

Interfaith Marriages in India: An Analytical Study of Sociocultural Dynamics and Religious Implications

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ABSTRACT. Interfaith marriages in India present a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by diverse social, cultural, and ideological elements. This study investigates the sociocultural dynamics and religious implications of interfaith unions, particularly between Muslim girls and non-Muslim boys, and vice versa. It explores how Western culture, Bollywood and changing social mores have contributed to these relationships. Methodologically, the study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design, drawing on case studies, narrative accounts, and secondary literature to construct a grounded, sociocultural situated account of interfaith marriage rather than a statistically representative one. Case studies and stories are used to show the practical implications and experiences of people moving across religious boundaries in love and consequences of liberal society. Social changes, such as increased social mobility, the possibility of co-education, and social media are also very important in influencing perceptions of interfaith alliances. The findings indicate that interfaith marriages in India are shaped less by religious conviction itself than by broader structural and cultural shifts: expanding co-educational spaces, greater female mobility and economic independence, urban anonymity, and pervasive social media use collectively widen opportunities for cross-religious interaction and attachment.

Keywords: *Marriage, Interfaith, Bollywood, Western Culture, Interreligious, Social Media.*

INTRODUCTION

Interfaith marriage, defined as a union between people of different faiths, has a long and complicated history in India. In the past, these marriages faced social and family opposition, but they remain a symbol of India's diverse cultural background. The development of interfaith marriage reflects broader social changes and ongoing negotiations/tensions between religious traditions and modernity. The study of interfaith marriages in contemporary India is important because it raises questions about religious tolerance, social integration, legal issues, above all, religion itself, and provides insight into the power of individual choices, social norms and religious teachings. Numerous factors contribute to the dynamics of interfaith marriages in India. Bollywood films have greatly influenced social views on marriages in India by depicting these unions in a romantic and idealised atmosphere. Film programs often show themes of love that transcend religious and cultural boundaries, establishing and promoting acceptance of interfaith relationships.

Social mobility has played an important role in the acceptance of interfaith marriages in Indian society. Greater access to education and economic opportunities allows individuals to interact with diverse groups and increases inclusive and open attitudes toward interfaith relations (R. Gupta, 2022). As people move into different social classes and geographic regions, they are more likely to meet and interact with people from different religious and cultural backgrounds, leading to greater acceptance of diverse unions (Kish-Gephart et al., 2023). Exposure to different cultures and practices through higher education and professional settings reduces the influence of traditional and religious views and promotes a more liberal view of marriage (Sadeghian et al., 2025). As a result, social mobility contributes to social acceptance, where interfaith marriage is seen as a personal choice rather than a taboo (Cerchiaro, 2022).

In India, interfaith marriages are significantly influenced by social and religious factors, which often prevent them from taking place. These factors include deeply rooted cultural norms,



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social pressures, and religious doctrines that prevent interfaith unions. Resistance to such marriages becomes even worse when they become a source of social anxiety. Community backlash can be severe, with families and local groups vehemently opposing the union. In addition, political interests often exploit these tensions to advance their agendas, using interfaith marriages as a tool to inflame community divisions and garner support from specific constituencies. Thus, the social and religious barriers to interfaith marriages are not only personal challenges but are reinforced in a broader socio-political context where they can lead to increased conflict and instability (Tilahun et al., 2025).

The available literature highlights the dynamic relationship between social norms, legal frameworks, media representations, and personal choices in interreligious marriages in India. Religious texts and teachings have a great influence on attitudes about marriage. Chandra Mallampalli (2023) discusses the different positions of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Sikhism in that union (Mallampalli, 2023). The complexities of religious conversion, struggle for identity, and family acceptance are key themes in the literature, Sharma and Kumar (2018) shows the psychological and social effects on individuals and families related to marriages (Sharma & Kumar, 2019).

