

# Sociological Study on Inter-Caste and Interreligious Marriage with Special Reference State Uttar Pradesh

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*Abstract- This research investigates the social elements of inter-caste and interreligious marriages, with a special emphasis on Uttar Pradesh, India. These couplings, which are frequently perceived as defying traditional societal standards, call into question India's deeply ingrained caste and religious barriers. The study examines the cultural, social, legal, and economic features of these marriages in order to better understand the circumstances that have contributed to their rise, the obstacles that couples encounter, and the impact on society. The study uses historical, sociological, and contemporary perspectives to provide a comprehensive examination of inter-caste and interreligious marriages in the socio-cultural environment of Uttar Pradesh. Marriage is a social institution that binds a man and a woman via a set of mutual rights and duties that are necessary for a family to function. It acts as a formal link, creating legal, economic, and emotional ties between two people. The term inter-caste refers to relationships between people from various castes, and an inter-caste marriage occurs when people from different caste groups marry. The term "interreligious" refers to partnerships between persons from various religious backgrounds. Interfaith weddings are centered on the people involved, regardless of their religious identity.*

*Index Terms- Inter-caste, Interreligious, Marriage, Uttar Pradesh*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Marriage, as a social institution, is important to the organization of society. In India, marriage is strongly ingrained in religious, cultural, and caste-based conventions that have long affected relationship structures. Despite legislative reforms and social reformers' efforts to remove caste and religious barriers, caste-based and religious divisions continue to impact social ties, particularly marriage. Inter-caste and interreligious marriages-unions of people from different castes or religious backgrounds-pose a challenge to the conventional social order. Uttar Pradesh, one of India's most populous and diverse

states, provides a unique setting for examining these marriages due to its complex demographic mix and the persistence of caste and religious barriers. Numerous studies have investigated marriage as a social institution from a sociological standpoint. However, there is growing acknowledgment that other disciplinary viewpoints are equally important. A thorough knowledge, especially for social work interventions, necessitates insights from a variety of fields to guarantee that proposed solutions are both relevant and effective. Marriage as an institution can be examined through various lenses, including sociology, economics, psychology, law, and public administration. Each of these viewpoints is necessary for a more complete understanding of marriage. This study intends to evaluate the sociological study of inter-caste and interreligious marriages in Uttar Pradesh. Modernization, urbanization, globalization, and democratization have all contributed significantly to the evolution of Indian society.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. Mokashi P. R. (2009) conducted a study between 1978-80 on inter-caste marriages (Dalit and Sawarna) in which he interviewed 100 units (50 couples). According to his findings, all the marriages were love marriages, and both the bride and groom willingly participated without any external pressure. He further asserted that such marriages contribute to the eradication of the caste system.

2. In his 2010 study titled "Mate Selection in Inter-marriages in Bombay" (published in book form), Mokashi analyzed 265 couples, with a breakdown of 63% Hindus, 15.7% Christians, 9.4% Muslims, 5.5% Parsis, and smaller percentages from Buddhist, Jain, Sikh, and Jewish backgrounds. The main reason for mate selection, according to the study, was physical attraction (50% of couples), while the rest attributed it to factors like mutual support during struggles,

education, personality, family appeal, intellectuality, and worldview. The study also included 10 international marriages.

3. In 2012, C. G. Deshpande published a book on inter-caste marriages, focusing on 75 couples from Pune, Mumbai, Nagpur, and Aurangabad in Maharashtra.

4. Reddy et al. (2012) found that Scheduled Castes exhibited a higher tendency towards inter-caste marriages compared to other castes. The research highlighted that factors like urban residence, education, modern occupation, and a middle-class economic background were associated with a higher incidence of inter-caste marriages. Additionally, these marriages generally occurred at a relatively older age. A study conducted in rural Andhra Pradesh recorded 936 individuals involved in inter-caste marriages.

5. In 2013, Kannan studied 149 inter-caste marriages in Bombay and observed that inter-caste marriage rates have steadily increased since 1956. Factors influencing inter-caste marriages included the woman's age at marriage, her ability to choose her partner, and her level of education.

