

Inter-Caste, Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Religious Marriages in India

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To cite this article: Dongardive, P. B., & Nagdeve, D. A. (2023). Inter-caste, inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages in India. *Population Geography*, 45(1), 81–98.

Abstract: Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are still considered taboo in India. India has experienced a very low prevalence of inter-caste marriages. It has been studied that inter-caste and inter-religious marriages will abolish religious and caste conflicts, but society still struggles to escape this social menace. The present paper aims to assess the prevalence of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages among currently married women. Additionally, determinants of inter-caste marriages have also been explored in the study. The data has been analysed from the fourth round of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) conducted during 2019-2021 in India. Bivariate and multivariate analysis has been used in the study. The study shows that most inter-caste marriages occurred within the same religion. Similarly, inter-ethnic marriages are comparatively higher among inter-caste marriages. On the contrary, inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages are quite low among the inter-religious group. The analysis reveals that inter-caste marriages are more significant between the two nearest caste groups in the social hierarchy. It replicates that, like any other phenomenon, caste hierarchy persists in inter-caste marriages. Hence, the policymaker should enhance the existing policies and programmes to promote inter-caste, inter-religious and inter-ethnic.

Keywords: caste, religion, inter-ethnic, inter-caste, inter-religious, NFHS

Marriage is one of the important events that creates one of the important institutions of society named family. Indian marriage system is confined to caste, religion, and ethnicity. Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are considered in Indian culture (Srinivasan & James, 2015). The spousal family faces violence and social boycott for violating the social norm (Das et al., 2011). Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages are registered under the Special Marriage Act 1954. However, the Special Marriage Act allows persons from two different castes and religions to marry

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Article:

Received: 03.06.22

Reviewed: 05.08.22

Accepted: 26.04.23

without religious formalities (Mody, 2002). The institution of caste predominantly has *Brahmin* supremacy (Ketkar, 2004). The existing Hindu religion is the collection of numerous castes, as are other religions in India. Every Hindu must marry within his/her caste group (*jati*) to maintain the caste's purity (Shah, 2007). Inter-dining and intermarriage of different castes are prohibited to maintain the purity of the higher castes. (Baas, 2007).

Marriage of the girl is considered a matter of honour in many states of the country (Sekher, 2012). Arranged marriages are meant to preserve endogamy and reduce the probability of marriage outside the group (Nawsagaray, 2014). Inter-caste, inter-religious and inter-ethnic marriages lead to honour killing and other deadliest phenomena (Phophalia & Goswami, 2018). Inter-caste marriages vary cohort by cohort, and tribes with different cultural practices always stay away from mainstream society (Bharti, 2012). The caste has been part of the Hindu religion, but now it has aired in Indian society. As a result, many tribal groups also claimed to be Hindu, and some feel superior in caste consciousness (von, 1982).

In the current global era, equal economic status is the primary concern of unions in Indian society, which has not been broken by inter-caste marriages (Goli et al., 2013; Dhar, 2013). However, inter-caste marriages are more (5.9%) prevalent in urban areas (Ahuja & Ostermann, 2016; Daset et al., 2011). The impact of women's education, public policy, and socio-economic development on intermarriage is negligible in India (Narzary & Ladusingh, 2019; Das et al., 2011; Shrinivasan & James, 2015). It is learned that the Indian education system has failed to fuel social inclusion in society. Very few dare cross the social control line and go for inter-caste and inter-religious marriages (Saroja, 1999). Moreover, those holding prominent societal positions do not support inter-caste marriages (Krishnaswamy, 1996).

The *Dravidian* movement has encouraged inter-caste marriages in India's southern states (Shrinivasan & James, 2015). It has been observed that economic well-being does not play a role in inter-caste marriage. On the contrary, it is found that inter-caste marriages are more common among poor than wealthy households (Sanghera, 2020). There is a significant deviation in the proportion of inter-caste marriages in the Indian States (Salve & Tewari, 2016). The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment announced funding for the Dr Ambedkar Scheme for Social Integration by improving inter-caste marriages (Hortaçsu et al., 2019).

