India: Situation of inter-religious and inter-caste couples, including treatment by society and authorities; situation of children from such marriages (2017-May 2019)

1. Context

According to data from India's 2011 census, India's main religious groups are Hindus (79.8 percent), Muslims (14.2 percent), Christians (2.3 percent) and Sikhs (1.7 percent) (US 25 Apr. 2018).

Articles 25-28 of the Constitution of India provide for freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion (India 1949). Article 25(1) provides the following: "Subject to public order, morality and health and to the other provisions of this Part, all persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion" (India 1949).

In India, the caste system is a form of hierarchical social stratification that divides Hindus into social categories and occupational groups, with the lowest group, who are outside the caste system, being the Dalits or "untouchables" (BBC 20 July 2017). Sources state that caste-based social structures remain a fundamental component of India's Hindu-dominant society and that caste-based discrimination persists (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019; Professor 6 Apr. 2019). Some other religious groups in India also have castes (US 29 May 2018, 7; Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019; Professor 6 Apr. 2019).

Article 15(1) of India's constitution provides the following: "The State shall not discriminate against any citizens on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth, or any of them" (India 1949). Article 17 provides the following: "'Untouchability' is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of 'Untouchability' shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law" (India 1949). Offences related to caste-based discrimination are punishable under the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 (India 1989), amended in 2018 (India 2018).

Worsening conditions for religious freedom were reported by the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) in India in 2017 due to an "increasingly exclusionary conception of national identity based on religion" and the actions of Hindu nationalist groups carrying out violence, intimidation, and harassment against non-Hindus and Dalits, causing an increase in intercommunal violence over the previous two years (US 25 Apr. 2018). USCIRF reports that victims include Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Dalit Hindus (US 25 Apr. 2018). This is corroborated by Minority Rights Group International (MRG) and the Centre for Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS) [1], who report that religious minorities have experienced rising hostility since the election of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in May 2014, including "communal violence" as well as violence led by vigilante groups.
and Hindu "extremist groups," some of whom have alleged links to the BJP (MRG and CSSS June 2017, 3). The same source notes that communal violence "disproportionately" affects religious minorities, "in particular Muslims, but also Christians and Sikhs" (MRG and CSSS June 2017, 3). Human Rights Watch indicates that societal violence against Dalits has also increased in recent years (Human Rights Watch 18 Feb. 2019, 20). Other sources also note incidents of violence against Dalits (MRG and CSSS June 2017, 3; US 13 Mar. 2019, 46).

2. Marriage Legislation

A 2015 report on interfaith marriage by the US Law Library of Congress reports that in India, "marriage is regulated by the personal status laws applicable to the persons concerned," and states the following:

The Hindu Marriage Act allows members of the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, or Sikh religions to intermarry. Under Muslim personal status laws as interpreted by the Hanafi school of thought, which is predominant in India, only Muslim men are permitted to marry *kitabia*, meaning members of the Christian or Jewish religions; Muslim women are prohibited from marrying non-Muslims. If a partner is a Christian it may be possible to marry under Christian rites through the Indian Christian Marriage Act, 1872. (US Sept. 2015, 6, italics in original)

However, under [federal] law, inter-religious and inter-caste marriages are legal in India as per the *Special Marriage Act, 1954* (Professor 6 Apr. 2019; US Sept. 2015, 6), which provides for a special form of civil marriage conducted "by a registrar appointed by the state that is available to all persons in India, irrespective of the religion, caste, or faith to which either party belongs" (US Sept. 2015, 6). A copy of the *Special Marriage Act, 1954* is attached to this Response.

Indian federal law allows for the marriage of inter-religious couples without conversion, according to the US Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report for 2017* (US 29 May 2018, 6).