The academic literature on marriage in India provides insight into the various factors that influence the acceptance and difficulties of marriage. Shah and Mehta's study, *Arranged Marriage in India: A Sociological Perspective* (2014), examines the significant influence of local culture, caste and social norms on the acceptance of marriage, and is said to be the most powerful social structure for influencing the individual options and how social attitudes are shaped.

In a complementary context, Gupta (2023) in *Interfaith Marriage and Social Mobility* discusses how social mobility driven by education and economic opportunity promotes inclusive attitudes toward bipartisan unions (C. Gupta, 2023). This shows the role of upward mobility in exposing people to diverse perspectives and reducing prejudice, thereby increasing acceptance. Saxena's book *Divorce and democracy: a history of personal Law in post-independence India* (2022) examines the legal framework established by the Special Marriage Act of 1954 (Saxena, 2022). Despite the intention to celebrate interfaith marriages without requiring religious conversion, Saxena notes that political and administrative pressures can prevent couples from taking the legal route to marry.

Patel (2019) explores the important role of Bollywood in shaping public perception in *Dynamics of Women's Movement in India* (Patel, 2019). By mediating interfaith relations, Bollywood films encourage acceptance and challenge traditional norms, thereby contributing to the advancement of the social vision for such unions. Chandra Mallampalli (2023) provides an analysis of religious education and its impact on interfaith marriage in *Religious Education and Religious Marriage* (Mallampalli, 2023). This study highlights the difficulties that arise from different religious positions, especially issues related to religious conversion and identity conflicts in different families. Chandra's work shows the complex balance that individuals and families must navigate to renew personal faith and interfaith unity. These studies show the multifaceted nature of marriages in India, influenced by sociocultural forces, legal issues, media coverage, and religious teachings.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory research design suited to a topic that is sensitive, under-documented in official statistics, and shaped by meaning-making at the level of the individual, the family and the community rather than by variables that lend themselves easily to quantification. Because no reliable national database of interfaith marriages exists in India, and because many such unions are deliberately kept outside formal records to avoid family or community reprisal, a qualitative approach was judged best able to capture the lived texture of these relationships, even though it does not yield a statistically representative or generalisable picture of interfaith marriage across the country.

Data were drawn from three complementary sources. First, secondary academic literature, including peer-reviewed journal articles, monographs and edited volumes on marriage, religion and social change in India, was reviewed to situate the study within existing sociological and religious-studies scholarship and to identify recurring themes, debates and gaps. Second, published and media-reported case narratives of interfaith couples, drawn from newspaper features, documentary film, television drama and biographical accounts, were compiled and read as illustrative case studies rather than as a random or representative sample. Third, primary religious texts, including the Qur'an, the Manusmriti, the Bhagavad Gita and the Guru Granth Sahib, together with their standard commentaries, were consulted directly to establish how Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism formally position interfaith marriage, and these textual readings were cross-checked against secondary scholarship in religious studies and Islamic and Hindu law.

Analytically, the material was organised through thematic content analysis. Case narratives, scholarly sources and textual material were read and grouped into recurring themes, namely sociocultural dynamics and regional variation, legal and political framing, religious doctrine and interpretation, media and Bollywood representation, and misconceptions and stereotyping, which correspond to the sub-sections of the Results and Discussion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Sociocultural Dynamics

Cultural Context of Interfaith Marriage in India is strongly influenced by local caste, society and culture. The exchange of these factors determines family acceptance and social attitudes. For example, in areas where they have a strong opinion, there may be more opposition to different marriages. Case studies, such as Hindu-Muslim couples in Uttar Pradesh, show both challenges, such as ostracism, and eventual successes, such as social acceptance (C. Gupta, 2023).

Inter-religious marriages in India invite varied reactions across different regions and communities. In some urban and progressive areas these unions may be welcomed as symbols of social harmony and evolving cultural norms. Blending of diverse cultures and increased exposure to global ideas may also promote acceptance and adaptation. In metropolitan areas and progressive communities, inter-religious marriages are increasingly accepted. The growing influence of education, media, and global cultural exchanges has fostered a more liberal outlook which contributes to a more inclusive mindset, particularly among the younger generations who view love beyond religious boundaries as a progressive way against the conservative religious way of life.