### III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The current study aims to investigate the socioeconomic situation, issues, causes and repercussions, differences in customs and traditions, discrimination, and other aspects of inter-caste married couples in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

### IV. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- I. To Analyze the Sociological Impact of Inter-caste and Interreligious Marriages in Uttar Pradesh
- II. To Examine the Challenges Faced by Couples in Inter-caste and Interreligious Marriages
- III. To Explore the Role of Family and Community in Shaping Attitudes toward Inter-caste and Interreligious Marriages

### V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed study will include both qualitative and quantitative study elements. Survey data is collected for qualitative analysis in order to have a better knowledge of the inter-caste marriage situations in which respondents live. In addition to this information, quantitative analysis quantitatively models the likelihood of migration using a variety of variables including logistic regression. Research Design and Data Description: The current study is both descriptive and analytical in nature. The current study will use both primary and secondary data.

### VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Uttar Pradesh (UP) is home to a large population that is predominantly Hindu, with significant Muslim and other minority communities. The caste system has historically been a dominant force in shaping social interactions and relationships, particularly in rural areas. While India's legal framework, such as the Constitution of India and various social reforms, has sought to abolish untouchability and caste-based discrimination, caste continues to have a pervasive influence on social behavior, especially in marriage. Interreligious and inter-caste marriages challenge the rigid social structure by bridging divides that have traditionally been seen as insurmountable. However, these unions are often met with resistance due to the deeply ingrained cultural norms that govern family and societal expectations.

6.1. Inter-caste and interreligious marriages are considered significant sociological phenomena that challenge traditional social structures in Uttar Pradesh, where caste and religion heavily influence social life. By analyzing the sociological impact of these marriages, the objective is to understand how they alter established norms, disrupt caste-based hierarchies, and influence social interactions.

6.1.1. Breaking Caste and Religious Barriers: In a state like Uttar Pradesh, where caste plays a major role in social organization, inter-caste and interreligious marriages are viewed as an attempt to challenge the rigidity of caste and religious boundaries. This analysis would focus on how such marriages affect caste-based relationships, particularly the status of individuals from lower castes or marginalized communities.

6.1.2. Social Integration and Inclusion: These marriages might foster greater social integration by blending distinct social, cultural, and religious practices. This objective aims to study whether these unions contribute to breaking down entrenched social divisions and encourage the acceptance of diversity, tolerance, and equality among different castes and religions.

6.1.3. Impact on Traditional Social Structures: In rural and semi-urban areas of Uttar Pradesh, where traditional social norms are deeply ingrained, these marriages can serve as a challenge to the norms of endogamy (marrying within one's own caste or religion). Understanding the sociological impact involves investigating how these unions disrupt social hierarchies and influence the broader societal structure.

6.2. Inter-caste and interreligious couples in Uttar Pradesh often face unique challenges, both personal and societal. This objective is focused on identifying and understanding the difficulties couples experience in their everyday lives, ranging from family opposition to societal rejection.

6.2.1. Family and Social Resistance: A significant challenge for inter-caste and interreligious couples in Uttar Pradesh is familial opposition. Families often disapprove of such marriages due to cultural values and the fear of social stigma. This challenge is more pronounced in rural areas where traditional values are stronger. The study will examine the level of resistance from families and how these couples manage to navigate such opposition.

6.2.2. Social Ostracism and Stigmatization: Couples in inter-caste and interreligious marriages often experience social isolation and stigma. In conservative parts of Uttar Pradesh, communities may ostracize these couples, leading to emotional distress and social alienation. The study would explore the extent of social rejection these couples face and how it affects their mental and emotional well-being.

6.2.3. Legal and Bureaucratic Hurdles: While inter-caste and interreligious marriages are legal under the

Special Marriage Act, couples often face bureaucratic hurdles in registering their marriages and securing legal rights. This objective aims to understand how the legal system in Uttar Pradesh either supports or impedes these unions, especially in terms of registration, inheritance, and property rights.

6.2.4. Religious and Cultural Conflicts: In cases of interreligious marriages, couples may face religious tensions related to practices, rituals, and the upbringing of children. These conflicts can create long-term difficulties in the relationship and with extended families. This study will investigate the nature of these challenges and how couples navigate them.

