

Modern Marriages in India: Caste Exogamy and Love Marriage

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Introduction and Theoretical Background: Major family transformations are taking place in India, however, it has already been shown that the changes are slow, a possible convergence towards a Western model of family is difficult to predict, and India is experiencing a “hybridization” of modern and tradition within new family practices (Allendorf and Pandian 2016). In this study, we are interested in marriage formation, particularly, we focus on love marriage and inter-caste marriage, two marginal phenomenon in a socio-cultural context where intra-caste and arranged marriages are still accepted as ‘ideal marriages’. Our study is relevant and contributes to enrich the literature on family transformations. This study is grounded on two theoretical frameworks. First, according to the Modernization theory, family behaviors of less developed countries will ultimately converge into the Western nuclear model (Bongaarts and Zimmer 2002; Byrant 2007; Buttenheim and Nobles 2009; Niranjana, Nair, and Roy 2005; Ortega 2014; Raymo et al. 2015; Ruggles 2009). The Indian experience (increase in age at marriage, decline in fertility, transition to nuclear families, single child families, etc.) seems to support this theory. Second, an alternative theory is the Developmental Idealism (Thornton 2001, 2005; Allendorf and Pandian 2016), according to which, people living in the context of a traditional society are more likely to adopt modern family attitudes if they idealize a modern society. In this theoretical approach, change in family behavior would be observable in all groups in society. Recently, Allendorf and Pandian (2016) have found similar trends in the choice of partner in urban and rural areas, supporting the developmental idealism hypothesis.

Research Questions: To what extent are Indian marriages shifting from traditional to modern practices? Which social groups (castes) are concerned by the change? Which regions? Is modernization driving the change?

Originality: Most literatures on Indian marriages has focused on age at marriage as the major concern. Our study accounts for determinants of inter-caste and love marriage, going by caste

groups and parents education. Methodologically too, in contrast to previous descriptive approaches, we adopt a multivariate and multilevel approach.

Hypotheses: In this study, we expect to find support to the developmental idealism theory. Thus, we hypothesize, all caste groups and regions will experience an increase in modern marriages over time and each caste group will act differently to experience modern marriages (inter-caste and love marriage).

Data Source: In this study, we use the eligible women file from the IHDS-II (Indian Household and Development Survey), 2011-12.

Variable Description: Our main dependent variables are **Caste Exogamous Marriage** [Q: Husband's family same caste as your natal family? A: **No** (caste exogamy), yes (caste endogamy)] and **Love Marriage** [Q: Who chose your husband? A: **Me alone** (love marriage), me and parents/relatives together (arranged marriage), parents/relatives alone (arranged marriage) and others (arranged marriage)]. Our explanatory variables are Birth cohorts (1960, 1970, 1980 and 1990), Caste groups [Brahmin, General castes, Other backward castes (OBC), Scheduled castes (SC), Scheduled tribes (ST) and others (Figure 1 in the annexe)], Regions (North, North-east, East, West, Central and South), Education level of mother, father, mother-in-law and father-in-law and Childhood place of residence (Same village/town, Other village, Other City, Other Metropolitan city).

Descriptive findings:

Love marriage: The trend for love marriage is increasing across all birth cohorts, it has almost doubled from 4.5% in the 1960 cohort to 8.9% in the 1990 cohort. The odds of love marriage is higher for ST, North-East and East regions. Interestingly, positive trends in love marriage can be observed across all combinations of places of residence, to some extent, across States, also across all the levels of parents and parents in law education. The fact that change in the choice of partner characterize all the social groups in Indian society seems to confirm the developmental idealism hypothesis. In addition, our explorative analysis shows that mother and mother in law education matters more than father and father in law education. Cohort born

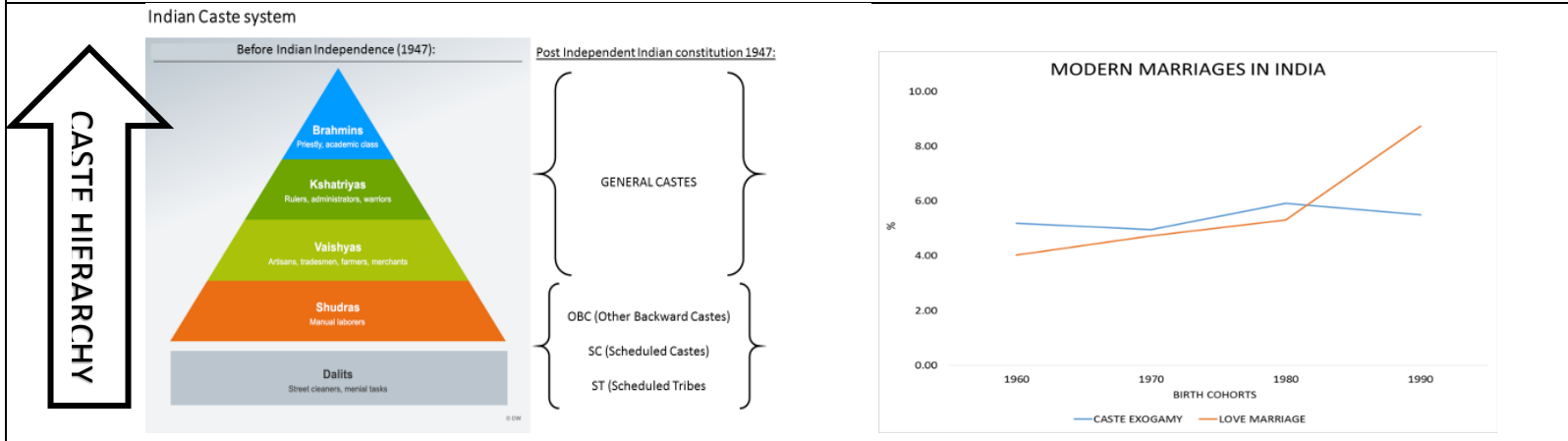
in 1980s shows an increasing trend of love marriage when mothers or mothers in law have a secondary education or higher. On the contrary, fathers' education appears to be inversely correlated with modern marriages.