Objectives

This paper has included tribal samples in the analysis as many studies have not included tribal populations. The existing literature focuses on the prevalence of

inter-caste marriage across different socio-economic conditions and geo-special differentials.

The present paper's objectives are:

1. To assess the prevalence of inter-caste, inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages in India.
2. To understand the impact of socio-economic and demographic variables on inter-caste, inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages.

Data and Methodology

The data have been used from the fourth round of the National Family Health Survey 2019-21 (NFHS-5), an ongoing socio-demographic health survey conducted by the International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai. The data has been collected from a total representative sample of 57693 currently married couples. Information on the caste, religion, and ethnicity of the respondent and her partner has been collected. Indian society has separate compartments of caste, religion, and ethnicity. The present analysis is not limited to the Hindu and has aired into Indian society of all other religions.

Along with scheduled caste, scheduled tribe (ST), other backward classes, and none of the other castes are included in the analysis. Some tribes have purity and Hindu attributes, considered high castes (von, 1982). Suppose a woman married to a man other than her caste, religion, and ethnicity is considered inter-caste, inter-religious, and inter-ethnic marriage. Similarly, religions are classified into four groups: Hindu, Muslim, Christian, and Others.

Bivariate and multivariate analysis is used to examine the effect of socio-economic factors on inter-ethnic, inter-religious, and inter-caste marriages in India. Similarly, the polychoric correlation coefficient and Spearman correlation coefficient have been used to see the relationship between male-female education, desire for childbearing, and age at marriage among couples who have inter-caste, inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriage.

Variables

Dependent Variables

Inter-Caste Marriage. If the husband's caste is the same as the wife's, it is considered 0 "within the caste." If the husband's caste is different from the caste of the wife, then it is considered 1 "inter-caste."

Inter-Religious Marriage. Suppose the husband's religion is the same as the wife's caste. In that case, it is considered 0 “within religion”. If the husband's religion differs from the wife's caste, it is considered 1 “inter-religious”.

Inter-Ethnic Marriage. If the husband's ethnicity is the same as the ethnicity of the wife, then it is considered 0 “within ethnicity.” If the husband's ethnicity is different from the ethnicity of the wife, then it is considered 1 “inter-ethnic”.

Inter-Caste Combinations. It has given six categories 1 “SC and ST”, 2 “SC and OBC”, 3 “SC and Other castes”, 4 “ST and OBC”, 5 “ST and Other caste”, and 6 “OBC and Other caste”.

Independent Variables

Age of the Women. A dummy variable has been created using variables related to the age of both husband and wife. This variable is recoded into three categories. 0 “same as husband's age,” 1 “more than husband's age”, and 2 “less than husband's age.”

Place of Residence. The place of residence is given in two categories; that is, 0 “rural” and 1 “urban.”

Education of Women. The education information is available in no education, primary, secondary, and higher secondary categories. The variable is converted into two categories 0 “no education”, 1 “primary”, 2 “secondary”, and 3 “higher secondary.”

Caste of Women. The variable has three categories. 1 “scheduled caste,” 2 “scheduled tribe”, 3 “other backward classes”, and 4 “other cast.”

Religion. It has three categories. 1 “hindu” 2 “muslim” 3 “christian” 4 “other.”

Ethnicity. It has three categories. 1 “caste” 2 “tribe” 3 “no caste/tribe.”

Family Type. The family type is recoded into two categories. 0 “non-nuclear family” 1 “nuclear family.”

Mass Media Exposure. It has two categories. 0 “no exposure” and 1 “exposure.”

Regions. The total population has divided into six geographic regions. 1 “north”, 2 “east”, 3 “central”, 4 “northeast”, 5 “west”, and 6 “south.”

Related to Husband Before Marriage. It has two categories. 0 “not related” 1 “related.”

Husband Married More Than Once. It has two categories o “married once” and 1“married more than once.”