The US Law Library of Congress observes in its report on interfaith marriages that, in India, "certain procedural hurdles [under the *Special Marriage Act*] ... reportedly are difficult to meet for persons who wish to keep their marriage secret or who wish to elope" because it requires public announcement ahead of the marriage allowing for public objections to be made (US Sept. 2015, 6). The US 2017 *Religious Freedom Report* explains that, like all couples who marry in a civil ceremony, inter-religious couples are required to give 30 days of public notice in advance of their marriage for public comment, which includes their addresses, photographs, and religious affiliation (US 29 May 2018). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, a social anthropologist at the University of Cambridge, who has researched "love marriages" in India for more than two decades, noted that under the *Special Marriage Act*, the 30 day notice period is a lengthy period for couples on the run from family, during which time the parents may locate them and try to convince them not to proceed with the marriage (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019). The same source stated that although the law permits inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, they are seen as "[a complete] disjuncture with what Indian society believes is acceptable or morally right" (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019).
The US 2017 *Religious Freedom Report* reports that Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, or Jains who marry outside their religion "face the possibility of losing their property inheritance rights under those communities' personal status laws" (US 29 May 2018, 6). The report by the Law Library of Congress specifies that Hindus (which statutorily includes Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists) who intermarry with non-Hindus under the *Special Marriage Act, 1954* lose their right to inherit property; this right is provided for according to the *Hindu Succession Act* but, in such cases of intermarriage, the *Indian Succession Act, 1925* will apply instead (US Sept. 2015, 7).

India has a government scheme according to which the state provides financial incentives for inter-caste marriages (Professor 6 Apr. 2019) or for non-Dalits to marry Dalits (*The Guardian* 6 Dec. 2017); less than 100 such marriages are reported to take place per year since the scheme was introduced in 2013 (*The Guardian* 6 Dec. 2017).

3. **Prevalence of Inter-Religious and Inter-Caste Marriages**

The social anthropologist explained that "love marriages" is a term commonly used to describe those of self-choosing, as opposed to "arranged marriages" organized by parents or kin; however, she explained that marriage partnering occurs on a spectrum with elements of choice and agency and noted that some families also bring love marriages into the kinship fold, or arrange matches taking into account the children's own preferences (3 Apr. 2019). However, the majority of marriages in India are still arranged by family (Desai n.d.; Professor 6 Apr. 2019). According to sources, inter-religious and inter-caste marriage are not common in India (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019; Professor 6 Apr. 2019). Most people in mainland India marry within their caste and within the same religion (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019; Professor 6 Apr. 2019).

According to sources, inter-religious marriage is less common than inter-caste marriage (Das, et al. 2011; Professor 6 Apr. 2019). Interfaith marriage between Hindus and Muslims is a "flashpoint issue" for Hindu nationalists in India, according to Agence France-Presse (AFP) (AFP 8 Mar. 2018). According to a 2011 study [2], using data from the 2005-2006 National Family Health Survey of 42,183 people across India's 29 states, the overall rate of inter-religious marriage was 2.1 percent, and the states with the highest rates of inter-religious marriage were as follows: Arunachal Pradesh (9.2 percent), Sikkim (8.1 percent), Manipur (7.6 percent), Punjab (7.3 percent), and Meghalaya (6.7 percent) (Das, et al. 2011, Table 4). The lowest rates were found in the following states: Jammu and Kashmir (0.7 percent), Rajasthan (0.7 percent), Chhattisgarh (0.6 percent), Madhya Pradesh (0.8 percent), and West Bengal (0.3 percent) (Das, et al. 2011, Table 4).

The same source found that inter-caste marriages (approximately 9.9 percent of all marriages in India) had as the highest rates in the following states: Punjab (22.5 percent), Meghalaya (25 percent), Goa (28.4 percent) and Kerala (21.3 percent) (Das, et al. 2011, Table 1). The lowest rates were found in the following states: Jammu and Kashmir (1.9 percent), Rajasthan (2.3 percent), Chhattisgarh (3.2 percent), Madhya Pradesh (3.5 percent), Bihar (4.7 percent), and Tamil Nadu (2.6 percent) (Das, et al. 2011, Table 1). According to the India Human Development Survey for 2011-2012, 95 percent of marriages occur within caste (Desai n.d.). More recent statistics could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time...
constraints of this Response.

