

# Shifting Trends in Marriage System: A Case Study of Jammu City



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## Abstract

Marriage is perceived as a system of roles of a man and a woman whose union has been given social sanction as husband and wife. The equilibrium of the system requires adjustment between the two partners so that the role enactment of one (partner) corresponds to the role expectation of the others (Robert O' Blood, 1960: 189). The regulation of mate selection in Hindu society is subsumed under the concept of *endogamy*, *exogamy* and *hypergamy*. The rule of endogamy is shared all over India. In general, pattern of kinship and marriage identified by Karve (1965) for North and South, with rest of the country sharing the mix of two still prevails. In ancient India, inter- marriages were often in the form of *Anuloma* (Hypergamy) and *Pratiloma* (Hypogamy). The rule of *Anuloma* and *Pratiloma* marriages has greater significance for the caste structure of Hindu society than for the marriage patterns of the Hindus in their social history. The hypergamous form of marriage has also been occurring among many communities in India from a long time like Kulins of West Bengal & Patidar of Gujarat. However, most of the marriages are based on caste, operated at sub-caste level and were characterized by kinship rules (Morris: 1968, Pocock: 1972).

This present paper is an attempt to study the emerging trend of inter-marriages in Jammu city, and will look into the trends, reasons and implication of these inter- marriages taking place across regions in the country and to see the level of change in traditional system of marriage and applicability of these changes in the Jammu city. It will explore various factors that bring change in the institution of caste and religion resulting in inter-caste and inter- religious marriages ultimately giving birth to new trends in the marriage patterns giving both positive and negative causes for consideration.

**Keywords:** Marriage, Inter-caste Marriage, Endogamy, Hypergamy, Hypogamy.

## Introduction

Marriage is a legally and socially sanctioned union usually between man and woman that is regulated by laws, rules, customs, and beliefs, attitudes that prescribes the rights and duties of the partner and accords status to their offsprings. In Hindu culture, marriage is a spiritual union. Beside it, seven other forms of marriages are recognized named as Gandharva, Rakshasya, Asura, Paisacha, Daiva, Prayapatiya and Arsha.

The regulation of mate selection in Hindu society is subsumed under the concept of *endogamy*, *exogamy* and *hypergamy*. Endogamy flourishes where social distinction has come to be a matter of permanent importance. The rule of endogamy is shared all over India. In general, pattern of kinship and marriage identified by Karve (1965) for North and South, with rest of the country sharing the mix of two still prevails. In the South, marriages often took place among close relatives within the same caste and relationship between bride giver and bride taker is equal. (isogamous). However, in North people prefer to marry strangers - those sufficiently removed in terms of both social and physical distance and relation is hierarchical (hypergamous), with bride taker having permanent superiority.

Marriage was considered an important institution essentially because it was the deepest and the most complex involvement of human relationship and symbolically the corner stone of society. The average Indian marriage especially in rural area is still perceived as governed by traditional rules of caste and religion. To ensure its continuity one of the first step was to tighten the circle of marriage by endogamy and exogamy, the rule that prescribes that an individual must find a partner outside of his own group known as exogamy. On the contrary, rule that makes it compulsory for a man to mate within his group is labeled 'endogamy' (Levi-Strauss, 1969).

In ancient India, inter- marriages were often in the form of *Anuloma* (Hypergamy). In this type of marriage, boy from upper caste or sub-caste could marry a girl from lower caste/sub-caste. In *Pratiloma* (Hypogamy) according to a social place, a girl from upper-caste marries a boy from lower-caste, but this form of marriage was not allowed. The rule of *Anuloma* and *Pratiloma* marriages has greater significance for the caste structure of Hindu society than for the marriage patterns of the Hindus in their social history. The hypergamous form of marriage has also been occurring among many communities in India from a long time like Kulins of West Bengal & Patidar of Gujarat. However, most of the marriages are based on caste, operated at sub-caste level and were characterized by kinship rules (Morris : 1968, Pocock: 1972).

