide protection to such couples and such registration is subjected to following consequences.

- i. According to Section 19, any Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, or Jain registered under the SMA is severed from joint family property.
- ii. However, this section does not apply to intra-religion marriages among Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, or Jains.
- iii. Personal laws regarding succession, maintenance, or divorce do not apply to those married under the SMA.
- iv. Their succession laws are governed by the Indian Succession Act.
- v. The registration of marriage serves as conclusive proof of the marriage.
- vi. The marriage is governed by the detailed provisions of the SMA concerning divorce, nullity, custody, and other related matters.

Under the Special Marriage Act, individuals do not need to renounce their religion; they can continue to be governed by their own personal laws, and the SMA should avoid creating laws related to succession. Promoting inter-caste marriages has been a strategy by the government to reduce caste prejudice and discrimination. For many years, central assistance has been provided to states to encourage such marriages. To support social integration, the Indian government introduced the Dr. Ambedkar Scheme, which financially assists couples married across different castes during their initial phase. This scheme aims to address issues of employment and poverty and is part of the implementation of the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. The amount of the incentive is determined by the state government. Additionally, the Law Commission of India, in Report No. 242 of 2012, recommended

¹¹. <https://www.thebetterindia.com/123240/special-marriage-act-wedding-religion-india-hadiya/> (last visited 1st Aug 2019).

a legal framework proposal for a bill titled "Prevention of Interference with the Freedom of Matrimonial Alliances (in the name of Honor and Tradition)."

The main recommendation of the proposed bill is as follows:

- i. To address excessive and unjust interference by caste assemblies or panchayats in lawful sagotra, inter-caste, or inter-religious marriages, this legislation has been proposed to protect the liberty of couples and their families. It aims to establish a threshold preventing gatherings or assemblies that seek to disapprove of such marriages and interfere with the conduct of the couple. Those who assemble to condemn these marriages and take action against them will be considered members of an unlawful assembly, subject to a mandatory minimum punishment.
- ii. Acts that threaten the liberty of couples or their families, such as social boycotts or harassment, are considered offenses with a mandatory minimum sentence. Additionally, criminal intimidation by members of unlawful assemblies or by individuals acting on their behalf is also punishable with a mandatory minimum sentence.
- iii. A presumption that a person participating in an unlawful assembly shall be presumed to have also intended to commit or abet the commission of offences under the proposed Bill is provided for in Section 6.
- iv. Power to prohibit the unlawful assemblies and to take preventive measures are conferred on the Sub- Divisional / District Magistrate. Further, a SDM/DM is enjoined to receive a request or information from any person seeking protection from the assembly of persons or members of any family who are likely to or who have been objecting to the lawful marriage.
- v. The provisions of this proposed Bill are without prejudice to the provisions of Indian Penal Code. Care has been taken, as far as possible, to see that there is no overlapping with the provisions of the general penal law. In other words, the criminal acts other than those specifically falling under the proposed Bill are punishable under the general penal law.
- vi. The offence will be tried by a Court of Session in the district and the offences are cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable.

JUDICIAL RESPONSE AND ACTUAL PRACTICE OF INTER-CASTE AND INTER-RELIGIOUS MARRIAGES

While the higher court in India has always stood to protect inter-caste couples, but at lower level some parts of the local judicial system shown lack of seriousness in addressing such issues and in imposing strict punishments upon individuals restraining inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. In its most recent report on India, Human Rights Watch points to increasing violence against inter-caste marriage couples committed by local village officials, caste panchayats, or caste-based village councils by honour killing, public lynching of couples or their relatives, murder of the bride or the groom, rape, public beatings, and other sanctions. This is particularly common if either bride or bridegroom is a Dalit.¹² The higher judiciary especially Hon'ble Supreme Court has played a crucial role in realizing all heinous crimes committed against couples of such mixed marriages. Time and again the judiciary has issued various guidelines for ensuring the safety and security of such couples. The apex court has been instrumental in striking down the validity of village caste-based councils and *khaap panchayats*. In its various judgments it has categorically denied to acknowledge and impose any extra-judicial judgments on inter-caste based couples. In the case of **Arumugam Servai vs. State of Tamil Nadu**¹³ the Supreme Court strongly deprecated the practice of *khaap/katta panchayats* taking law into their own hands and indulging in offensive activities which endanger the personal lives of the persons

¹². Human Rights Watch 2006, *India – World Report*, 18 January. (Cisnet India CX160821)

¹³. CRIMINAL APPEAL NO. 959 of 2011

marrying according to their choice. In a case of **Bhagwan Das vs. State (NCT of Delhi)**¹⁴ the Supreme Court opined:

“The so-called honor killing comes within the category of rarest of the rare cases deserving death punishment. This is necessary as a deterrent for such outrageous, uncivilized behavior. All persons who are planning to perpetrator honor killing should know that the gallows await them”

In the land mark judgment of **Lata Singh vs. State of U.P.**¹⁵ the Supreme Court observed and direct as under: - This is a free and democratic country, and once a person becomes a major, he or she can marry whosoever he/she likes. If the parents of the boy or girl do not approve of such inter-caste or inter-religious marriage the maximum, they can do is that they can cut off social relations with the son or the daughter, but they cannot give threats or commit or instigate acts of violence and cannot harass the person who undergoes such inter-caste or inter-religious marriage. We, therefore, direct that the administration/police authorities throughout the country will see to it that if any boy or girl who is a major undergoes inter-caste or interreligious marriage with a woman or man who is a major, the couple are not harassed by any one nor subjected to threats or acts of violence, and anyone who gives such threats or harasses or commits acts of violence either himself or at his instigation, is taken to task by instituting criminal proceedings by the police against such persons and further stern action is taken against such persons as provided by law. We sometimes hear of 'honour' killings of such persons who undergo inter-caste or inter-religious marriage of their own free will There is nothing Honorable in such killings, and in fact they are nothing but barbaric and shameful acts of murder committed by brutal, feudal minded persons who deserve harsh punishment. Only in this way can we stamp out such acts of barbarism.