4. Societal Attitudes and Treatment

AFP reports that inter-religious marriages are "frowned upon" in India, especially in rural areas (AFP 8 Mar. 2018). Inter-caste marriages are "rarely endorsed" by dominant caste groups and social and cultural stigma precludes intermarriage, according to a joint submission to the UN by Indian NGOs who provide support to Dalits (Navsarjan Trust, et al. June 2014, 6). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, an anthropologist at the Centre for Modern Indian Studies at Georg-August University in Göttingen, Germany, whose research is focused on Dalits, explained that people who are wealthy, urban, and educated elites on the "extreme" end of the socio-economic spectrum can intermarry more freely, depending on the regional context and their family's attitudes (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). According to sources, younger Indians are increasingly aspiring to choose their marriage partners and enter into "love-marriages" rather than following the traditional norms of their parents (Professor 6 Apr. 2019; The Guardian 9 July 2018).

According to sources, the least societally accepted intermixed unions in India are those between:

- Hindus and Muslims (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019; Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019; Professor 6 Apr. 2019), especially where the male is Muslim and the female is Hindu (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019);
- Rich and poor (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019);
- Between Dalits and non-Dalit Hindu (Professor 6 Apr. 2019; Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019; Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019).

Sources indicated that intermarriage is more acceptable where the female is of a lower position than her partner, rather than where the male is of a lower position than the woman (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019; Professor 6 Apr. 2019) because lower caste women can marry "up" while lower caste males cannot (Professor 6 Apr. 2019). According to the anthropologist, among inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, the most highly opposed unions are the ones where the male comes from the inferior or less dominant social group, giving the example that a Muslim man marrying a Hindu woman would generally be seen as a threat to the dominant Hindu community; however, if he was very wealthy or from a prominent family and the woman was from a poor Hindu family, the parents may not object (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). The anthropologist explained that, in general, if a person is middle class and upwardly mobile, the trend is toward arranged marriage with a dowry, while for the very poor, they may have to accept whoever is willing to marry the woman, and this may be a man of a different caste group, which sometimes occurs with family consent, though they may try to hide the marriage or pretend there is no caste difference (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019).

The anthropologist explained that the degree to which a couple has differences in community status and socio-economic status, as well as whether this crosses the "untouchability line," determines the reaction and situation the couple may encounter due to the union (5 Apr. 2019). The stigma attached to inter-caste marriages sometimes "gives rise to violence, collective punishment, and social
exclusion against couples from different communities," and can also lead to verbal abuse, physical assault, sexual abuse, and marital rape (Navsarjan Trust, et al. June 2014, 6). The anthropologist also explained that reactions to mixed marriages can range from general familial disapproval, trying to break up the couple, to being socially excommunicated by the family, to lynching or killings; the anthropologist noted that more serious violence is more likely for certain groups and types of marriages, such as Hindu-Muslim and Dalit-non-Dalit (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). It is very common for families who disapprove of the marriage to take away family support (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019; Professor 6 Apr. 2019). Sources indicate that the loss of family support is a significant sanction in India due to the degree of dependence people have on it (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019; Professor 6 Apr. 2019).

4.1 Family Reconciliation

The anthropologist explained that the possibility of reconciliation with the family can depend on the family’s attitudes and the degree of difference between the couple, noting that usually when the family opposes a love marriage, the couple will elope or have a civil ceremony and the family will cut off communication (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). Sometimes after "years" the family will begin to speak again, often within "limits" (such as speaking to the man but refusing his wife entry into the family's home), or after children are born sometimes the parents may "soften" their attitudes (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019) or there will be "reluctant acceptance" from the immediate family because a child is involved (Professor 6 Apr. 2019). The social anthropologist also explained that the "vast majority" of these unions are seen as "highly socially illegitimate" but that for some families who initially oppose them, once grandchildren are involved, they may eventually stop trying to break up the marriage (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019).

4.2 Violence Against Mixed Couples

According to the anthropologist, violent sanctions against a couple especially occur where the union is Dalit-non-Dalit or Muslim-Hindu (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). In a telephone interview with the Research Directorate, a professor of anthropology at William Paterson University in New Jersey who has studied castes in India for over twenty years, also explained that "violence hits hardest" when a Dalit man falls in love or marries someone of a slightly higher caste than them, noting that examples of this type of violence occur across India (Professor 6 Apr. 2019). According to the same source, in cases of such violence, more often it is the Dalit man who is "killed or terrorized," but in other cases the woman is killed by her own family or taken away to another place (Professor 6 Apr. 2019).