Results

It has leaned that inter-caste marriages increase with socio-economic development as it dilutes religious beliefs, values, and customs and increases the percentage of inter-caste marriages. Religion is a bunch of homogeneous caste groups following the same belief and culture. Marriages are not welcomed out of the religious group. It is considered that inter-religious and inter-ethnic marriage can develop harmony in society.

Inter-Caste, Inter-Ethnic and Inter-Religious Marriages

Table 1 presents the per cent distribution of inter-caste inter-ethnic, and inter-religious marriages across India. The result shows that 17% of currently married women have inter-caste marriages in India. However, around 10 per cent of them have inter-ethnic, and only 3 per cent have inter-religious marriages. The analysis found that inter-caste marriages are highest in the western region (18%) of India, followed by the north (18%), northeast (17%), west (15%), and central (14%). Karnataka has the highest (24%) percentage of inter-caste marriages. On the contrary, Ladakh has the lowest inter-caste marriages (4%). The Northeast region has more than (11%) of inter-ethnic marriages. On the contrary, the north region has (4%) the lowest inter-ethnic marriages. Similarly, Panjab, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Utter Pradesh and Bihar have less than (3%) of inter-ethnic marriages. On the other hand, Odisha, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Manipur have 12%, 14%, 26%, and 9% inter-ethnic marriages.

Table 1

Per Cent Distribution of Inter-Caste, Inter-Ethnicity, and Inter-Religious Marriages Among Currently Married Women in The States of India, 2019–21

State	Within caste	Inter-caste	Within ethnicity	Inter-ethnic	Within religion	Inter-religious	Total
North	82.0	18.0	92.0	8.0	96.0	4.0	8851
Haryana	85.0	15.0	96.3	3.7	97.9	2.2	1711
Himachal Pradesh	90.8	9.2	97.8	2.3	98.4	1.6	818
Jammu and Kashmir	86.4	13.6	86.9	13.1	97.2	2.8	1640
Punjab	83.9	16.1	99.6	0.5	94.1	5.9	1699
Rajasthan	86.3	13.7	91.5	8.6	97.7	2.3	3673
Ladakh	96.2	3.8	71.0	29.0	92.7	7.3	158
Central	85.4	14.6	84.5	15.5	97.5	2.5	4768
Madhya Pradesh	83.3	16.7	86.5	13.5	98.6	1.4	4034

State	Within caste	Inter-caste	Within ethnicity	Inter-ethnic	Within religion	Inter-religious	Total
Uttar Pradesh	86.2	13.8	98.4	1.7	97.9	2.1	6360
East	85.7	14.3	90.4	9.6	97.4	2.6	3244
Bihar	81.2	18.8	97.8	2.2	97.6	2.5	2646
Jharkhand	80.8	19.3	86.5	13.5	90.7	9.3	2001
Odisha	84.1	15.9	87.9	12.1	99.0	1.0	2367
West Bengal	79.3	20.7	73.8	26.2	97.7	2.3	1902
North-East	83.3	16.7	88.7	11.3	97.9	2.1	14658
Arunachal Pradesh	90.0	10.0	84.5	15.5	91.2	8.8	1668
Assam	79.9	20.1	80.6	19.4	98.4	1.6	3088
Manipur	79.1	20.9	91.0	9.0	85.1	14.9	646
West	84.6	15.4	95.7	4.3	97.1	2.9	14921
Gujarat	80.4	19.7	88.6	11.4	98.1	1.9	3183
Maharashtra	79.4	20.6	85.2	14.8	95.0	5.0	3181
South	81.8	18.2	86.5	13.5	96.0	4.0	11251
Karnataka	75.8	24.2	85.9	14.1	97.7	2.3	2466
Kerala	83.4	16.6	92.1	7.9	96.6	3.4	754
Tamil Nadu	93.5	6.5	98.5	1.5	97.3	2.7	1995
India	83.6	16.4	90.1	9.9	97.1	2.9	57693

Source: Author's calculation using NFHS-5 2019-21 dataset. Weights are used to estimate the values.