Caste Exogamy: Prevalence of inter-caste marriages are even more marginal than love marriage in the Indian society with less than 6% in 1990 birth cohort. There is no clear evidence of increasing trends. Nevertheless, a positive evolution can be observed in more recent cohorts of the Metro-cities. Some increasing trends exist also in the East region, when looking at the Brahmin caste, and in the North-East regions and among the ST's. The percentage of inter-caste marriage is higher when mothers or mothers in law have a secondary education. However, a more limited number of social groups has been experiencing a change in inter-caste marriage compared to love marriage.

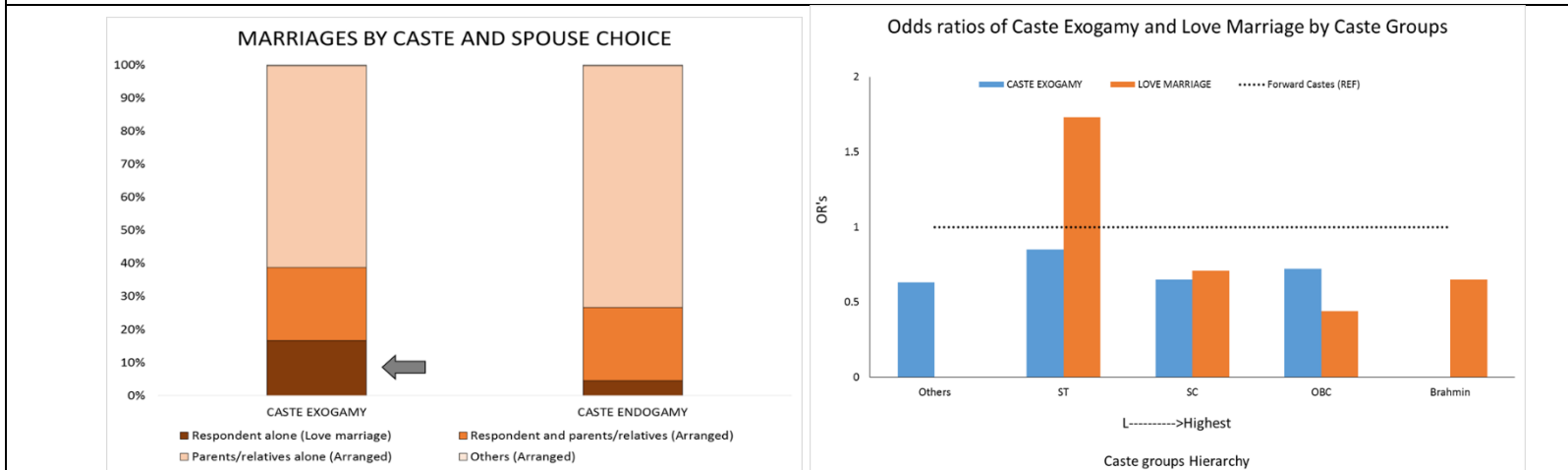
Conclusions and further steps: Our study shows a notable increase of love marriage in recent cohorts. This increase is common to several groups of society (by caste and regions), thus giving some support to the developmental idealism hypothesis. On the contrary, no clear increase is observed for inter-caste marriage, with the exception of metro areas and few regions. Moreover, compared to previous literature, we show new results by parents and parents in law education, indicating that some gender dynamics are at play. Our preliminary results also show that Brahmin caste, despite the higher position in the social hierarchy, displays a more traditional behavior in less developed villages. In further developments of this study, we are devoting more attention to the theoretical aspects that could explain some of the unexpected results presented above. At the methodological level, we are conducting some analyses to identify determinants of love marriage and inter-caste marriage by applying a multivariate analysis. Additional control variables at this stage will be age at marriage and other characteristics of the family of origin. Moreover, the multilevel modeling will permit to account for correlation between observations at the State and regional level.

Appendix:

The Indian Caste System (historically and post-independence) (Fig:1); Caste exogamy and Love marriage in India: Trends (fig:2)



Inter-love-caste-marriage (fig:3); Odds ratios of Caste exogamy and Love marriage by caste groups (fig:4)



Odds ratios of Caste exogamy and Love marriage by region (fig:5); by parents and parents in law education (fig:5)