Sources report that in the past few years, Hindu nationalists have promoted the idea that there is a campaign by Muslim men to coerce Hindu women into converting to Islam through seduction and marriage, under what is termed "love jihad" (MRG and CSSS June 2017, 21; AFP 8 Mar. 2018). According to USCIRF, the media gave a large amount of coverage to such "inflammatory allegations" and this "fueled private citizens to commit horrific attacks" such as the videotaping of the killing of a Muslim labourer in 2017, with the narrated warning that this is a consequence for "those who engage in the conversion of Hindu women" (US 25 Apr. 2018). The video reportedly
went "viral" in India (US 25 Apr. 2018). According to MRG and CSSS, in order to counter "love jihad," Hindu nationalist groups have deployed "rescue operations" which consist of forcibly separating couples and launching false accusations of rape and abduction against Muslim men (MRG and CSSS June 2017, 21). Similarly, Human Rights Watch reports that Hindu nationalist groups "accuse Muslims, not just of violent attacks, but of kidnapping, raping, or seducing Hindu women as part of a plot to make India into a Muslim-majority country" (Human Rights Watch 18 Feb. 2019). According to MRG, Hindu nationalist groups have "benefitted from legal and political patronage, with strong links to the police and certain political actors," including the formation of so-called "anti-Romeo squads" by police (MRG and CSSS June 2017, 21). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

Sources report violence against intermixed couples, including "honour killings" being carried out by:

- family members (Professor 6 Apr. 2019; Reuters 27 Mar. 2018);
- [illegal (Professor 6 Apr. 2019)] caste-based local councils called *khap panchayats*, mainly in the north of India (*The Times of India* with PTI 27 Mar. 2018; Professor 6 Apr. 2019), in rural areas (*The Times of India* with PTI 27 Mar. 2018);
- vigilante groups, including Hindu nationalists (Professor 6 Apr. 2019).

According to the US Department of State's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2018*, "honor killings" remained a problem, "especially" in Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh (US 13 Mar. 2019, 38). There are no official figures on the number of "honor killings" carried out in India (*The Guardian* 15 Feb. 2019; PTI 4 July 2010). Sources report the following information:

- In 2018, Reuters reported that, according to government data, approximately 500 people had died in "honor killings" in India since 2014 (Reuters 27 Mar. 2018);
- *The New Indian Express* cites national statistics stating that 77 people were murdered by their own families due to inter-caste relationships in 2016 (26 Feb. 2019);
- According to Evidence, a local human rights NGO based in Madurai, 180 cases of killings related to inter-caste marriages occurred in Tamil Nadu between 2015 and 2018 (Scroll.in 21 Nov. 2018);
- According to FactChecker.in’s Citizens’ Religious Hate Crime Watch (Hate Crime Watch), a website that records crimes motivated by the religious identity of the victim(s) based on reports from English-language print and online news sources, as of May 2019, 102 deaths and 720 injuries have been caused by crimes of this nature since 2009; this category of crime considers indicators such as interfaith relationships, conflicts due to cattle protection, and religious conversion (FactChecker.in n.d.).

Sources report the following examples of violence against inter-religious couples in 2017-2019:

- In 2017, a Muslim man was videotaped being "hacked to death" due to his
In May 2017, a man named Ghulam Mohammad was allegedly beaten to death by "members of a right-wing group" (Hindu Yuva Vahini) for assisting a relative to elope with a Hindu girl from a "different community" after the family lodged a kidnapping complaint with the police (The Hindu 3 May 2017);

In July 2018, a mob attacked a Muslim man inside a Ghaziabad, New Delhi, court when he and his partner, a Hindu woman, went to the court to get married (The Hindu 25 July 2018);