It has been studied that inter-religious marriages increase with education and socio-economic development. The southern region of India is more socio-economically developed than other regions of India. Therefore, more inter-religious marriages are expected in the southern region than in other regions in India. Analysis reveals that the southern region has around (4%) inter-religious marriages and the east region has only (2.6%) marriages.

The percentage distribution of inter-caste marriages, inter-religious and inter-ethnic marriages according to background characteristics are presented in Table 2. Out of total marriages, 17 per cent are inter-caste marriages among urban residents. Nearly one-third of the women with different ethnicity have inter-caste marriages, which is more than that of the same ethnicity. The nuclear family has not significantly impacted inter-caste, inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriage. The analysis has shown a positive relationship between education and inter-caste marriages.

Normally it is accepted that woman should not be older than a man for marriage. However, in the case of inter-caste marriage majority (19%) of women are older than their spouse. Exposure to any media does not show any impact on inter-caste marriage but on inter-religious marriages. Comparatively, more women (16%) were related to their current husbands before marriage went for inter-caste marriage. However, it does not show any effect on inter-religion marriage. A husband married

more than once is also significantly related to inter-caste and inter-religious marriages.

Table 2

Marriages by Same and Different Caste, Ethnicity and Religion According to Different Characteristics

Background variables	Types of marriage						Total Sample
	Within caste	Inter-caste	Within ethnicity	Inter-ethnic	Within religion	Inter-religious	
Resident							
Urban	82.4	17.6	91.2	8.9	96.5	3.6	14112
Rural	84.2	15.8	89.6	10.4	97.3	2.7	43581
Ethnicity							
Same	84.5	15.4	NA	NA	97.3	2.7	51613
Different	69.6	30.4	NA	NA	95.2	4.8	6080
Religion							
Same	83.8	16.2	90.3	9.7	NA	NA	55871
Different	79.4	20.6	83.8	16.2	NA	NA	1822
Caste*							
Same	NA	NA	94.9	5.1	97.3	2.7	45688
Different	NA	NA	88.6	11.3	96.4	3.5	8182
Family type							
Non-nuclear	84.1	15.9	90.0	10.0	97.3	2.7	16674
Nuclear	83.4	16.6	90.1	9.9	96.9	3.1	41019
Age of women							
Same as men	83.1	16.9	87.7	12.3	97.2	2.8	2717
Elder than men	80.6	19.4	89.7	10.3	96.9	3.2	2154
Younger than men	83.8	16.3	90.2	9.8	97.1	3.0	52822
Access any media							
No	82.9	17.1	88.5	11.5	97.0	3.0	27163
Yes	84.2	15.8	91.3	8.7	97.1	2.9	30530
Related to husband before marriage							
No	83.5	16.5	90.2	9.9	97.1	2.9	50884
Yes	84.3	15.7	89.8	10.3	96.6	3.4	6809
Husband married							
Once	83.8	16.2	90.0	10.0	97.1	2.9	52808
More than once	82.2	17.8	91.6	8.4	96.9	3.1	4885
Education							
Illiterate	83.02	16.98	90.00	10.00	97.08	2.92	16270
Educated	83.87	16.13	90.13	9.87	97.05	2.95	41423
Total	83.63	16.37	90.1	9.9	97.06	2.94	57693

*Total sample for the columns is(53870), different from the given in the total sample column due to missing cases.

NA – Not applicable due to the same variable in the column and row

Source: Author's calculation using NFHS-5 (2019-21) dataset. Weights are used to estimate the values.

Inter-Caste Marriage Combinations, Marital Age, Fertility Behaviour

Table 3 provides information about castes, religion, ethnicity, and education level of men and women involved in inter-caste marriage. The analysis shows that among total females in scheduled tribes (18%) do inter-caste marriage. However, females (16.6%) performed inter-caste marriages among the total scheduled caste. Out of the total Muslim male and female, (24%) of male and female has performed inter-caste marriage. Ahmad and Chakrabarti (1981) have found that Muslim caste systems display many characteristics of Hindu Castes. The proportion of inter-caste marriage is higher among Muslims than in other religions. It is found that economic uniformity is more important in inter-caste marriage, especially among Muslims (Ahmad & Chakrabarti, 1981). The table does not show any significant impact of education on inter-caste marriage.

