



INTERCASTE MARRIAGES AND DIFFERENT FACTORS OF FAMILY OPPOSITION: A CASE STUDY OF MAHARASHTRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The Indian Caste System is historically one of the main dimensions where people in India are socially differentiated through caste, class, religion, region, tribe, gender, and language. Marriage is an ancient institution in society since human civilisation. It's socially sanctioned for restoration of intergenerational transference of code and culture for developing the value system of a particular caste and class followed by family principles for human protection, care and support of its members. Marriage in the any class and caste is a socially accepted when its socially approved by parents of origin and guardians of caste and class, however marriage in other caste or class is not an socially accepted by the parents of origin and leading to social and familial conflicts. This leads to uneven caste class relationship in both the families of origins. Irrespective of caste or class, the unique choice to choose a partner for marriage outside the boundaries of one's caste with partner of other caste results in Intercaste marriage which is less accepted by society. In the Intercaste marriage the right to choose the life partner is a matter of one's own decision. It is involves the degree to which the feelings of an individual's intimacy, love and affection is matched with the partner leading to Intercaste marriage which is significantly associated with parental opposition. Inter-caste marriage plays vital role in questioning and interrogating the caste boundaries and demonstrates an action towards negotiating caste based discrimination towards equality in social stratification system of society. The couples face hurdles and barriers from the family and society and make their own origin of family in the socio political cultural space to deconstruct rigid boundaries of oppression and discrimination. Present study had done

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among the inter-caste married couples those who had faced family disapproval for their inter-caste marriage. The specific objective of this study was to know the different factors of family opposition through couples interview and case studies. The study had tried to find out the unknown facts, so the study had used qualitative exploratory case study design. In this study “Non probability sampling “and purposive sampling was used for the selection of the respondents. Researcher did data collection in state of Maharashtra. Data was collected with the “Snow ball sampling method. Researcher was used in- depth interviews and observation as a tool for data collection.

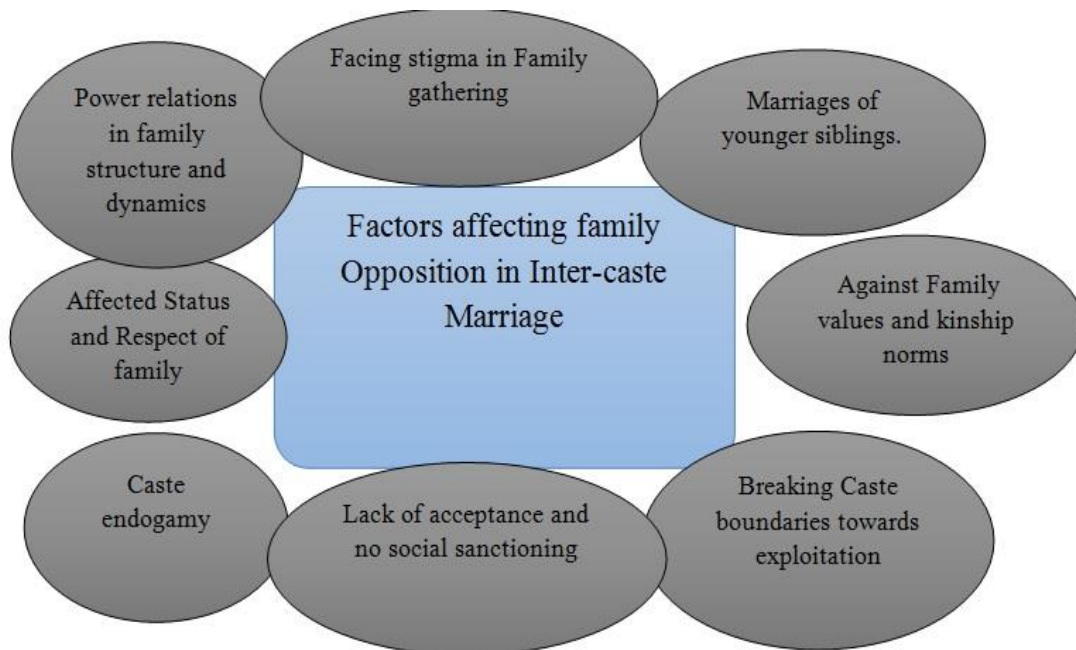
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INTRODUCTION

The inter caste marriage within the institution of marriage is less socially sanctioned leading to the family opposition. This creates ripple effect on the couples as penalizing them for breaking family norms and caste and status boundaries. In previous chapter we have seen the stories of Intercaste married couples and their experiences. Here we will see the various aspects of disapproval for marriage by the family or parents.