In July 2018, Delhi police detained a man for three days due to his interfaith marriage and a complaint lodged by his wife's brother; he claimed he was beaten and threatened with false accusations of rape; a Delhi court permitted the spouses to be reunited and ordered the police to provide them and their family with security (The Statesman 29 July 2018);

In March 2019, an inter-caste couple from Hosur (Tamil Nadu) were tortured and killed in Karnataka (The Times of India 19 Nov. 2018). Their bodies were found in a river in Karnataka (Scroll.in 21 Nov. 2018). The wife's father, among other individuals [or along with two of her uncles (Scroll.in 21 Nov. 2018)] were arrested for murder (The Times of India 19 Nov. 2018; Scroll.in 21 Nov. 2018); they "reportedly confessed that they had strangled the couple because they felt humiliated that [the wife], who belonged to a dominant middle caste group called the Vanniyars, chose to marry a man from the Dalit community (Parayar)" (Scroll.in 21 Nov. 2018);

In December 2018, a family carried out a "suspected honour killing," burning alive a woman from the Yadava caste because she had married a man from another caste, the Padmashali caste (ANI 24 Dec. 2018);

In January 2019, a local Panchayat in Ukalana, [Haryana], allegedly ordered the eviction of the family members of a man who was part of an inter-caste couple from their village after the couple eloped and the wife's father had lodged a kidnapping complaint; the group later gave a written statement to police which indicated that no eviction order had been issued (The Times of India 8 Jan. 2019);

In March 2019, an inter-caste couple (including a "Dalit girl") and a relative were injured in Tirupur when they were beaten by members of their community (The New Indian Express 11 Mar. 2019);

In early May 2019 in Maharashtra, a couple was set on fire because of their inter-caste marriage; the perpetrators were reported to be the woman's father and two of her uncles (The Wire 6 May 2019; The Hindu 6 May 2019). The woman died of her injuries (The Wire 6 May 2019; The Hindu 6 May 2019); at
the time of the media report, her husband was in critical condition (The Wire 6 May 2019). The husband’s family had reportedly complained to the police about the threats they received from the woman’s family, but said the police took no action as they did not take their complaints seriously (The Wire 6 May 2019).

5. State Protection

According to the USCIRF, Indian state institutions have "serious capacity" challenges, among others, that hinder their ability to deal with communal violence problems or provide justice to victims of large-scale past instances of violence; however, without providing details, the source states that the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Minority Affairs, and the National Commission for Minorities are active and "provide opportunities for the government to protect minorities and counter intolerance" (US 25 Apr. 2018).

In March 2018, the Indian Supreme Court made a judgment ruling in favour of a woman who had converted to Islam and married a Muslim man but who had her marriage annulled by the Kerala High Court following accusations by her parents that she had been forced to marry and convert to Islam, while the woman insisted that she made this choice freely (AFP 8 Mar. 2018; The New York Times 10 Apr. 2018). The New York Times reports that the woman's father had filed a report with the police after his daughter converted to Islam in 2016; she reported that upon her return to her family, she was "tortured and forced to convert back to Hinduism" and her husband was investigated for links to "radical Islamist groups" (The New York Times 10 Apr. 2018). According to the same source, the Supreme Court ruling "upheld the right of citizens to choose their spouse and convert to another religion" (The New York Times 10 Apr. 2018).

In 2018, the Supreme Court declared it illegal for khap panchayats to attempt to end marriages between consenting adults (The Times of India with PTI 27 Mar. 2018; Reuters 27 Mar. 2018) and called for punitive action against "village councils that impose punishments[,] including murder," on inter-caste couples (Reuters 27 Mar. 2018). US Country Reports 2018 indicates that the Supreme Court also ordered state-level governments to take "remedial, preventive and punitive" actions to stop "honor killings" and create "special cells" in all districts to report harassment and threats to inter-caste couples (US 13 Mar. 2019, 38). Information on the whether such "special cells" have been established could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

In a 2018 program by National Public Radio (NPR) about interfaith and inter-caste marriage, the designer of an app for couples who want to marry "outside" the caste system stated that when couples are in need of help, "they want to go to the police station, but they [are fearful]" of doing so (NPR 22 Nov. 2018).

