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Introduction

The present work relating to a group of — the religiously intermarried, has been conceived as a contribution towards the general field of the Sociology of marriage and religion. The focus of investigation has been on some of the structural and functional aspects of mate selection in the lives of an urban group, whose members had exercised self-choice in their marriages. This group consisted of three religious sub groups (i.e., Hindus, Muslims and Christians). Our enquiry attempts to examine a trend different from the traditional pattern, which reflects a phenomenon that is generally referred as modernity. Personal choice in marriage is such a relatively new idea in India it disrupts the established mores to such an extent that it is seldom won without a struggle. It was felt that Pune, provides an ideal setting for a study of this kind, as it has an urban - industrial complex, with a lively traditional background. Further this study assumed a larger significance as the sample represented an important segment of the educat...
community in Maharashtra.

Some General Features of the Study

This work can be claimed to be distinctive in the following respects:

1) In its scope, it covers the total life style of the respondents. It takes into consideration the family background and the socialization pattern of the respondents along with the process of socialization of the off-springs of our respondents. It is thus an exhaustive study of one continuing generation.

2) In its analysis it covers both religious beliefs and actions together. No exclusive reliance has been placed on beliefs or actions alone. Similarly it considers both the structure of religion in the natal home and the changing aspects of religion in the homes of the inter-married.

3) The study illustrates the utility of considering both sociological and psychological factors in comprehending the complex reality of religious behaviour and religious belief.

4) Methodologically, the notable feature of the project is
   
   (a) By bringing into focus the three religious groups - i.e., Hindus, Muslims and Christians
the various areas of their inter-relations have been highlighted, as the individual sample of one religious group is much more than that included in previous studies.

The Analytical Framework

Many Sociological studies of religion are concerned with the role of a religion in the explanation of a social phenomenon. The task in such works is to discover the contribution which religion as an independent variable, makes to social integration. Our approach has been different. It is based on the view that religion and social structure are inter-related systems. The study of such a mutual inter-relationship, has two facets. The first is the impact of religion upon social structure and the second is the influence of social structure upon religious beliefs and practices. It is impossible to separate these two facets.

From this perspective, the findings and the conclusions of our study would be discussed in a framework which broadly consists of the following:

(i) the inter-action of marriage family and religion on the institutional level,

(ii) the central significance of socialization,
(iii) the strength of the religious and the secular factors,
(iv) their inter-action in the phenomenon of inter-religious marriages,
(v) Patterns of adjustment,
(vi) Persistence, continuity and change as indicated by the mixed inter-religious marriages, and
(vii) Verification of some of the standard evaluations of the three religious systems.

(i) The interaction of marriage, family and religion on the institutional level.

(a) Joint Family:

The Indian tradition of the joint family is well known. We find that in an intermarriage the traditional values of arrangement of a marriage, bargaining for a dowry and incorporation of the new bride in the traditional pattern, are replaced by modern values such as love, companionship and individuality.

In spite of antipathy stirred by the mixed marriage, parents in 26 cases helped their children to set up independent homes. Thus we found that on the whole 73 couples with parental help and without it set up nuclear homes. There were a few joint house holds
where the intermarried couple stayed. It was found that Hindu females in larger numbers consented to live in the joint families of their spouses. This, we believe, was essentially due to the extended family pattern that is still important in Hindu homes. Muslim males in larger numbers also stay with their parents in joint families than do other two religious groups. Here it must be mentioned that with the exception of a few Muslim males who were from affluent families and who were well-employed, the others were from the middle-middle class. This group is more inclined towards the traditional values.

The Christian females in greatest numbers have independent homes. This is because they are more Westernized and not oriented to the extended kin-system. Besides this, quite a few of these women were wage earners and could afford to maintain independent establishments. Incidentally those, who set up independent homes preferred a cosmopolitan neighbourhood.

(b) *Patriarchal Tradition*

This link with the joint family residence, that too with the male respondent's parents, brings forth another feature of traditional, pre-industrial society-
viz., the patrilocal, the patrineal and the patriarchal pattern of family in general. (Even the modern society has in many crucial respects the same structure). For this very reason women in greater numbers convert to the male's religion. (We shall discuss this factor a little later). What is relevant is that in a male-dominated society, it is but natural that women have accepted the major burden of adjustment. (Chapter V).