Table 3

Distribution of male and female by inter-caste and same-caste marriage according to background characteristics

	Within caste marriage		Inter-caste marriage		total male	total female
	male	female	male	female		
Caste						
Schedule caste	83.2	83.4	16.9	16.6	10767	10760
Schedule tribe	83.4	81.7	16.6	18.3	11285	11357
OBC	86.5	87.2	13.5	12.8	21877	21786
None of them	79.2	79.0	20.8	21.0	9941	9967
Religion						
Hindu	84.3	84.3	15.7	15.7	42427	42385
Muslim	75.4	75.5	24.6	24.5	4795	4786
Christian	90.1	89.2	9.9	10.8	3894	3965
Other	87.6	87.0	12.5	13.0	2754	2734
Ethnicity						
Caste	83.44	83.7	16.6	16.3	45324	45133
Tribe	87.74	85.3	12.3	14.7	8272	8453
No Caste/Tribe	65.68	55.7	34.3	44.3	274	284
Education						
No education	81.03	83.0	19.0	17.0	8658	15483
Primary	82.16	81.4	17.8	18.6	7961	7690
Secondary	84.01	84.1	16.0	15.9	29473	24961
Higher Secondary	86.3	85.6	13.7	14.4	7778	5736
Total	83.6	83.6	16.4	16.4	53870	53870

Source: Author's calculation using NFHS-5 (2019-21) dataset. Weights are used to estimate the values.

Table 4 shows the education, age at marriage, birth interval, and ideal number of children among inter-caste and different inter-caste marriage combinations. The mean years of education for females are lower than that of males. The table also shows that most inter-caste marriages happened between OBC and Other, followed by SC and OBC, ST and Other castes, SC and Other and ST and OBC. The mean education difference between males and females is almost equal in all caste combinations. The mean age at marriage is highest for males in ST and OBC.

Table 4

Education, Median Age at Marriage, and Childbearing Behaviour Among No Inter-Caste Marriages, Inter-Caste Marriages and Inter-Caste Marriage Combinations in India, 2019–21

Characteristics	Marriage			Inter-caste marriage combinations					
	Within caste Marriage	Inter-Caste Marriage	Total	SC and ST	SC and OBC	SC and Other	ST and OBC	ST and Other	OBC and Other
Mean Years of Education									
Female	6.6	6.3	6.5	5.6	7.4	7.4	7.5	5.7	7.7
Male	8.0	7.7	7.9	7.1	8.7	8.5	8.5	7.2	8.8
The mean number of the ideal number of children									
Female	3.0	2.7	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.8	3.3	2.7	2.5
Male	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.7	3.2	2.8	4.7	3.1	2.9
Mean number of Children ever born	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.2	2.2	2.4	2.2
Mean age at childbearing	20.8	20.7	20.6	20.3	20.6	21.0	21.0	20.6	21.1
Total	45688	8182	53870	1226	2076	683	280	749	2763

Source: Author's calculation using NFHS-5(2019-21) dataset. Weights are used to estimate the values.

Correlation Between Different Characteristics of Male and Female

Table 5 shows the correlation between the education of the wife and her husband, the correlation between the wife and her husband's marital age, and the ideal number of children of wife and husband. Since many women and their husbands have zero education, the correlation after removing the zero education cases is more informative. At the all-India level, the correlation is at 0.51 between women's and men's education. In the inter-religious group, the correlation is relatively high (0.52) compared to other groups between women's and men's education. The table depicts no change in the correlation between the education of women and men correlation coefficient for inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages. It clearly shows that for inter-

religious marriages, both males and females are equally educated than inter-caste and inter-ethnic marriages. The marital age correlation coefficient between husband and wife is high among all marital types and higher for men and women within caste, ethnicity, and religion. The analysis reveals a (0.41) correlation coefficient in the wife and husband's ideal number of children. However, the correlation coefficient in the wife and husband's ideal number of children in the inter-caste marriage group is (0.27). It means male and female shows a lack of correlation in terms of childbearing number in the inter-caste marriage category. Inter-marriages do not significantly impact the correlation between education, age at marriage and an ideal number of male and female children.