The Professor remarked that the police hold attitudes similar to those of the broader society about caste and communalism (6 Apr. 2019). Similarly, the anthropologist observed that in rural areas, police tend to "collude" with the dominant communal group, but that the situation is better in cities, except in places such as Gujarat where there is a strong "Hindu nationalist ideology" (5 Apr. 2019). He explained that "often police will stand by and do nothing" to stop violence against Dalits, delay or not
investigate, fail to file "caste atrocity" reports, or allow perpetrators out on bail (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). In a follow-up correspondence with the Research Directorate, the same source explained that

[i]f a persecuted inter-religious or inter-caste couple went to the police for aid, it would be surprising if they received it. The possibility that police would actively collude with objecting parents should be taken very seriously; in most parts of the country the police are identified with dominant caste power and with the dominant religious community. To be clear, this is not a matter of official policy. [According to the] constitution, the Government of India is a secular state and the equal representative of all its people, irrespective of religion or caste. (Anthropologist 30 Apr. 2019)

The social anthropologist also said that inter-religious and inter-caste couples are frequently unable to obtain sufficient support from local authorities or the state because of "connivance" by kinship or community groups causing the police to respond slowly, ignore reported threats or complaints, and in cases of deaths after love-marriages, fail to prosecute or charge perpetrators (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019). The Professor similarly explained that people with low social status due to "casteism" or "communalism" (conflict or bias based on religion) are unlikely to lodge a case with police if their rights are violated, and if they do, the police are unlikely to register the case as a First Information Report (FIR); even if an FIR is filed, there is a large case backlog and a conviction rate of about 10-15 percent in "atrocity cases" [cases involving crimes against members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, such as Dalits] (Professor 6 Apr. 2019). The same source remarked that crimes against inter-religious and inter-caste couples occur with "impunity," particularly against Muslim and Dalit males by vigilante groups (Professor 6 Apr. 2019).

6. Relocation to a Large City

According to the social anthropologist, couples in "love marriages" from rural areas often attempt to move to a large city to seek anonymity (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019). The anthropologist similarly stated those in love marriages frequently relocate to a large city or to a different area where they have family (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). He explained that the "primary strategy" when facing a violent reaction to their marriage is for the couple to seek shelter with friends or contacts in the same region (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). The same source explained that these situations are usually "asymmetrical" regarding acceptance, in that one side of the family may be "more pragmatic" about the union, while the opposing family is more concerned with their "honour" (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). Similarly, the Professor stated that when a couple faces community pressure, they are ostracized and must relocate; they typically move to a larger city, where they often encounter difficulties finding work and housing due to a lack of personal networks in the area (Professor 6 Apr. 2019).

The social anthropologist remarked that in Indian cities and neighbourhoods, people "actively seek to know each other's business" and noted having heard many reports of couples who spoke of being questioned about their marriage by neighbours or employers, or whose families find them after moving, in some cases because the parents had relatives or friends in the police force (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the
Couples who relocate to a large city may change their names or hide their identity when trying to rent housing (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019; Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019) or encounter difficulty renting as an interfaith or inter-caste couple (NPR 22 Nov. 2018). Landlords may require tenants to meet conditions such as being "vegetarian" (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019; Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019; Professor 6 Apr. 2019), which is coded language for being a higher caste Hindu (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). Muslims and Dalits encountered the most difficulty finding accommodation to rent in cities due to housing discrimination favouring higher caste Hindus (Professor 6 Apr. 2019; Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019) and are less likely to be able to find a job (Professor 6 Apr. 2019).

Sources indicated that factors impacting a mixed couple's ability to move to a larger city include the following:

- The couple's financial capacity (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019; Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019);
- The degree to which the family has power and determination to locate the couple (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019);
- The couple's educational background and employable skills (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019; Professor 6 Apr. 2019);
- Availability of a personal support network of friends (Professor 6 Apr. 2019; Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019) or relatives (Professor 6 Apr. 2019); and
- Whether they appear "visibly different" (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019).