Similarly reconciliation with the couple after the arrival of the first child also indicates the potency of the patriarchal tradition. This kind of reconciliation was marked among Hindus and it is connected with the belief in the continuity of the family line that has considerable importance in patrineal societies. This may no doubt have sentimental and religious overtures but the fact remains that basically this attitude stems from a characteristic family social structure. (Chapter V).

(ii) **The Central Significance of Socialization**

We have dealt with (i) Socialization of our respondents in their natal home and (ii) Socialization of the children of our respondents.
Both these aspects have a core significance. When we analyse the pattern of socialization in general, we find that they are in two areas (a) Secular and (b) Religious. We will take into account the latter.

The respondents pattern of socialization when considered in the religious sphere shows that most of the respondents came from religious homes. For prayers were said, temples, churches and mosques were visited and most of the rites, rituals and festivals celebrated in the natal homes. (Chapter IV).

Some respondents were members of religious clubs during their school and college days. A very marginal number confessed to have been influenced by the ideology and philosophy of another religion before marriage. (Chapter III).

Further, it was found that parents' religious affiliation and prejudices had in no way adversely affected the respondents. The attitudes of the respondent's parents were considerably liberal regarding choice of friends and not so liberal about choice of mate.

With such a religious climate in the natal homes only a nominal number of couples were found to be
above religious feelings and thus practiced no religion. This indeed did not mean that they were all atheists. Only a very nominal number said they were non-believers in God but a majority said that they definitely accepted His presence in the world. This line of thought reflects in their belief in the sanctity of marriage. (Chapter IV and V).

The Central Significance of Socialization of children of the Respondents.

When the male members in the family are dominant and the father's religious identity is considered important, the children are brought up in their father's faith. (This was true in our study for a greater number of children were brought up in the father's faith). Yet it is the mother, who socializes the children in their religious sphere. Thus the attitudes, opinions and images that the child is exposed to, and later formulates are more or less through the mother's influence. (Chapter VI).

This difficulty was incidentally faced by a greater number of women who married Hindu males. The mothers imparted religious instructions to the child, but found it rather difficult to do so. The reasons for these difficulties were (i) the female respondents were not acquainted with their husband's
form of worship, prayers and rituals. (ii) their own socialization in the religious sphere had taught them a completely different set of religious values and were unable to comprehend religious values of the other religion. (Chapter VI).

On the other hand when the children were socialized in well organized religions such as Christianity, the mothers took help from external sources, such as the Church, Sunday School etc. The mother's influence on the child was much greater than that of the father, in the initial stages of socialization.

The religious socialization of children was found to be in three various ways. (i) The first alternative was to bring up the child in the mother's or the father's faith (50% fathers and 20% mothers - (Chapter VI). (ii) To bring up the child without a religious background, and leave the choice open, so that when the child was grown up and understood the implications he would adopt a religion of his/her choice. (iii) The idea of giving the child a uniform religious background. This meant conversion of one spouse to that of the other. Incidentally only 36 of our 200 respondents went in for such a uniform religion. (Females - 9% Hindu, 11% Muslim and 9% Christians,
Males - 2% Hindu, 3% Muslim and 2% Christian. Even after conversion, some respondents continued to practice the pattern of worship and prayer of their previous religion. (Chapter VI).

We find that the respondents took a liberal view regarding the choice of their children's friends, but expressed a desire to advise when they chose a mate as it involved the religious aspect.

Just a few respondents said that they had brought up their children to respect both religions, (though the child was brought up in the faith of one spouse only). Further they said they would give liberty to their child to finally choose the religion he/she liked (when he/she was 18 or 21 years old).

Thus the total pattern of the children's socialization points out that a majority is taught to respect religion and are not brought up religiously.

(iii) The Strength of the Religious Factor

First of all we find that in keeping with the demographic composition of India we have a greater number of Hindu males in our sample. There is a greater number of Christian females than the Muslim females, who are minimal in our total group of the intermarried. (Chapter III). The reason for this
sample distribution seems to be (i) Hindu males found their ideal spouses at place of work and thus entered marriage across religious lines. (ii) The Christian females were wage earners in greater numbers and were relatively free to choose their mate, and (iii) the Muslim women are more subject to the control of their religious group, by its norms and regulations. Besides this basic factor, lesser education, lesser earning capacity and the Purdah system further inhibit these women.