6.3. The family and community are central to shaping individual behaviors, and their role in shaping attitudes toward inter-caste and interreligious marriages is critical in a place like Uttar Pradesh, where social norms are largely determined by these structures.

6.3.1. Family Influence and Expectations: Families in Uttar Pradesh often play a critical role in shaping their children's marriage decisions. Traditional values emphasize caste and religion in mate selection. This objective seeks to explore how these familial expectations influence individual decisions to enter inter-caste or interreligious marriages. It will also examine how parents react when their children choose partners from different castes or religions.

6.3.2. Community Norms and Social Pressure: Communities, especially in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh, are tightly knit, and there is often immense pressure to conform to social norms. The community's perception of inter-caste and interreligious marriages can either foster acceptance or lead to resistance and exclusion. This objective will look into how local communities respond to these unions, especially in close-knit villages where caste and religion hold significant social weight.

6.3.3. Generational Differences: Younger generations in Uttar Pradesh, especially in urban areas, may be more open-minded and willing to embrace inter-caste and interreligious unions, while older generations may hold more traditional views. This objective

seeks to understand the generational divide and how families with different views on marriage navigate inter-caste and interreligious relationships.

6.3.4. Role of Religious Institutions: Religious institutions, such as temples, mosques, and churches, often exert considerable influence over social norms and personal choices in Uttar Pradesh. This objective will explore how religious leaders and institutions respond to inter-religious marriages and the impact they have on both the couples involved and the broader community.

6.3.5. Social Support Networks: Inter-caste and interreligious couples may find support through specific community groups or social movements that promote equality and social justice. This objective aims to explore the role of such networks in providing social and emotional support to couples, helping them overcome challenges posed by their families or communities.

#### 6.4. Legal Framework and Social Reforms:

The legal framework in India has played an essential role in promoting social equality, but the influence of caste and religion on marriage remains potent. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 and the Special Marriage Act of 1954 offer provisions for inter-caste marriages, allowing individuals from different castes to marry legally. Similarly, interreligious marriages are governed by the Special Marriage Act, which permits couples from different faiths to marry without converting to the religion of the other. Despite these legal provisions, the social acceptance of inter-caste and interreligious marriages is still limited, especially in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh. Social reformers such as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Mahatma Phule, and Raja Shahu Maharaj advocated for the eradication of the caste system and the promotion of equality in marriage. Their efforts contributed to the push for legislative change, but the influence of traditional caste and religious structures has remained strong.

6.4.1. Sociological Aspects of Inter-caste and Interreligious Marriages: In Uttar Pradesh, inter-caste and interreligious marriages are often stigmatized and viewed as a challenge to traditional norms. The concept of caste purity and the historical significance

of religious identity contribute to the resistance against these unions. Families, especially in rural areas, fear social ostracization and loss of status if their children marry outside their caste or religion.

6.4.2. Role of Family and Community: The family plays a crucial role in the socialization of individuals and the shaping of marriage expectations. In UP, families continue to exert significant pressure on individuals to marry within their caste or religion. The idea of "honor" is closely tied to caste and religion, and violating these norms is often seen as dishonoring the family. This creates a barrier for couples who wish to marry outside these boundaries. However, urbanization and exposure to global cultural influences have led to a gradual shift in attitudes, particularly among younger generations. In cities like Lucknow and Varanasi, there is a growing acceptance of inter-caste and interreligious marriages, though the trend is still slow to spread in rural areas.

6.4.3. Religious and Caste Identity: Religious and caste identities are strong markers of social status in Uttar Pradesh. Interreligious marriages challenge religious norms, and inter-caste marriages disrupt the hierarchical caste system. These unions are often seen as undermining the social order and challenging age-old practices. In some cases, interfaith marriages involve religious conversion, but this is not always the case. In instances where conversion is not required, tensions can arise as families may view the marriage as a threat to their cultural and religious values.

6.4.4. Economic Implications: Economic factors also play a significant role in inter-caste and interreligious marriages. In rural areas of Uttar Pradesh, caste-based occupations are still prevalent, and marriage within the same caste is often seen as a means of preserving economic and social stability. Inter-caste marriages may be viewed as a threat to economic security, as the couple may lose access to traditional resources and networks tied to caste.