Marriage is an institution in Indian society which is culturally perceived as life time event aiming to begin one’s own family. A family begins with marriage of couple by its first family life cycle stage with or without approval of the parents /family in origin. As per socialization of the couple the perception of the partner is socially constructed developing into image of a life partner. Society reinforces these images with the social and rituals practices for sanctioning the marriage in its class, caste and gender boundaries. The couples engaging in the Intercaste marriage break these stereotypes of deciding the partner from the same caste. This resulting into parent opposition in their family life cycle stage leads to catastrophic in cohesion and adaptations in the ecology of families of origin. Finally it leads to exclusion of the couple due to parental opposition. The self-disclosure of deciding a partner of one’s own choice is largely kept secret and when disclosed it leads to non-acceptance due to Intercaste marriage. When the matter comes to home and disclose the relationship that “I have someone in my life leads to conflict in family”. Interviews of respondents reveal that common factors of family opposition. Are as follows:

Family opposite factors in context of Intercaste marriage



Family opposite factors in context of Intercaste marriage

1. Caste Endogamy:

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar had cheered the footstep of Intercaste marriage as innovative as it in a straight line attacks the maximum relevant characteristic of caste that is endogamy, on which the caste stands. Once endogamy for example marrying within one’s own caste or tribe is attacked and destroyed, the entire protection of the caste system will smash and success over such a well-fortified castle of caste can be very easily won through inter-caste marriage and that is why Dr. Ambedkar calls it revolutionary. Intercaste marriage will remove untouchability. There is no other effectual remedy available for removing the scar of untouchability except inter-caste marriage. Dr. Ambedkar had said that “Caste is a psychological state as a result it cannot be eradicated through constitutional measures alone.” The Intercaste marriage takes place only when persons completely remove their biases, prejudices, untouchability, and idea of high and low and all discriminatory concepts based on caste from his mind. The inter-caste marriage is thus the creation of psychological state of the personalities who have risen above all such pettiness of life. The parties enter into inter-caste marriage, wedlock are, thus psychologically clean before they adopt to go for such a marital union. There is general belief that Intercaste marriages are not successful. The media mostly controlled by the caste Hindus may perhaps be propagating such theory which is completely disproved.

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“Apali samajat changali ijjat hoti, pan tuzyamule kamavaleli ayushyabharachi sarv ijjat eka kshanat geli. Tuzya ya lagna mule amhi barbad zalo, khalchya jatichi mulgigharat anun gharach barbad kel, atta tuzya lahan bahinishi lagn kon karnar?”

Family starts their disapproval with this wording in the context of upper caste families. At the time of giving decision to couple this is common and regular sentence of families. Another common sentence from family is

“Amhi dusrya jatichi/samajachi Mulagi kinva Mulga amchya jatit ajibat swikarnar nahi”. English Translation: *“We will never agree to take any other jatis or Samaj’s girl or boy in our society”*.

Couples reported that parents never accept this type of decision from their children regarding the decision of marriage.

“We will not continue any relation with you if you marry alternative society’s girl or boy and will do suicide ““You are showing us this day, but we have done so much for you” (emotional blackmail)

“Influence of relatives and social pressure”. Disapproval from relatives plays a major role in match-making and in overall life. Caste plays a very big role in society and even supremacy depends upon caste. Dowry also is another factor for inter-caste marriage. Because family expectation from a girl that she will bring lot of bribe from her maternal home. But the matter when comes on Intercaste marriage they cannot fulfill their expectation.

2. Marriage of younger sibling:

This is another factor of family opposition because if elder brother or sister did Intercaste marriage it is like disaster on family. They have to face lots of struggles to match the marriage of siblings. One respondent reported that because of his Intercaste marriage his younger sister’s marriage had broken and in another case couple had marriage but never tell to girl’s family because girl has one younger and one elder brother for marriage. Interviews reveal that this is an impact on siblings of Intercaste marriage.

“This type of marriage our society never will accept and not even us”. “Our reputation that we have earned since so many years, we have care and respect about our Samaj’s happiness, because of this Intercaste marriage we cannot go against the social system”.

The question of insult faced by the family is far from being an individual reaction. We talk about freedom of caste in our society. People have to sacrifice many times for this reason and most of the love stories are breaking from years. Many young minds and hearts are

sacrificing because of the word *“what society will think?”* In life style differences different castes have different living styles, traditions, customs, food, eating habits, which makes it little difficult to have an Intercaste marriage. In India wedding is not just a strong relation between husband and wife it is a strong connection between totally two different families.