Religious endogamy is the very bulwark of any religious system. It, therefore, is the most serious stumbling block in the path of people, who want to violate it. One consequence of this situation is that the inter-religious couple, therefore, invariably carries on a clandestine pattern of courtship. In some cases this period of courtship is extended up to eight years because of stiff opposition by the parents of the couple. (Chapter IV).

In Hinduism religion and caste are closely interrelated. It is to be noted that this caste consciousness persists among some of the Hindu respondents, who are religiously intermarried. This speaks on both conscious and unconscious levels. (Chapter III).
The retention of the fundamental religious belief and the religious rites were evident in that some respondents preferred the religious ceremony to a civil marriage. Most of our respondents (with an exception of five) were marrying for the first time, and as many as 78% chose a civil marriage.

Yet a good many of these respondents said that this form of marriage was due to sheer necessity. That was because (i) there was no one to perform the religious marriage (ii) they were not economically prepared for the burden of a religious marriage. But at the first opportunity a few of these respondents once again went through the marriage ceremony—this time a religious one (Chapter V). In this context it was found that of the three religious groups, Christians (46%) were more keen on a religious ceremony that was repeated in the Church after the civil ceremony at the Registrar’s office. This is because a Church wedding is more acceptable to the Christians, especially for the Catholics it is the only form of legal marriage. 67% Muslims and 56% Hindus had accepted the civil mode of marriage. Though the attitude of the parents towards other religions do not in any way influence the decision of an individual to intermarry, the pattern of religious socialization does influence
the ultimate religious commitment and loyalties of the respondents in relation to the group. This is seen to some extent from the way in which certain 'core' religious rites, rituals and festivals are carried out. (Chapter V). The ideology and the aesthetic aspects of religion make a deep impression on an individual in the process of religious socialization. (Chapter VI).

(iii) **The Strength of the Secular Factor**

Inter-religious marriages show a value consensus that point out certain secular factors. Love is the most decisive factor of them - in as much as - it cuts across religious endogamy.

In mate choice, age and occupation have not assumed as great an importance as they do in arranged marriages. We, therefore, find that difference in age is waved aside when other areas of compatibility are common. There are, therefore, an occurrence of 'wife-older' marriages in 1/10th of our sample. (Chapter III - Mate Selection).

Similarly physical attractiveness, nor status have influenced the final choice of the mate. Love has undoubtedly played the decisive role in mate selection, but the main factor to tip the scales in favour of the mate has been - character of the mate.
This particular quality in the spouse has been added by similarity of interest and pursuits. (Chapter III). Character, strictly and logically speaking can be viewed in a secular sense. However, in the context of a traditional society like India it is and becomes an integral part of a moral-religious ethics. Further it must be stated that in India moral values are inextricably linked with sex ethics. As both these factors are taken into our assessment, the premium on character assumes great importance.

Another important factor, which promotes inter-religious marriage is the occupational propinquity of the partners (Chapter III). This is in contrast to the findings of a majority of American studies on love and marriage, which bring out residential propinquity as the significant factor. Occupational propinquity reflects independent decisions taken by women who are wage earners. Thus we find that women, who move out of their homes, and bring home a wage can stand up against opposing factions essentially because of their status as bread winners. Parents obviously have a greater hold over those children, who are not financially independent.
The size of the family, in terms of the number of siblings, parental education, or the pattern of socialization have not materially influenced intermarriages in our sample. (Chapter IV).

(iv) **Interaction of Religious and Secular factors in the phenomenon of inter-religious marriages.**

When we examine the areas of interaction of religious and secular factors, they seem to fall into two categories. (i) Institutional and (ii) Interpersonal. The institutional factors are linked with the traditionally accepted norms. Thus we find that the norms of the marriage are centred round a prescribed circle. When these norms are disregarded, the action is considered unethical. It is for these very concepts that inter-religiously married couples face parental opposition. (Chapter IV).