Table 5

Correlation Between Women's and Men's Education, Marital Age and The Ideal Number of Children for Different Groups

	Within caste	Inter- caste	Within ethnicity	Inter- ethnic	Within religion	Inter- religious	Total
Women's education correlation with partner education (excluding cases hus_edu=wife_edu=0)							
Polychoric	0.50	0.50	0.51	0.47	0.51	0.52	0.51
CI	(0.460- 0.524)	(0.493- 0.530)	(0.509- 0.522)	(0.446- 0.494)	(0.506- 0.519)	(0.481- 0.559)	(0.506- 0.519)
Spearman	0.52	0.50	0.52	0.47	0.52	0.49	0.52
CI	(0.509- 0.523)	(0.487- 0.525)	(0.517 - 0.529)	(0.445- 0.493)	(0.515- 0.527)	(0.450- 0.531)	(0.514- 0.526)
Observations	45449	5942	50634	4002	53301	1335	54636
Woman marital age correlation with partner age (excluding cases hus_age=wife_age=0)							
Polychoric	0.57	0.50	0.57	0.53	0.57	0.54	0.57
CI	(0.569- 0.580)	(0.483- 0.519)	(0.569- 0.580)	(0.513- 0.553)	(0.566- 0.577)	(0.512- 0.582)	(0.566- 0.576)
Spearman	0.55	0.52	0.54	0.53	0.54	0.54	0.54
CI	(0.546- 0.558)	(0.511- 0.545)	(0.541- 0.553)	(0.519 - 0.559)	(0.541- 0.552)	(0.512- 0.582)	(0.541- 0.552)
Observations	52610	6920	58519	4820	61808	1531	63339
Women's ideal children correlation with partner's ideal children (hus_chil=wife_chil=0)							
Polychoric	0.44	0.30	0.42	0.33	0.41	0.37	0.41
CI	(0.433- 0.447)	(0.278 - 0.322)	(0.414- 0.428)	(0.310- 0.361)	(0.408- 0.421)	(0.334- 0.421)	(0.407- 0.420)
Spearman	0.36	0.27	0.35	0.30	0.34	0.37	0.34
CI	(0.360 - 0.375)	(0.257- 0.301)	(0.344- 0.359)	(0.279- 0.331)	(0.340- 0.354)	(0.335- 0.422)	(0.341- 0.355)
Observations	45688	8182	51613	6080	55871	1822	57693

Source: Author's calculation using NFHS-5 (2019-21) dataset. Weights are used to estimate the values.

Determinants of Inter-Caste, Inter-Religious and Inter-Ethnic Marriages

The multivariable statistical results in Table 6 show that the place of residence plays a significant and positive role in inter-caste marriage. Compared to the urban area respondents who live in a rural area, the odds of getting married out of the caste are lower (odds ratio 0.874). The likelihood of inter-caste marriages was two times more likely among the women who married out of her ethnicity (odd ratio 2.402). As compared to the non-nuclear family nuclear family, respondents who live in the nuclear family are more likely to go for inter-caste marriage (odd ratio 0.036). The odds of livelihood for women older than men are 0.184 times higher than women and men the same age. It means the probability of the wife being older than the husband is higher in inter-caste marriage couples. The result shows that inter-caste marriage breaks the assumption that the wife should not be older than men. Educated women are less likely to have inter-caste marriages than non-educated women (odd ratio 0.964). This finding is the same as the results of large-scale studies (Das et al., 2011; Goli et al., 2013; Narzary&Ladusingh, 2019), as we have combined all educated women in one group and compared them with non-educated women.