Contrastingly, because of the region's socio-political landscape, marked by historical conflicts and strong religious identities, which make such unions particularly sensitive, in regions like Kashmir, inter-religious marriages often lead to significant social unrest and community tensions. Marriages between individuals of different religions can exacerbate existing communal tensions, sometimes resulting in violent confrontations, social ostracism, and legal battles. The societal pressure and potential backlash discourage many from pursuing such relationships, highlighting the deeply entrenched religious and cultural divides (Onwuzulike, 2024).

Legal Political Perspectives and Media

The legal landscape of interfaith marriages in India has been largely shaped by the Interfaith Marriage Act, 1954. The law allows interfaith couples to marry without conversion. However, the implementation of these laws is often influenced by political considerations, and some governments propose stricter laws under controversial narratives like, for example, *Love Jihad* (Saxena, 2022), a term coined to check the marriage of Hindu women with Muslim Men for religious and political reasons. Analysis of these laws and policies reveals the complex relationship between legal and political processes.

The media plays an important role in shaping public opinion about interfaith marriage. Movies like *Bombay* (1995)¹ and TV shows like *Qubul Hai* (2012-2016)² portray the struggles and triumphs of married couples, influencing social attitudes (Patel, 2019). Social media magnifies these stories, often clouding public opinion and amplifying both support and opposition.

Religious Doctrines and Beliefs

Different religions in India have different positions on interfaith marriage. Religious texts such as the Manusmriti which provides basic information but have different interpretations (Mallampalli, 2023). The Qur'an provides clear guidelines about the religio-legal status of such marriage.

The rules of marriage in Islam are specific and varied. Under Islamic law, Muslim men can marry women from the *People of the Book*, which includes Christians and Jews. However, these women must be religious and chaste. This is based on a verse of the Qur'an:

This day are (all) good things made lawful for you. The food of those who have received the Scripture is lawful for you, and your food is lawful for them. And so are the virtuous women of the believers and the virtuous women of those who received the Scripture before you (lawful for you) when ye give them their marriage portions and live with them in honour, not in fornication, nor taking them as secret concubines. Whoso denied the faith, his work is vain and he will be among the losers in the Hereafter (QS. 5: 5).

Another verse:

Wed not idolatresses till they believe; for lo! a believing bondwoman is better than an idolatress though she please you; and give not your daughters in marriage to idolaters till they believe, for lo! a believing slave is better than an idolater though he please you. These invite unto the Fire, and Allah invited unto the Garden, and unto forgiveness by His grace, and expounded His revelations to mankind that haply they may remember (Q.S: 2: 221).

While such guidelines and teachings in *The Qur'an* consider interreligious marriages valid in certain conditions and contexts, they are, however, generally invalid in Islamic law. The reason for this requirement is consideration for faith, which constitutes the fundamental criterion for human understanding and mutual relationship, to maintain religious harmony in the family and to ensure that children are brought up based on the Islamic faith. Therefore, although interfaith marriages are permitted [with the Jews and the Christians], they are determined strictly in accordance with Islamic traditions and religious observance (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007; Kamali, 2008).

Hindu scriptures and traditional texts have also talked about interracial marriage. The Manusmriti (3.5), one of the oldest legal texts, discourages inter-caste and inter-religious marriages and promotes inter-communal marriages to maintain social harmony and religious purity:

¹ The film, directed by Mani Ratnam, is a moving depiction of interfaith love against the backdrop of the 1992-93 Bombay riots. It follows the love story of a Hindu man and a Muslim woman who defy social norms to live together, highlighting the social issues and challenges they face. *Bombay* explores themes of love, tolerance and the devastating effects of religious conflict through powerful drama and action. This film, with its portrayal of riots and its message of communal unity, became an important work in Indian cinema.