The nature of opposition in our study varied from extreme opposition (73%) to mild resistance (23%). There were 55% males and 71% females, who had to face a strong opposition from parents. The parental stand is invariably backed by siblings, other relatives and neighbours. Only in a very microscopic numbers do the relatives of the couple stand by them.
Opposition was found essentially due to (i) Religious differences (ii) Fear of social pressure (i.e., fright of the possible gossip and ostracisation of the family). (iii) Disparity of status. (Chapter IV).

Opposition to inter-religious marriage was considered a sort of safeguard by many parents. (The findings in the interview). It was also feared that the younger siblings would be deprived of their rightful status within the religious group, as they would find it difficult to secure good matches within the prescribed circle.

Certain antecedents in History are important realities to be reckoned with. The Hindus have a fairly rigid caste hierarchy and they believe that the untouchables and lower castes were converted to Islam and Christianity. Similarly Christians feel that with Westernization their status is higher than that of the Hindus or Muslims. The Muslims are proud of their record as a race of conquerers and look down upon the Hindus, as a defeated race. All these ideas of religious statuses, embedded in the organized religious systems are further complicated by the class factor. This is partially borne out in our study. (Chapter IV).
Interpersonal

We can say that interpersonal interaction starts with the beginning of love and it continues through courtship and marriage. We have also to consider the networks of such interaction - between the respondents and their parents, respondents and their in-laws, respondents, their friends and relatives and finally between respondents and their children.

As mentioned earlier, love has been a dominant factor in these marriages. Thus this important feeling makes the courtship worthwhile even if it is stretched to long years (8 years in some cases). These years of courtship are supposed to bring in understanding and promote a feeling of togetherness-companionship.

Parental participation in the marriage ceremony paves the way for the post-marital reconciliation. (We find 50% of parents eventually relented and participated in the marriage ceremony or at the reception. (Chapter IV).

The couple's future stand and the possibilities of reconciliation and adjustment were determined by this factor.
A few areas of adjustment of the couple that are more or less secular in nature. They cannot, however, be totally isolated from certain religious values, which creep in and influence the secular factors and vice-versa. Thus we find that language, sexual and temperamental areas of adjustment are totally secular and an adjustment is quicker in these fields. With some ease food habits are adjustable - but here again vegetarianism or non-vegetarianism are dependent on religious belief. A Brahmin Hindu may be a strict vegetarian, while the spouse may be a non-vegetarian. As ideas of religious purity are ingrained by the process of socialization, this particular factor may prove troublesome. Yet our respondents had solved this problem to their mutual satisfaction. An important area of adjustment is the domestic economics or financial. In the secular area of adjustment the question of a satisfactory disbursement of finances, took a longer time to settle. (Chapter V).

Another area of interaction begins when parents reconcile with their children, and parents reconcile with their children's spouses. Firstly the pattern of reconciliation points out that the greatest number of reconciliations took place before the marriage,
and only a few after the marriage.

The reconciliation of the parents with their son-in-law or daughter-in-law was found to be because (i) the person was of good character, (ii) he was generous and understanding and (iii) he was helpful during difficulties. The emphasis again was on character as was seen in mate selection. (Chapter V). All in all, when we examine these interpersonal relationships and the comparative roles of the religious, the secular factor, we find that, their interaction is more important than each one's absolute importance (Chapter VI). Religious factor is super-imposed, however, on all the personal and inter-personal relationships.

Thus we find that even after reconciliation with the couple, parents exclude 50% of these couples from rituals and rites in the parental homes. Further only 50% of our respondents were welcome to visit their natal home with their families. In some homes, they are welcome with their children, but not with the spouse, and in yet a few other homes only our respondents (alone) were allowed to visit their natal homes.

In India, a son-in-law is considered an important and esteemed guest in his father-in-law's home, but due to barriers of religion this is not possible
in quite a number of homes. This again is a part of the norms of purity and pollution—specially in the Hindu life style.

(v) **Patterns of Adjustment**

After all—marriage involves togetherness and adjustment. The couples had two areas of adjustment.

(a) Secular
   (i) Language
   (ii) Food habits
   (iii) Financial Adjustment
   (iv) Temperamental Adjustment
   (v) Interpersonal Relationship

Most of the problems in these spheres were amicably settled. Differences in financial matters took the longest time to adjust than other matters.