However, in urban areas, economic independence and access to a wider range of professional opportunities may lead to a greater willingness to accept inter-caste and interreligious unions. This shift

is particularly visible among the educated middle class.

6.4.5. Challenges Faced by Couples in Inter-caste and Interreligious Marriages: Couples in inter-caste and interreligious marriages in Uttar Pradesh often face significant challenges, including. Family Opposition: Resistance from families is one of the most significant obstacles. Families may disown or socially ostracize individuals who marry outside their caste or religion, leading to emotional and social stress. Social Ostracization: Couples may face public ridicule and exclusion from their communities, particularly in rural areas where traditional values are more strongly upheld.

6.4.5. Legal and Bureaucratic Hurdles: Although inter-caste and interreligious marriages are legally recognized under the Special Marriage Act, couples may face bureaucratic hurdles in registering their marriages. There may also be challenges in securing property rights and inheritance.

6.4.6. Religious and Cultural Tensions: In interreligious marriages, couples may experience tensions related to religious practices, rituals, and family expectations regarding children's upbringing.

6.4.7. Positive Impact and Social Change: Despite the challenges, inter-caste and interreligious marriages can lead to positive social change by Promoting Social Equality. These marriages challenge the hierarchical structure of caste and religious divisions and contribute to social integration.

6.4.8. Breaking Down Barriers: By encouraging cultural exchange, inter-caste and interreligious marriages help break down long-standing barriers and promote tolerance and understanding.

6.4.9. Empowering Women: These unions often empower women by giving them the agency to choose their partners based on love and compatibility, rather than adhering to caste or religious expectations.

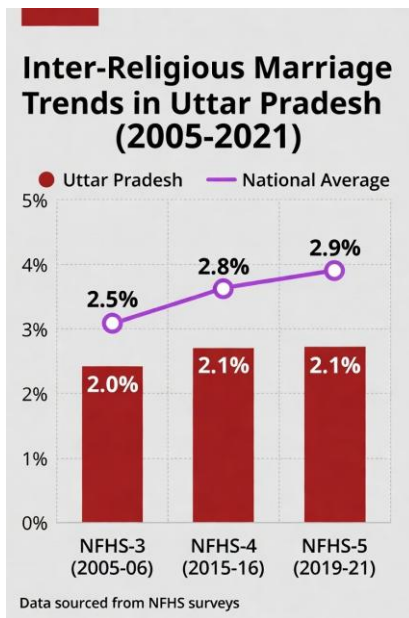
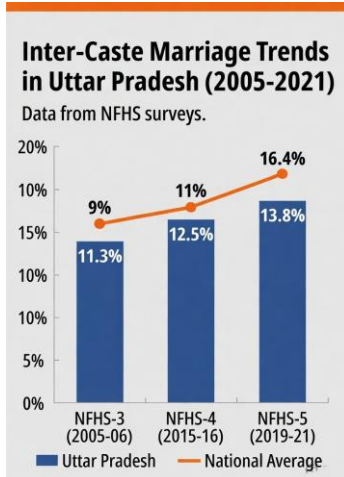
6.4.10. Challenging Traditional Norms: As more inter-caste and interreligious marriages take place,

the rigid norms surrounding marriage in Uttar Pradesh may gradually become less influential.

6.5. Inter-Caste and Inter-Religious Marriages in Uttar Pradesh: Trends and Challenges (2014–2024) Uttar Pradesh (UP), India's most populous state, remains deeply entrenched in caste hierarchies and religious divides. Inter-caste and inter-religious marriages represent key indicators of social change, challenging traditional endogamy. However, NFHS data and related studies over the last decade show only marginal shifts amid strong patriarchal, familial, and political resistance.

Inter-Caste Marriages: According to NFHS-5 (2019-21), 13.8% of currently married women in UP were in inter-caste unions (within-caste: 86.2%), compared to the national average of 16.4%. This reflects a slow rise from approximately 11.3% in NFHS-3 (2005-06) and around 12-13% in NFHS-4 (2015-16). Urban rates are slightly higher than rural, with more acceptance between proximate castes (e.g., OBC-SC or OBC-Other) rather than distant ones. Education and urbanization show weak positive correlations, but government incentive schemes have seen limited uptake in UP.