² *Qubool Hai* is an Indian television drama series that explores the lives of two Muslim families, exploring themes of love, tradition and family values. The show revolves around the turbulent relationship between Asad Ahmed Khan, an observant and cold-hearted man, and Zoya Farooqui, an energetic and independent woman. Through a burgeoning romance, *Qubool Hai* tackles various social issues including interfaith relations, cultural conflicts and gender dynamics in the context of modern Muslim society. The series became popular for its powerful storytelling, character development and depiction of current issues affecting the Muslim community. .

असपिण्डा च या मातुरसगोत्रा च या पितुः ।
सा प्रशस्ता द्विजातीनां दारकर्मणि मैथुने ॥ ५ ॥

asapiṇḍā ca yā māturasagotrā ca yā pituḥ |
sā praśastā dvijātīnāṃ dāra-karmaṇi maithune || 5 ||

She who is not a “sapīṇḍa” of one’s mother, not of the same “Gotra” as his father, and who is not born of (unlawful) intercourse—has been recommended for marriage.³

This verse underscores the importance of adhering to prescribed social and religious norms, including those related to marriage, thereby discouraging interreligious unions.

However, in modern interpretations, many Hindu scholars support a comprehensive approach that is consistent with the general information contained in the Vedas. The Bhagavad Gita emphasises the importance of love and responsibility over rigid social structures and emphasises spiritual values above social limitations. Hindu scholars refer to the scriptural teachings like:

मां हि पार्थ व्यपाश्रित्य येऽपि स्युः पापयोनयः ।
स्त्रियो वैश्यास्तथा शूद्रास्तेऽपि यान्ति परां गतिम् ॥ 32 ॥

mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye ’pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayaḥ
striyo vaiśhyās tathā śhūdrās te ’pi yānti param gatiṃ

All those who take refuge in Me, whatever their birth, race, gender, or caste, even those whom society scorns, will attain the supreme destination.⁴

Furthermore, traditions are often dominant, and interfaith marriages now prevail (Bhawuk, 2012). These ancient texts and modern interpretations show the complexity and diversity of views in Hinduism about marriage. The Guru Granth Sahib, the central religious scripture of Sikhism, emphasises the unity of humanity and the equality of all people regardless of caste, creed, or religion. However, when it comes to the specific issue of interreligious marriage, traditional Sikh teachings tend to encourage marriages within the Sikh faith to ensure religious and cultural continuity.

Although the Guru Granth Sahib does not specifically prohibit interreligious marriage, there is no explicit directive within it that forbids Sikhs from marrying individuals of other religions; it only seems to emphasise the spiritual nature of marriage, portraying it as a union of souls devoted to the love of God. It encourages the couple to live a life of simplicity and mutual respect, focusing on their shared spiritual journey rather than materialistic aspects like dowry (Guru Granth Sahib, Ang 787).

Notwithstanding, contemporary interpretations and practices can vary. Many modern Sikhs, especially in the diaspora, may choose to marry individuals from different faiths while still maintaining their own religious practices and identities. The emphasis in Sikhism on personal conscience and spiritual development can lead to diverse views and practices regarding interreligious marriage (Nesbitt, 2011). Religious conversion can become a point of contention in marriages. Some couples choose to convert for family approval, while others maintain a religious identity. This decision has a significant impact on the religious identity of individuals and families,

³ Similarly, in In the *Vaśiṣṭha* (Dharmaśāstra), there is prohibition also of the girl belonging to the same *gotra* as one’s mother. It says— ‘If the twice-born person marries a girl of the same *gotra* or the same *Pravara* as himself, he shall renounce her and perform the penance of the Cāndrāyaṇa; so also, if he has married the daughter of his maternal uncle, or a girl of the same *gotra* as his mother.’

⁴ Bhagavad Gita, (9.32)

resulting in psychological and social consequences, including identity conflict and ostracism (Sharma & Kumar, 2019).