(b) In the religious sphere we have observed an emergence of tolerance. As this was one area where the couple were well aware of differences from the very beginning, (it had a priority over other differences) they were resolved with mutual understanding.

(vi) **Persistence, Continuity and Change as indicated by the Mixed Inter-Religious Marriages.**

In our Introduction, we had stated that
inter-religious marriages are potentially and actually significant for social change. These marriages reflect a phenomenon that is generally referred to us as modernity.

Our study is extremely limited. Nevertheless, it does suggest the forms of persistence continuity and change in the major institutional sphere of religion.

One of our major findings is that inter-religious marriages do not make religion irrelevant. A leaning towards secularism — meaning thereby a kind of disinterest and irrelevance about religion is envisaged as one possibility of development after inter-religious marriages. Meiss, the American Sociologist finds strong support for the hypothesis that inter-religious partners were less tied to their religion. This, however, is not borne out by our study.

(A) The persistence and continuity of religion is demonstrated in respect of its core features which indicate the vitality of the religious belief.

(a) Belief in God held by our respondents. For a good number continues with daily worship, fasts and Vratas (Chapter IV and V)

(b) Marriage is viewed in a sacred context (Chapter V).
(c) The preferred mode of marriage is civil. But this is more apparent than real. (Chapter IV).

(d) Premium is put on 'Character', which has some distinct moral-religious overtones. (Chapter III and V).

(e) The desire for religious identity for various reasons is in existence and it has its own compulsions. This is manifested partially in conversion and in a slightly disguised form even in non-conversion (Chapter VI). The religious identity of children is a matter of concern for the parents (Chapter VI).

(f) The tenacity of rites of passage is sufficiently brought about by our study.

(b) The areas in which religion is evidently on the decline are:

(a) Love, cutting across religious endogamy (Chapter II, III).

(b) Rites and Rituals - that seem to be abbreviated. The idea of purity and pollution is blunted. Further, visits to temples are also limited. Their attenuation points out the trend amongst the respondents. (Chapter V and VI).

(c) Festivals seem to have retained their importance to some extent but the religious significance
seems to have declined considerably and only its importance as a day of good will - good food - new clothes - retained. (Chapter IV, V and VI).

(d) There is a significant number of non-converts, for only 36 respondents out of 200 have been converted. (Chapter VI).

(C) Secularism as a counter ideology and creed, it does not find favour with our respondents. The typical Indian way-out, having its roots in a traditional pluralism - that of adjustment, reconciliation exchange and/or co-existentialism rather than a clean break - is clearly evident here. This is supported by the following data:

(a) Negligible percentage of non-believers (Chapter IV).

(b) Refusal to accept the notion of substitution of religious festivals by the secular festivals. (Chapter VI).

(c) Co-existence and exchange of festivals such as the Ganapati and Navratra festivals, Pujas (Satyanarayana), Church visiting, Astrology etc. (Chapter V)
(vii) Verification of Some of the Standard Evaluations of the three religious systems.

We now come to the last question in this enquiry. Certain evaluations about Hinduism, Christianity and Islam are standard and well established in sociological and historical literature. In fact some of these are accepted almost as axioms by the people. (We prefer to call these general judgements as evaluations rather than group stereotypes, as they are not just based on prejudices and impressions. Much thought, analysis, backed up by scholarship and learning have gone in building them up.)

We pick up two of such evaluations:

1) Hinduism is liberal; it is a way of life, a liberal attitude than religion, in the sense of an organised system.

(ii) Due to the mololithic and over-institutionalised structure, both Islam and Christianity are rigid and exclusive systems.

On this background, we may now pose our question: to what extent these evaluations stand confirmed by our study. We need hardly say that our study is limited in terms of its scale, approach, and methodology. Nevertheless, it can be maintained
that it has a representative significance in some measure.

Following are some of our formulations:

(i) All the three religions are fundamentally and equally opposed to the violation of religious endogamy inspite of its eclectic and syncratic character, Hinduism is in no way different.

Amongst many reasons why we have a low number of Muslim women in our sample – the hold of orthodox Islam on the Muslim minds is certainly one of them.

(ii) As regards the reconciliation with parents and in-laws our data reveals that the Hindu males, in both groups were slightly more stiff compared to Muslim and Christian males (parents) in the premarital stage. (Chapter IV). One important reason of this may be that the ritualistic notions of purity and pollution qualify in a very serious way the Hindu liberalism in its theological and philosophical spheres.