Inter-Religious Marriages: These remain extremely rare at 2.1% in UP (national 2.9%), with little change over the decade. Urban areas report marginally higher rates (~3.6%). Hindu-Muslim marriages dominate public discourse but face intense stigma, exacerbated by the 2021 UP Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Act. Most inter-religious unions occur within similar ethnic groups and show no significant upward trend. Here are visual representations of the trends:



Sociological Factors (2014–2024): Urbanization, female education, and media exposure have driven modest inter-caste gains, particularly in nuclear or educated households. However, caste-based politics, khap panchayats, honor-related violence (especially in rural western UP), and post-2014 communal polarization have reinforced endogamy. Inter-caste marriages receive relatively more acceptance than inter-faith ones due to weaker religious taboos. Family (not individual) choice dominates ~73% of marriages. No dramatic secular increase is evident in IHDS or NFHS data.

In conclusion, while socio-economic modernization and policies have produced slight inter-caste progress

(~2-3% rise over 15 years), inter-religious marriages remain stagnant. Deep structural barriers in UP limit social integration. Stronger implementation of the Special Marriage Act, protection for couples, and sustained awareness campaigns are essential

#### 6.6. Government schemes promoting inter-caste marriages in UP

In Uttar Pradesh, the government has introduced targeted financial incentives to encourage inter-caste marriages as a means to reduce caste-based discrimination and promote social integration. The primary initiative is the Dr. Ambedkar Scheme for Social Integration through Inter-Caste Marriages, supported at both the state level and by the Dr. Ambedkar Foundation.

Under this scheme, eligible couples receive a one-time financial grant of ₹2.5 lakh. To qualify, one of the spouses must belong to a Scheduled Caste (SC) or Scheduled Tribe (ST) community, while the other must be from a non-SC/ST background. The marriage must be legally registered under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, and the application must be submitted within one year of the marriage. Earlier, the scheme provided ₹50,000 from the state along with ₹2.5 lakh from the central fund, but it has now been streamlined into a single consolidated benefit.

The eligibility criteria include that both spouses must be residents of Uttar Pradesh, with the groom aged at least 21 years and the bride 18 years or above. Additionally, neither partner should have been previously married, and the couple’s annual family income must not exceed ₹2 lakh. Applicants are required to submit documents such as a valid marriage certificate, caste and income certificates, an affidavit, and joint bank account details.

The application process is conducted online through official government portals, where couples submit forms and upload necessary documents. After verification by district authorities, the approved amount is transferred directly to the beneficiaries’ bank accounts.

Although the scheme has contributed to increased registration of inter-caste marriages in some districts, its overall impact remains limited due to persistent

social resistance. Interreligious marriages receive comparatively less institutional support, and legal as well as societal challenges continue to restrict their wider acceptance.

6.7. District-wise trends of inter-caste marriages in UP last 10 years

District-wise data on inter-caste marriages in Uttar Pradesh over the last decade (2016–2026) remains limited due to the absence of comprehensive, disaggregated public datasets. Major national surveys such as the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4: 2015–16; NFHS-5: 2019–21) provide only aggregated state-level estimates, indicating that approximately 5% of marriages among women in Uttar Pradesh are inter-caste. However, these surveys do not offer district-level breakdowns, as their fact sheets focus primarily on demographic and health indicators rather than marriage patterns.

In the absence of detailed datasets, the Dr. Ambedkar Inter-Caste Marriage Promotion Scheme serves as an important proxy for understanding trends. This scheme, supported by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, provides financial incentives of ₹2.5 lakh to eligible inter-caste couples (where one partner belongs to SC/ST communities). Administrative records of scheme applications suggest a gradual increase in inter-caste marriage registrations after the scheme’s strengthening post-2015.