Misconceptions and Stereotyping

In this section we shall focus on the claim that Muslim women choose Hindu men for marriage based on aversion to Muslim men's appearance, religious dress or socioeconomic status. Scholarship in the field and practical experience reveals that such a claim is both simplistic and misleading. Not only does this argument perpetuate stereotypes about Muslim men, it also ignores the multifaceted and personal nature of the marriage decision. The idea that Muslim men are less popular because of their beards or religious dress is a superficial and diminishing assessment. Personal appearance is highly subjective, and many people find traditional clothing and beards attractive and valuable (Merino et al., 2024). Religious clothing expresses personal faith and cultural identity. To reduce it to a factor of rejection does not recognize the values and principles that it represents (Haddad, 2007).

To say that Muslims are less educated or economically disadvantaged is a broad generalisation. Many Muslim men are highly educated and have considerable economic status (Ahmad, 2017). Socioeconomic status is different in every community. Like their counterparts from other communities, Muslim men also have a broad educational and economic background.

Marriage is a personal choice influenced by many factors such as compatibility, shared values, mutual respect and personal connection. Reducing such decisions to community-specific characteristics is too simplistic (Moore et al., 2013). The dynamics of interfaith marriages are complex and stem from individual preferences rather than community stereotypes (Tilahun et al., 2026).

The imposition of stereotypes or generalised assumptions undermines personal autonomy and perpetuates a narrative that divides dissent (Rhode, 1997). Emphasising education, mutual understanding and respect in communities promotes a more inclusive and harmonious society (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007).

Some Examples of Inter-Religious Marriages in India

Although inter-faith marriages are not considered good in societies in which people's social behaviours are governed mostly by their religions, there are examples which show mixed marriages in India, mostly driven by personal choice and emotion, become a symbol of inclusiveness and acceptance for different religious traditions. Here are a few examples:

1. Amrita Arora, a Christian businesswoman, is married to a Muslim businessman Shakeel Ladak. The marriage incorporates Christian and Islamic traditions, expressing mutual respect and integration of each other's religious traditions (Kumar & Jain, 2026).
2. The marriage of Bollywood superstar Shah Rukh Khan, a Muslim, and Gauri Chibber, a Hindu, is known for its fusion of Muslim and Hindu traditions. This high combination shows the fusion of cultural and religious practices and shows the possibility of coexistence (Benazzo & Benazzo, 2019).
3. Riteish Deshmukh, a Hindu, married Genelia D'Souza, a Christian. Their marriage included Hindu and Christian ceremonies, showing their commitment to honour and respect each other's religious backgrounds (Patel, 2019).
4. Shahnaz, a Kashmiri Muslim from Srinagar, and Rajesh Kumar, a Hindu from Jammu, has been regarded to represent an example of interreligious unity in Kashmir. Their marriage, which took place in 2015, overcame significant resistance from their families and communities (Bhat, 2017).

5. Noor Mohammad, a Muslim from Anantnag, and Neelam Sharma, a Hindu from Baramulla, married in 2018. Their relationship faced intense scrutiny and opposition from both their religious communities (Khan & Mythen, 2021).

However, in most of such examples it is always very difficult to judge whether the concern for religion, respect and regard for each other's values is as compared to the passion, emotion and choice of the people involved.

Influence of Bollywood

Bollywood and Western media significantly control cultural norms and behaviours that often shape public perceptions and attitudes. One notable area of its influence is the portrayal of interfaith relationships, which are often portrayed in a glamorous and engaging manner. This portrayal not only engages audiences, but challenges and expands traditional understandings of love and relationships. Bollywood films often celebrate interfaith love marriages and influence the socio-religious perceptions of Indian society. For example, two prominent films that exemplify this trend are *Veer-Zaara*⁵ (2004) in which the love story crosses national and religious boundaries amid political tensions between India and Pakistan. The film resonated with audiences in India as well as abroad and promoted discussion on the complexities of the relationship between religions and cultures.

Similarly, the film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge* (1995)⁶. In which the love story challenges traditional norms and family expectations, ultimately promoting the idea that love can transcend social and religious barriers. *My Name Is Khan* (2010)⁷ can be another example from Bollywood.⁸ These films highlight the romanticised image of interfaith marriages and suggest that love can transcend religious differences and promote greater social acceptance and integration.