On the contrary, male education does not impact inter-caste marriage. It indicates that mass media exposure can impact inter-caste marriages. This finding is similar to the finding of large-scale studies (Shrinivasan& James, 2015).

Table 6

A Logistic Regression Analysis of Variation in Inter-Caste Marriages Among Currently Married Women in India, 2019-21

Explanatory variables	Exp(B)	Sig.	95% Conf. Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Resident				
Urban®				
Rural	0.832	0.000	0.791	0.876
Ethnicity				
Same®				
Different	2.402	0.000	2.218	2.600
Religion				
Same®				
Different	1.284	0.000	1.128	1.461
Family type				
Non-nuclear®				
Nuclear	1.036	0.191	0.983	1.091
Age of women				
Same as men®				

Explanatory variables	Exp(B)	Sig.	95% Conf. Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Elder than men	1.184	0.054	0.997	1.406
Younger than men	0.963	0.516	0.859	1.079
Access any media				
No®				
Yes	0.918	0.001	0.874	0.966
	Related to husband before marriage			
No®				
Yes	0.946	0.121	0.882	1.015
	Partner married more than once			
No®				
Yes	1.120	0.006	1.033	1.214
Education				
Non-educated				
Educated	0.964	0.191	0.911	1.019
Constant	0.222	0.000	0.194	0.254

Note: Dependent Variable: 0- Within caste marriage, 1- Inter-caste marriage

Source: Author's calculation using NFHS-5 (2019-21) dataset. Weights are used to estimate the values.

The logistic regression results (Table 7) show that compared to women living in urban areas, women living in rural areas are less likely to marry out of their religion (odd ratio 0.731). The likelihood of inter-religious marriages is significantly higher among the women who married out of the ethnic group (odd ratio 1.469). However, the odds of getting married out of their religion are 0.284 times higher among those who married a person from a different caste. The table shows that respondents in nuclear are 0.074 times more likely to marry inter-caste than non-nuclear families. Educated women are less likely to have inter-religious marriages than non-educated women (odd ratio 0.966).

Table 7

A Logistic Regression Analysis of Variation in Inter-Religious Marriages Among Currently Married Women in India, 2019-21

Explanatory variables	Exp(B)	Sig.	95% Conf. Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Resident				
Urban®				
Rural	0.731	0.000	0.653	0.817
Ethnicity				
Same®				
Different	1.469	0.000	1.221	1.768

Explanatory variables	Exp(B)	Sig.	95% Conf. Interval	
			Lower	Upper
Caste				
Same®				
Different	1.284	0.000	1.129	1.461
Family type				
Non-nuclear®				
Nuclear	1.074	0.234	0.955	1.208
Age of women				
Same as men®				
Elder than men	1.114	0.580	0.760	1.635
Younger than men	0.968	0.801	0.752	1.247
Access any media				
No®				
Yes	0.908	0.090	0.812	1.015
Related to husband before marriage				
No®				
Yes	1.256	0.002	1.089	1.449
Partner married more than once				
No®				
Yes	1.115	0.229	0.934	1.330
Woman education				
Not educated®				
Educated	0.966	0.583	0.853	1.093
Constant	0.034	0.000	0.025	0.045

Note: Dependent Variable: 0- Within religion marriage 1- Inter-religious marriage

Source: Author's calculation using NFHS-5 (2019-21) dataset. Weights are used to estimate the values.

However, a husband who married more than once is more likely to marry out of religion. The odds of getting married out of the religion for a husband married more than once is (1.115). Similarly, compared to a woman not related to their husband before marriage, the odds of getting married out of religion are more likely among the women somehow related to their husband before marriage (1.256).