#### Objectives

1. To understand the pattern and trends of new forms of mixed marriages occurring across regions in India.
2. To analyze the causes of mixed marriages like inter-caste and inter-religious marriages in the Jammu city.
3. To examine the various consequences of the phenomenon of mixed marriages and the resulting problems faced by women in marital adjustment

This present research paper is an attempt to study the emerging trend of inter-marriages in Jammu city. A inter- marriage is a term often applied to marital union between two individuals from different races, religion and cultures. It may also refer to inter-caste, inter-racial, inter-religious and transnational marriage. These marriages are emerging out of the true blend of mixed emotions, mixed philosophies and mixed cultures. In the study two groups, caste and religion were taken to study inter-caste and inter-religious, a kind of inter-marriages or mixed-marriages. Focus was on the causes and consequences also highlighting changes in the traditional caste system with special reference on transformation in one of its most important characteristic i.e. caste endogamy and acceptance of new changes by the people though partially or reluctantly. The study looks into the trends, reasons and implication of these inter- marriages taking place across regions in the country and to see the level of change in traditional system of marriage and applicability of these changes in the Jammu city through case studies.

Until sometime back marrying a person, belonging to some other caste or religion was strictly not permitted by the families. After independence, India set out on the tremendous task of educational, economic, industrial and social development. The socio economic growth and consequent urbanization, spread of education and adoption of democratic ideals by the nation were supposed to have a liberating effect on the inter-caste attitudes. These combined with constitutional and legal sanctions against the caste discrimination were assumed to have eroded the age-old caste-system to some extent resulting in inter-caste relations, which reported some changes in people's attitude accepting the contemporary trend of inter-caste marriages (Kuppu Swamy 1956).

With the modernization of Indian society and social awareness of people, inter-caste and inter-religious marriages have become a common sight. This to some extent is primarily -due to the acceptance of the concept of love marriages. Nonetheless, people with an orthodox or conservative outlook of life are still firm about marrying within the same caste, community and religion. Contrary to this thought, people in a present time do believe solemnizing wedding of two different individual belonging to different family background and culture.

#### Research Findings

There are many reasons considered responsible for these changes as well as many implications of such mixed marriages of which the main being higher education and well-established job playing important roles. However, not all types of inter-marriages are consequences of such modern facilitating factors involving individual choices and freedom. In fact inter-marriage also results due to negative reason like poverty, declining sex ratio, late marriages, second marriages or marriage of divorcee. These factors not only facilitate inter-caste marriages but also cross the boundary of religion resulting in inter-religious marriages. Thus, mixed marriages occurring due to these positive and negative factors are examined in the study and focused on middle and lower middle families.

In recent years, it has been observed that the new trends of inter-caste as well as inter-religious marriages, which involve migration, are taking place whether from rural to rural or rural to urban areas. In the post independence period, demographic, social and economic changes are leading to increasingly more differentiated and complex marriage pattern cutting across the barrier of region, religion, and caste resulting into what are referred to as 'Mixed-Marriages'. Changes and social mobility with in caste system have been highly restricted. Since ancient and medieval time society has been divided into different social classes based on Varna System for the smooth and ordered life. Nevertheless, with the changing time the inherited social status is gradually relaxing especially in urban areas due to high education, co-existence of communities and lesser knowledge about the various aspects of the caste system while in countryside and small towns this system is still rigid.

However, inter-caste marriages are becoming more common than before in contemporary India, many Indians still consider caste as the major criteria for matrimonial choices. Almost all Indians matrimonial websites and matrimonial columns in Indian newspaper contain caste-based categories. Despite various changes in recent years change in the character of the caste endogamy or marriage within one's own caste or sub caste is least. Not all inter-caste or religious marriages are exclusively choice marriages based on factors such as higher education and occupation. Declining sex- ratio in one region and poverty in another, forces men from region of low sex ratio to marry women from the regions of poverty and women from poorer families. The case where men marry again due to widowhood, divorcee or marriage at old age due to poverty, the chances of inter-caste, inter-religious and inter-region marriages increases (Ravinder Kaur, 2004).

Inter-caste marriages that occur due to negative factors represent a pattern in which people from different geographical and cultural regions are linked. Some time inter-marriages stretch to hundred of miles taking woman completely away from her familial, regional, linguistic and cultural context. Earlier the two opposing tendencies of endogamy and exogamy placed certain spatial and geographical limits to spread of marriage network for example a Jat for Haryana would marry Jat from neighboring U.P. and Rajasthan. However, due to emerging new trends of inter-caste marriage, the Jat is now marrying a woman of indeterminate caste from Assam, West Bengal or Bihar. Thus, these linkages are resulting due to poverty and the declining sex ratio.