Regionally, patterns reveal significant variation across districts. Urban and semi-urban areas, particularly in western Uttar Pradesh, show relatively higher uptake due to factors such as education, migration, and exposure to diverse social environments. For instance, Meerut witnessed a sharp rise in applications—from about 14 cases in 2015 to over 130 in 2016—indicating the immediate impact of financial incentives and urban influence. Similarly, districts like Noida and Ghaziabad demonstrate moderate growth, driven by cosmopolitan populations and greater social mobility.

Administrative and educational hubs such as Lucknow and Kanpur show steady uptake, largely due to better awareness of government schemes and relatively progressive social attitudes. In contrast,

rural and culturally conservative regions lag behind. Districts in eastern Uttar Pradesh, including Gorakhpur and Varanasi, report lower participation due to strong adherence to caste norms and social pressures. Similarly, the Bundelkhand region, represented by districts like Jhansi, shows minimal uptake, reflecting entrenched caste hierarchies and limited institutional outreach.

Although no official year-wise district tables are publicly available, the trend based on scheme applications indicates a modest but consistent increase, estimated at around 5–10% annual growth across the state. However, the actual proportion of inter-caste marriages remains below 10%, underscoring the persistence of social stigma, family resistance, and cultural barriers.

Estimated District/Regional Trends in Inter-Caste Marriage (2016–2026)

District/Region	Estimated Trend	Key Observations
Meerut	High Increase	Nearly 10× rise post-incentive; strong urban impact
Western UP (Noida, Ghaziabad)	Moderate Growth	Migration, education, and cosmopolitan culture
Lucknow	Steady Increase	Administrative awareness and scheme accessibility
Kanpur	Steady Increase	Urbanization and educational institutions
Eastern UP (Gorakhpur, Varanasi)	Low Growth	Conservative social norms and caste rigidity
Bundelkhand (Jhansi)	Minimal Growth	Strong caste enforcement and low outreach

Overall, while policy incentives have contributed to a gradual rise in inter-caste marriage registrations in Uttar Pradesh, the lack of detailed district-level data remains a major limitation for sociological analysis.

Future surveys, particularly NFHS-6, are expected to provide more granular insights into these evolving social patterns.

## VII. CONCLUSION

These three objectives form a comprehensive framework for studying the sociological impact, challenges, and role of family and community in inter-caste and interreligious marriages in Uttar Pradesh. By focusing on these key areas, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how these marriages function within the larger context of social change, tradition, and modernity in one of India's most socially complex states. The findings will contribute to the ongoing discussion of caste and religious boundaries, social integration, and the role of marriage in fostering a more inclusive society. Inter-caste and interreligious marriages in Uttar Pradesh present both challenges and opportunities for social change. While these unions continue to face resistance from families, communities, and traditional social structures, they also serve as catalysts for promoting equality, social justice, and cultural integration. The legal framework, although progressive, needs to be supported by greater social acceptance and educational initiatives that challenge caste and religious prejudices. In the long run, the increasing number of inter-caste and interreligious marriages could play a crucial role in dismantling caste-based hierarchies and fostering a more inclusive society in Uttar Pradesh and beyond.

## VIII. SUGGESTIONS

To promote inter-caste and interreligious marriages in Uttar Pradesh, a multi-dimensional approach is required that goes beyond financial incentives. First, awareness campaigns should be strengthened through educational institutions, media, and community outreach to challenge deep-rooted caste prejudices and promote constitutional values of equality. Second, the implementation of schemes like the Dr. Ambedkar Inter-Caste Marriage Promotion Scheme should be made more transparent and accessible by simplifying procedures and ensuring timely disbursement of funds. Third, legal protection mechanisms must be reinforced to safeguard couples from harassment, violence, and social boycotts,

including the establishment of special support cells and helplines at the district level. Fourth, integrating discussions on social inclusion, caste equality, and secularism into school and university curricula can foster attitudinal change among youth. Fifth, local governance bodies and civil society organizations should be actively involved in promoting acceptance and mediating conflicts. Additionally, there is a need for systematic data collection at the district level to better understand trends and design targeted interventions. Encouraging inter-community dialogue and highlighting positive success stories can further normalize such marriages. Overall, sustainable change will require a combination of policy support, legal safeguards, education, and societal transformation.

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