Researcher collected whatever data, that data shows that each family has different factors for opposition in Intercaste marriage. But one factor is same in each case that is **“CASTE”**. Sociologist have argued that caste system is hierarchical system in which castes are placed one above the other on the basis of social status and prestige. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar defined Indian caste system as a system based on graded inequality. It divides men into separate communities and one of its main feature, the practice of endogamy for example the social rule that requires an individual to marry within a specific culturally defined social group which he or she is member, reinforces and sustains this separateness and it is this segregation, which has created difficulty in achieving constitutional values of liberty, equality, fraternity, human rights etc. in the Indian society. Traditionally marriage in Hindu society was a sacrament but after the passage of Hindu Marriage Act 1955 it can be treated as a contract. However still marriages primarily take place on the traditional grounds of caste (Jatis) and sub-castes (Up-Jatis). That means marriage is inextricably linked to Jati Vyavastha (caste system) with its root in the religion. Inter caste marriage can be one of the significant steps to reduce the caste prejudices, abolish untouchability and spread the values of liberty, inequality, fraternity, human rights, etc. in the Indian society. (ICMS 2014)

Every family has the expectations from their children especially from grown up children during marriage period. Expectation of parents is that children always have to listen to family (Parents). They should not go against parents or other family members. Each family has different family values and the families strongly follow those values.

3. Against Family values and kinship norms:

The mindset of family is hurt as the marriage has occurred against the wishes of family norms, values and kinship norms which questions the sanctity of the member who is married in the other caste. The patients still thinks that their children are not able to take their own decision regarding choosing their partner that too from the other caste. In the context of Intercaste marriage the offspring decisions always wrong and parents always right because they had an experience of life but the couples did not accept it and revolt. Some couples tried to convince the parents and some did not dare to inform. The parental response and parental opposition was an evident to be profound ranging from disengagement from the couple to complete denial and demeaning the significance of marriage. Few verbatim are as follows

“Tula dusrya jatichich pahije hoti ka? aaplya jatichya muli melyat ka? Ttu as kahi kelas tar punha amchya darat pay pan theu nako. Amhi tuzya sathi

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melo ani jar tu khalchya jatichya mulibaroabr lagn kel tar tu pan amchya sathi mela.”

4. Facing stigma in Family gathering:

Dalit girl reported that there was family little bit ready to accept but relatives and social pressure stopped them. One Maratha boy reported that his mother was ready but grandmother was not ready that is why mother also rejected this marriage. Still the family of boy not accepted the girl because she is in lower caste. Maratha boy said that,

“My family will accept me with my wife but we have to wait for dying of grandmother”.

This exhibits that family values. Another factor of family opposition that if children do this type of marriage family/parents could not attend the social functions like marriages, festivals, traditional programs etc.

“We always says that SAMAJ but we also forget that we are also component of this SAMAJ this is applicable for us too.

One lower caste male respondent reported that why his family rejected this marriage because the girl was in upper caste hence she will take over on family and they will miss their rights because reference of social history lower caste people exploited by upper castes. If they will accept this marriage again the history will start in their happy home. Youth and adults are not against each other but it is an impact of caste system.

5. Power relations in family structure and dynamics:

In the context of Intercaste marriage parents always thinks that they are right and children are wrong. The parents cannot accept that without their consent their children are taking the decision regarding their marriage with special reference to Intercaste marriage. In the context of couple when the matter comes to decision of marriage. In the context of marriage of adult children if children are taking the decision of marriage the parents will raise the question. One Maratha male respondent reported that

“Jevha mi ghari sangital ki mi dusrya jatichya muli barobar lagn kel tya veli aaji ni saral sangital ki sodun de tya binjatichyya baykola, tuzya sathi dusri bayko shodhate”.

This narration reveals that when respondent did marriage without consent of family that was a very big thing for them. Challenges the family values started from here.

6. Breaking Caste boundaries towards exploitation:

Dalit husband said that,

“Jevha mi ghari sangital ki mala mazya pasantichya mulishi lagn karayach ahe ani ti Mulagi Maratha ahe tevha Aai bolali ki baas atta evdhach rahila hot karayach . Mi tya porila mazi sun mhanun kadhich swikarnar nhay karan ti hya gharat yeun ticha hakka gajaval. Purvichya kala pasun shoshan sahan kelay atta gharat bi sahan karayach ka”?

This narration reveals that parents are connected previous experiences regarding the caste system and they are not ready at all to accept upper caste girl in their house. This shows the fear if missing the identity as a family member.

7. Facing stigma in Family gathering:

One Dalit respondent reported that his father was against for this marriage because they were social friendly and believes on social network relationship. Hence if Intercaste marriage happens they cannot show their face to their social network. In the context of family (Parents) they always used to go for social gathering or marriage functions. In that function if anyone will say something about their children inter-caste marriage then it is like a stigma for them and they are not able to bare the tones of people. For this purpose they rejected marriage.

“Tumhi as karname kelet tar amhi samajat jav ki nay asa vichar padato. Kuthach tond dakhavayala jaga thevali nay. Tumchya pai samajat basan uthan band zalay, Jo nahi to yeun vicharato ya jati baherchya lagna vishai”

8. Affected status and respect of family:

During the Intercaste marriage according to the respondents, societal status and respect are most important thing for the parents/family if anyone try to touch this. They cannot digest that any one come and will say anything. This is a matter of honor.

These are the factors are family opposition revels from this study.

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