7. Shelters

The Guardian reports that "India has no shelter system for couples fleeing their parents" (The Guardian 15 Feb. 2019). The Love Commandos, an organization that supports interfaith and inter-caste couples (NPR 22 Nov. 2018), has operated safe-houses for love marriage couples (On Religion 23 July 2017; Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019) since 2010 (On Religion 23 July 2017). The social anthropologist mentioned one in Delhi with a capacity to support approximately 10 people (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019). Sources report that the Love Commandos had "hundreds of safe houses around the country" (On Religion 23 July 2017) or that they have sheltered "thousands of young people seeking to marry outside their caste, religion or clan" using a "network of secret safe houses" across the country (The Guardian 15 Feb. 2019). Sources indicate that there have been reports that the Love Commandos were holding couples against their will (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019; Hindustan Times 1 Feb. 2019; The Guardian 15 Feb. 2019) and extorting them (Social anthropologist 3 Apr. 2019; The Guardian 15 Feb. 2019). The organization's leader was arrested in late January 2019 (The Guardian 15 Feb. 2019; Hindustan Times 1 Feb. 2019); he has denied the charges (The Guardian 15 Feb. 2019). According to a February 2019 article in the Guardian, due to financial pressures, Love Commandos had been closing its shelters and was running only one shelter by January 2019; its hotline was also unavailable and the eight couples staying in the shelter were "stranded" (15 Feb. 2019).

Other organizations providing support to couples in mixed marriages include Dhanak.
of Humanity, which gives legal advice to interfaith couples who want to marry (On Religion 23 July 2017), or Adhalinal Kaadhal Seiveer [Aadhinal Kaadhal Seiveer Trust] (AKS) which "counsels and provides shelter" for inter-caste couples (The New Indian Express 26 Feb. 2019). In 2019, sources reported that AKS set up a shelter in Tiruchu [Tiruchirappalli, Trichy] (Tamil Nadu) providing shelter for inter-caste couples who face opposition from their families (The Hindu 9 Feb. 2019; The New Indian Express 26 Feb. 2019) and which also has branches in Tirupur, Madurai and Chennai (The New Indian Express 26 Feb. 2019).

Further information on NGOs that support mixed couples could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

8. Treatment of Children of Mixed Couples

The Professor remarked that it is difficult to make generalizations regarding treatment of children of mixed couples, although the "overwhelming default" is that they would not be accepted by either community, whether religion- or caste-based, but "if they are lucky," they may be accepted by one of the two sides of the family (Professor 6 Apr. 2019). Sources indicated that the children of a mixed couple will likely join the community group of the side of the family that is more accepting of them (Professor 6 Apr. 2019) or that the children will adopt the identity of the group that accepted them, and encounter the same problems as those faced by that community group (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). The anthropologist noted that children of mixed couples could have important economic difficulties (Anthropologist 5 Apr. 2019). The Professor remarked that Dalit families tend to be more accepting as they are at the bottom of the social hierarchy (6 Apr. 2019). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

The Professor stated that in some cases (in some caste groups, and usually the male), an individual can pay a fine and rejoin the caste community (Professor 5 Apr. 2019). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints of this Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

Notes

[1] The Centre for Study of Society and Secularism (CSSS) is an Indian non-profit organization that "works for the rights of the marginalized, women, Dalits, Adivasis and religious minorities with the primary aim of promoting communal harmony and peace with social justice" (MRG and CSSS June 2017).

[2] The study, by Tarun Kumar Roy and Kailash Chandra Das of India's International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Kumudini Das of Pillai’s College of Arts,
References


Anthropologist, Georg-August University, Göttingen, Germany. 30 April 2019. Correspondence with the Research Directorate.

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The Constitution of India. [Accessed 1 May 2019]


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Multiple Discrimination Against Dalit Women. Alternative report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for the examination of the 4th and 5th periodic reports of India at the 58th CEDAW session in July 2014. [Accessed 23 Apr. 2019]

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**Internet sites, including:** Amnesty International; Asian Centre for Human Rights;
Asian Human Rights Commission; Dalit Foundation; ecoi.net; Freedom House; India Today; International Crisis Group; UN – Refworld.

Attachment