Societal Free Mixing

People of different origins meet more often in today's globalised society, which encourages the development of relationships based on shared values and respect rather than just religious identity. Social media platforms, businesses and universities play an important role in facilitating these exchanges and creating environments that foster the organic growth of interfaith partnerships. Take the case of Sara and Michael (PBS, 2017), who met while participating in a study abroad program. Their mutual appreciation of art and history led to the development of their relationship, showing how social mixing can foster interfaith alliances based on shared interests rather than religious ties. This case highlights the importance of mutual respect and common interests in developing inter-religious ties in a globalised environment.⁹

⁵ *Veer-Zaara* is a 2004 Bollywood film directed by Yash Chopra and starring Shah Rukh Khan and Preity Zinta. The film is a romantic drama that explores themes of love, sacrifice and patriotism.

⁶ Directed by Aditya Chopra, the classic film features Raj (Shah Rukh Khan) and Simra (Kajol), who come from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

⁷ *My Name Is Khan* (2010) is about marriage in the relationship between Rizwan Khan, a Muslim, and Mandira, a Hindu single mother. Their marriage faces societal problems and personal problems, and bad feelings and misunderstandings deepen, especially with the events of 9/11. The film shows the couple's struggle against religion and the impact of social problems on family life

⁸ Directed by Karan Johar, the film is about Rizwan Khan (Shah Rukh Khan), a Muslim man with Asperger syndrome and his Hindu wife Mandira (Kajol), the film explores the challenges they face due to their different religions and the post-9/11 socio-political climate, emphasising the message that love and understanding can overcome social prejudices and divisions.

⁹ The cases of Sarah and Michael happened in the United States. This case is often brought up in discussions about interfaith marriages and the difficulties they face in different cultural contexts.

Love Beyond Boundaries

Love often transcends social structures including caste, religion and economic status. Examples from history and today show that people often choose to marry based on personal relationships rather than religious precepts. This position is in line with the growing recognition of interfaith unions around the world (Sharma & Kumar, 2019), often cited as an example of the challenges and social dynamics involved in interreligious marriages in India, is a remarkable example of how love can overcome religious differences. Anwar and Priya decided to get married despite the opposition of their families because they love each other and understand each other. Their story highlights how love can transcend social barriers, highlighting the growing acceptance of interfaith unions and the value of relationships beyond conventional social norms.

Sex Education and Youth Behavior

Claims that young people talk about relationships and gender are controversial and have little support, but they influence young people's behaviour and lead to short-term relationships. There are many cases of young Indians showing these effects. For instance, Ravi, a university student in Delhi, and Priya, a high school student in Mumbai, both shared their attitudes towards relationships after participating in a women's education program. The program provided information about sex and relationships, which they admitted influenced their decisions about dating and short-term relationships (Isenberg et al., 2018). Ravi's involvement in short-term relationships increased after being exposed to public education, showing the program's impact on his behaviour.

Similarly, Anjali, a student from Bangalore, and Arjun, a student from Chennai, also saw changes in their relationship patterns after attending a workshop on sexual health and relationship dynamics. As Mehta reported in his research on the impact of sexual health education on adolescent behaviour, their new knowledge made them more likely to engage in short-term relationships (Mehta et al., 2022). The workshop provided them with information to change their attitudes and behaviours regarding romantic relationships. Therefore, the complexity of human relationships can be explained by many factors. Therefore, it cannot be denied that marriage, especially interfaith marriage, is influenced by many factors, including cultural norms, personal values, emotional connection, common needs, and long-term compatibility. However, media-driven sex-centred feminism can lead young people to develop relationships across socio-religious and cultural boundaries.