The logistic regression results (Table 8) show that rural areas are likelier to have an inter-ethnic marriage (odd ratio 1.499). The likelihood of inter-ethnic marriages is significantly higher among the women who married out of the caste group (odd ratio 2.401). As compared to the respondent with a non-nuclear family, the nuclear family respondent is times less likely to marry inter-caste. Compared to women with no mass media exposure, women with mass media exposure are less likely to marry out of their ethnic group (odd ratio 0.900). It indicates that mass media exposure cannot influence inter-ethnic marriages. Educated women are less likely to have inter-religious marriages than non-educated women (odd ratio 0.838). It shows that education is unable to promote inter-ethnic marriages in society. It could be because inter-ethnic marriages are more prevalent among the rural

population. However, a husband who married more than once is less likely to marry out of the ethnic group.

Table 8

A Logistic Regression Analysis of Variation in Inter-Ethnic Marriage Among Currently Married Women in India, 2019-21

Explanatory variables	Exp(B)	Sig.	95% Conf. Interval Lower	Upper
Resident				
Urban®				
Rural	1.499	0.000	1.372	1.638
Caste				
Same®				
Different	2.401	0.000	2.218	2.599
Religion				
Same®				
Different	1.460	0.000	1.213	1.758
Family type				
Non-nuclear®				
Nuclear	0.943	0.153	0.869	1.022
Age of women				
Same as men ®				
Elder than men	0.913	0.493	0.704	1.184
Younger than men	0.812	0.014	0.688	0.959
Access any media				
No®				
Yes	0.705	0.000	0.653	0.761
Related to husband prior to marriage				
No®				
Yes	1.094	0.094	0.985	1.216
Partner married more than once				
No®				
Yes	0.860	0.027	0.752	0.983
Education				
Not educated®				
Educated	0.838	0.000	0.772	0.910
Constant	0.068	0.000	0.055	0.083

Note: Dependent Variable: 0- Within ethnicity marriage 1- Inter-ethnic marriage

Source: Author's calculation using NFHS-5 (2019-21) dataset. Weights are used to estimate the values.

Discussion

Marriages in India are indigenous and supported by religious beliefs to maintain the purity of higher caste. If anyone is born in a caste, he or she cannot change it, but religion. People in India are divided into numerous castes, with no marital intercourse. Inter-caste marriage challenges the caste system; as a result, religious compartments have also been damaged. It results in the consociation of the society with no caste discrimination. Special Marriage Act 1954 protects an

individual's right and allows them to get married in different caste groups. Modernisation, education, exposure to mass media, and intermingling may lay a good foundation for inter-caste and inter-caste marriages. As Das et al. (2011) and Ray, Chaudhari, and Sahai (2017) have found, the education of the women and men, income, and the resident does not significantly impact inter-caste marriages in India. We found that these factors affect inter-caste marriages but not inter-religious marriages significantly. Narzary and Ladusingh (2019) have found that inter-marriages are highest in the Northeast region of India. It may happen due to the inclusion of scheduled tribes in the sample. It has been observed that the western region of India is more socio-economically developed than other regions of India. It is expected that inter-caste marriages are more in the Western region than in other regions in India.

The paper shows that inter-caste marriages happen due to love marriages because of regular interaction and affection where the household is barely involved. The social movement has been systematically recorded in regional languages in various parts of India. As Shrinivasan and James (2015) mentioned, the Dravidian movement has tried hard to break the caste system and encourage inter-caste marriages in the South but failed to impact significantly.

Conclusion

The inter-religion, inter-ethnic and inter-caste marriages have been gradually increasing, but India is still struggling to escape this social menace. An individual's education level does not predict the likelihood of inter-religious but inter-caste marriages. The marriage pattern is changing in India due to urbanisation, modernisation, socio-economic development, and globalisation of the Indian economy. The socio-economic and demographic factors also affect the pattern of inter-caste, inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages in India. There is a need to encourage inter-caste, inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages by giving promotional messages through mass media for a healthy society. There is a need to reduce the caste discrimination and caste barrier prevalent in Indian society.

Acknowledgement: The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. No ethical approval is required for the study. The present study has not been supported by financial funding.

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