There is a positive and encouraging judicial response of the Indian judiciary towards favoring the inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. The latest and most vibrant precedent set by Hon'ble Supreme Court was in case **Shafin Jahan vs. Asokan K.M. & Ors.**¹⁶ in which Supreme Court not only struck down the Kerala High Court's judgment but also gave a wide recognition to individual choices enriched under constitution. The court made following observations;

The Supreme Court held that a person's right to choose a religion and marry is an intrinsic part of her meaningful existence. Neither the State nor “patriarchal supremacy” can interfere in her decision.

“Freedom of faith is essential to his/her autonomy; Choosing a faith is the substratum of individuality and sans it, the right of choice becomes a shadow,” Chief Justice Misra wrote in an opinion he shared with Justice Khanwilkar. Justice Chandrachud wrote, “Matters of belief and faith, including whether to believe, are at the core of constitutional liberty. The Constitution exists for believers as well as for agnostics”. The court held that the Constitution protects the ability of each individual to pursue a way of life or faith to which she or he seeks to adhere. “Matters of dress and of food, of ideas and ideologies, of love and partnership are within the central aspects of identity. Society has no role to play in determining our choice of partner. Additionally, The Constitution guarantees to each individual the right freely to practice, profess and propagate religion. Choices of faith and belief as indeed choices in matters of marriage lie within an area where individual autonomy is supreme”¹⁷

The actual practice of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages in India at present provides a mixed and contrasting picture. It has been found that a number of factors affect the acceptance and

¹⁴. (2006), 5 SCC 475)

¹⁵. (2011) 6 SCC 405.

¹⁶. (2018) SC 343.

¹⁷. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/right-to-convert-is-part-of-fundamental-right-of-choice-supreme-court/article23483824.ece> (last visited 3rd December 2024)

opposition for such marriages e. g inter-caste and inter-religious are more readily accepted in urban areas and among the elite classes with sufficient educational background. In India, individuals with a liberal outlook have come to understand that a successful marriage isn't dependent on sharing the same caste or religion. Instead, it's based on mutual understanding and compatibility. The key to a successful relationship lies in how well partners comprehend and respond to each other's needs and feelings. It's not necessary to belong to the same community or caste to better understand one's spouse. Numerous examples demonstrate that people from vastly different backgrounds can lead happy lives together, largely thanks to education. For instance, Athar Aamir and Tina Dabi, the first and second IAS toppers, exemplify a successful interfaith marriage. Education has expanded perspectives, enhanced analytical thinking and altering views on social issues like marriage and relationships. Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages symbolize social equality. To combat the caste system's constraints, inter-caste marriages have become essential. As globalization and education advance, societal views have evolved. Modernization has led to greater acceptance of inter-caste marriages in urban and progressive communities. There has been a noticeable shift in social attitudes, with parents and relatives increasingly open to marriages outside their own castes. However, in areas with limited educational exposure and modern influences, resistance to inter-caste marriages persists.¹⁸

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Keeping in mind various socio-economic changes such as industrialization, urbanization, democratic values and western liberal education we must not hesitate to conclude that the rate of inter-caste and inter-religious marriage are on rise in India, as compared with pre-independence time. But the unfortunate thing is that our society has not been completely able to reject caste and religious differences and that is why Inter-religious marriages still meet with resistance even today in Kerala, known for having the highest literacy rate in India, saw a nationwide debate when a woman chose to convert to another religion and marry of her own accord. In the unusual case of Hadiya, who converted to Islam and married a Muslim man, the Kerala High Court annulled her marriage to Shafin Jahan on May 24, 2017. It was only after Hon'ble Supreme Court intervened and rescued the couple. There is also no doubt to this ground reality that Economic status, standard of education, and type of occupation are some of the important, determinants of such mixed marriages. The 2nd aspect of above analysis is that the incidence of such unions is very low in villages compared to cities. Our Bollywood world presents it a live example with interfaith marriages by various actors and actresses. The Aamir khan-kiranrao, saifali khan-Kareenakapoor, Dilipkumar – Sairabanoo have proved to be most successful and happy unions in the world suppressing caste and religious differences. The more interesting is that none of them have met with any opposition on the part of their nears and dears. In his influential essay "Annihilation of Caste," Dr. B. R. Ambedkar argued that inter-caste marriage was the true solution for ending the caste system. He believed that the blending of blood through marriage would foster a sense of kinship and that only by establishing this kinship could the divisive effects of caste be eradicated. Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia also advocated for "*roti and beti*" (sharing food and marriage) as a means to abolish caste, highlighting the gender issues involved in inter-caste marriages. It is the responsibility of every Indian, particularly the younger generation, to make their elders aware that the rigid caste system is outdated and a significant barrier to achieving a prosperous and secular India. The youngsters can take various steps on their part to demolish this system. Last but not least there is an urgent need to educate people through scientific education so that they are freed from clutches of cultural limitations glorify, give media exposure and encourage such marriages in order to reduce the caste barrier prevalent in Indian society. India will not require long time when the marriage system in India will be completely free of caste and religious discriminations.

¹⁸ www.srjis.com--*Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science and English Language*, Attitude of civil society towards inter caste marriages - Mohd Zubair Kales-Feb-March, 2014. Vol. -I, ISSUE-II.