(iii) Coming to the pattern of adjustment of the couple with each other, no religion seems to constitute a barrier in the process of adjustment. As for the conversion and what we have chosen to call disguised conversion our finding was that the group of Hindus –
males and females were more keen about it. Once again this may be due to deep rooted significance of the concepts of purity and pollution, which cuts across Hindu liberalism in its intellectual field.

(iv) The range of interaction with other religious groups, is more restricted in Hinduism. (It is worth noting that Hindu males 50% and females 51.35% had more friends from their own religious group, while Muslim males (50%) and females (72.22%) as well as Christian males (50%) and females (48.89%) had more friends from different religious background than their own).

(v) It won't be wide off the mark if we trace this restricted range of interaction to the subtle influence of the notions of purity and pollution on one hand and the exclusiveness generated by the Caste system.

(vi) As for mutual exchange and co-existentialism in the spheres of forms of worship and prayers, the Muslim (45.8%) and the Christian (34.61%) groups of males were more unyielding than Hindus. This is consistent with the rigidity that comes in the wake of organised religious system. There is however, one curious exception here, this is about Muslim females. (Muslim females follow their spouse's pattern of
worship. This number of Muslim females is impressive in view of the popular view that Muslims are generally rigid in their religious sphere.)

The disciplined orientation of a monolithic religious system is manifest in relation to Christianity. A considerable number (53.84%) of Christians went to the Church, which they attend alone as their spouses did not choose to accompany them. Further 21 Christian males out of 26, regularly read the Bible. (This forms (81.6) of the male Christian sample). Christian women emerge as the largest group that continues to relate with its own form of prayer and worship. The fear of social pressure is uniform in all the three religious groups. Yet when it is a matter of persecution, Hinduism stands out differently. It is notable that independent homes were set up by Hindu males in greater numbers (40) than Christians (20) or Muslims (13). In fact, 50% of the Muslim and Christian males had confessed that they were afraid of some kind of trouble by religious fanatics. All the Hindu males and 50% Christian and Muslim males said that they were not afraid of their religious brethren or any other religious faction but had chosen a particular locality as it pleased them to do so. On the other hand, all Hindu females were afraid of an all-Hindu neighbourhood and had urged their spouse to look out for a more congenial locality
on the contrary Christian and Muslim women were fearless. (The fright of the Hindu females, however does not square up with the above findings).

When we judge the impact of the inter-religious married life on our respondents we find that the Christian response is conspicuously different. For the Hindu males (73%) and Muslim males (70.84%) are liberal regarding their children's choice of friends. Only the group of Christian males appears to be rigid in comparison and 67% said they would allow their children to choose their own friends. Where the selection of the mate was concerned, 72% Hindu males, 70.85% Muslim males said that would not object or mind their children's choice of a mate from any religious faith. But only 53.85% Christians were prepared to give such freedom to their children, and the rest displayed a more conservative outlook as they openly said that they would much rather have their children marry Christians.

Once again we would like to emphasize that all the above observations have a validity only within the limited framework of our study. They do however, indicate that some of these standard and firmly established evaluations of different religions are still open for a rigorous investigation.
Some limitations and suggestions for future study

As mentioned earlier, due to certain very peculiar social, cultural and situational factors, in Maharashtra in general, and Pune in particular, the middle class sample of inter-religiously married couple in this survey has a selective aspect.

The relationship between class and religiosity needs to be further explored by taking larger samples of various sub-segments of lower, middle and upper class. It is equally conceivable that Bombay might have presented some different findings in respect of (i) residential and occupational propinquity (ii) problems arising out of parental opposition (iii) socialization patterns.

The author is well aware of the fact that the sample is rather heavily overweighted in certain socio-cultural variables. It is also true that we could not get homogeneity in relation to (i) number of years of married life - and (ii) the age of the respondents.

We therefore, feel that a sample of inter-religiously married, with age and years of marriage of nature a more homogeneous would reveal trends of difficulties in recent years.
Finally patterns of stereotypes, could be examined with a five point scale. This would no doubt establish the persistence of this factor and its manifestations in such a mixed marriage.