It is not surprising that many women from states like Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Orissa and West Bengal are married to men in the more prosperous states having low sex ratio, like Haryana, Punjab and to lesser extent in Jammu and Kashmir. Thus, it can be said that poverty acts as a push factor in economically poor states. On the other hand adverse sex ratio works as important pull factor in the female deficit states. Such marriages, rather than based on modern values like openness and flexibility, are marked by closeness and rigidity of custom. Women from different cultures find it more difficult to adjust in traditional bound families. In those families where individual choices and freedom are supported by the forms of modernity women find it comparatively easier to adjust in the new settings. Therefore, the type of reason involved marks the form of impact or consequences of inter-caste marriages

According to 2011 census, the distribution of population in Jammu district was 15,29,598 with Hindu- 60 percent Muslim- 36 percent, Sikh-4 percent with multiple castes, like Brahmin, Rajput, Khatri, Mahajan, Shia's, Sunni's, Jat, Lobana (Sikh) and various Schedule Castes. It seemed appropriate that such a study can only be done in urban centre where there is a concentration of multi-caste and multi-religious population.

Caste and Religion are the integral component of the Indian society since time immemorial, Jammu region is no exception. Jammu is by and large a rural (72.62%), traditional society with rigid caste system, low literacy rate and low socio-economic development. Even today caste and religion play important role in mate selection, therefore, to think beyond own caste is unacceptable. In the recent years significant spatial variations in the pattern of inter-marriages are seen in the marriage pattern of India and it was found that following the rigid norms of caste and religion, Jammu has also witnessed change in the marriage system and cases of inter-caste and inter-religious marriage are numerous.

Although changes have occurred over the past three decades, these marriages are still frowned upon. Such marriages are sensitive issues of the society, unacceptable by majority of people. Problem in the way of such marriages are posed by various factors, which can result in hazardous outputs. Despite of our living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, some regions of the world are still waiting for the dawn of modern views and thoughts. However, the cities have started relieving themselves from the burden of havoc caused

by such marriages people in towns and villages still hold firmly on their objections.

Reasons for inter-caste marriages are numerous and include most of the reason for any marriage. According to research finding 90% of respondents considered love as a highly valued motivation for inter-marriage. It is been considered as important factor or force of motivation to marry outside the group. Residential propinquity and occupation propinquity were also held important factors by 45% of respondents for having inter-caste or inter-religious marriages. Some 10% of respondent defined their motive in terms of practical reasons, i.e., to attain liberty, wealth and status. About 75% of respondents held education as more frequent cause of inter-marriage. Educational effects have been interpreted in terms of both opportunity and preference. Modern education has played its role in initiating changes in the traditional marriage patterns. It has been examined in the study that respondents viewed that it is through education that some of the values and western ideologies such as rationalism, individualism, equality of sex and freedom of choice etc. have influenced the outlook of young men and women.

Thus, educated youth have their own views and stands on matters like to 'marry or not to marry', 'when to marry', 'whom to marry' and 'how to marry' etc. They give more importance to personal preferences and choices in marriage rather than to kinship rules and family traditions. Some of the respondents were of views that they had inter-caste or inter-religious marriages simply because they find suitable match in each other. According to them education in real sense had broadened their thinking horizon and made them rise above petty issues like religion and caste.

Many factors such as personal, social, physical and economic – may interact to shape and generate problems in any marriage. The conflicts in marriage differ with the difference in the culture. There are some consequences, which arise as obstacles in the smooth functioning of such marriages. Some times the intimate relationship can experience mismatch of expectation and resulting in various points of misunderstandings. In the study undertaken cultural and religious differences, loss of reputation, financial and residential problem and loss of social security were seen as main consequences of such unions.

### **Conclusion**

To conclude we can say that in the changing society even though individuals had used their choices in selecting their partners but faced many problems, infact they were much greater than those of arranged marriages. Given the traditional and patriarchal structure of Indian society in selecting a mate has not come as a source of freedom or modernity but at a greater cost in the form of several hardships for daring to exercise one's choice beyond caste and religious boundaries. No doubt, inter-marriages have brought about potential and significant social change and reflect the phenomenon of modernity but on the other hand it does not make the institution of caste or religion irrelevant. Due to occurrence of mixed marriages of inter-caste and inter-religious nature and their acceptance even

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though reluctantly, suggest a very important change in Indian society and reveals that drastic shift is coming in traditional marriage system especially in one of most important characteristic i.e., endogamy.

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