Personal Connections and Mutual Understanding

Two notable examples of interreligious marriages in India that highlight personal connections and mutual understanding are the relationships of Shoaib Akhtar, a Muslim man, and Shalini Singh, a Hindu woman (Patel, 2019), and Rajeev Verma, a Hindu man and Fatima Khan, a Muslim woman (Mehta et al., 2022). While the former marriage showcases how shared values and understanding can foster a harmonious relationship despite differing religious backgrounds, the latter demonstrate the power of personal connection and mutual understanding in overcoming societal and familial pressures.

Political and Societal Overtones

Policies that promote marriage are often aimed at promoting social cohesion, inclusion and the resolution of social barriers. For example, political leaders and governments can promote more inclusive societies by supporting policies and programs that foster interfaith harmony and harmony. These programs may include public awareness programs, legislative reforms, and community outreach programs designed to challenge prejudice and stereotypes. These actions can be seen in various political frameworks where the promotion of interfaith marriage is seen to strengthen national unity and alleviate social problems (Jafri, 2022). In addition, legal measures to protect the rights of married couples and ensure legal and social support increase the commitment

to create an inclusive environment. By being able to support interfaith marriage, political entities can play an important role in social cohesion and create a fairer society (Sonkar, 2022).

Legal Reforms

To ensure equality and justice in multicultural and multi-religious societies, laws that protect the rights of people in heterosexual marriages make their influence on Indian society also. There are legal protections, and laws that allow civil marriage regardless of religious background, are critical to protecting the rights of married couples. These laws promote a more inclusive society by preventing discrimination and ensuring that marriages are recognized and respected within the legal framework (Sonkar, 2026). By creating an enabling legal environment, policymakers increase acceptance and harmony in interfaith relations.

Educational Campaigns

Promoting awareness and understanding of different religions and cultures through educational initiatives promotes acceptance. Initiatives that encourage different communities to communicate and build relationships can lead to greater acceptance of interfaith relationships (Sharma & Kumar, 2019). Additionally, implementing policies that combat religious and cultural discrimination in workplaces, schools, and public spaces create an environment where interfaith relations are more acceptable (R. Gupta, 2022). Public support for interfaith marriage and diversity in political leadership influences public opinion and reduces influence of social norms (Mehta et al., 2022). Moreover, in a secular state where the government remains neutral in religious matters an environment is created where interfaith marriages are viewed as a matter of personal choice rather than a social issue.

However, in India, political and religious factors sometimes influence the perception and treatment of interracial marriages. For example, the controversial *Love Jihad* narrative has been used to frame interfaith relationships as a threat to social and religious norms, generating legal and social opposition to such unions. This has created significant challenges for married couples, who often face legal obstacles and social stigma driven by politics rather than genuine concern for social cohesion and religious integrity (Sharma & Kumar, 2019). These examples show how political and religious activities can affect the issue of marriage in countries around the world.

One more factor advocating for interfaith dialogue and marriage is NGOs and community groups which provide support networks for interfaith couples (Rao, 2020, p. 191). These political interests and actions can help create an environment where interfaith marriages are more accepted and supported. To effectively approach interfaith marriage, it is important to understand these different perspectives and the broader socio-political environment that influence public perceptions and personal experiences of interfaith marriages.

CONCLUSION

Interfaith marriages are a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by personal autonomy, social change, cultural exchange and the universal nature of love. To dismiss these unions as simply the result of media influence or youthful indifference simplifies the rich and complex motivations behind such relationships. Academic discussions should aim to explore these dimensions in depth, which will contribute to a deeper understanding of interreligious dynamics in contemporary society.

Intermarriage in India navigates the complex terrain of socio-cultural and religious practices. The study shows the relationship between social attitudes, legal frameworks and religious teachings. The findings highlight the need for more research on long-term marriage and its children's experiences. Finally, interfaith marriages are well versed in the socio-cultural and religious contexts of India. Reasons for marriage choices are deeply personal and cannot be reduced to stereotypes about looks, education or economic status. Promoting a narrative that respects individual choices

and recognizes the diversity of all communities is essential to promoting mutual respect and understanding.

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