

Endogamous Marriage and Caste Power: A Qualitative Study of Family, Caste-Group and Khap Panchayat Opposition to Inter-Caste Marriage

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Abstract—Drawing on incidents of opposition to inter-caste marriage reported in Indian newspapers, judicial decisions, government sources and theoretical literature, this article examines how endogamous marriage reproduces Brahmanical-Manuvadi caste power. Its central argument is that caste survives not only in public life, occupational structures, religious identity and political representation, but is remade across generations through marriage, kinship, descent, honour and ideas of purity. Inter-caste marriage is therefore more than a marital decision between two individuals. It challenges caste boundaries, social and cultural capital, and the reproduction of caste dominance.

The article organises newspaper cases into three qualitative clusters. The first concerns marriages between Dalit, Scheduled Caste (SC), Other Backward Class (OBC), or so-called lower-caste men and women from upper or locally dominant castes. The second covers marriages between men from upper or influential castes and Dalit, lower-caste or backward-caste women, including cases in which opposition emerged from an SC, OBC, Adivasi or otherwise marginalised caste group. The third addresses caste-based resistance at the stage of a romantic relationship or proposed marriage, before a marriage has taken place. Khap panchayats, caste panchayats, biradari organisations, social boycott and fines are examined as a separate analytical cluster. Drawing on Ambedkar's theory of caste annihilation, Bourdieu's concepts of social and cultural capital, and Gramsci's account of cultural hegemony, the article argues that inter-caste couples require state protection, social recognition, collective encouragement and active support from progressive organisations if inter-caste marriage is to contribute meaningfully to the annihilation of caste.

Index Terms—endogamous marriage, inter-caste marriage, caste power, Brahmanical order, khap

panchayat, social boycott, Ambedkar, social capital, cultural hegemony.

I. INTRODUCTION: THE DOMESTIC CONSTITUTION OF CASTE POWER IN MARRIAGE

Caste in Indian society is not merely a form of public inequality. It assumes one of its most durable forms within the home, in the regulation of family, daughters, daughters-in-law, descent, kinship and marriage. Public life may be conducted in the language of equality, constitutionalism, reservation, representation and modernity, yet the moment marriage is discussed, the older grammar of caste, lineage, gotra, biradari, honour and purity is reactivated. In this sense, endogamous marriage functions as the domestic constitution of caste. It creates the impression that marriage is a private matter, even though it is one of the principal mechanisms through which caste power reproduces itself. A report on Telangana's Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste survey stated that 6.27 lakh households, or 5.6 per cent of the total, reported at least one inter-caste marriage within the family. Endogamy therefore remained dominant in that dataset (The Times of India, 2026c).

The argument developed here begins from the proposition that caste does not endure solely because of religious texts, caste-based occupations, political representation or overt social discrimination. It survives because marital relations are kept within caste boundaries. Endogamy keeps children, property, kinship, social recognition, cultural dispositions and symbolic prestige within the same caste group. Inter-

caste marriage, by contrast, crosses these boundaries. It does not simply establish a relationship between two individuals; it creates kinship, affinity and social proximity between two caste worlds. This is why opposition to inter-caste marriage can move far beyond ordinary familial disagreement and take the form of murder, assault, arson, social boycott, financial penalties and panchayat sanctions.

In this article, the terms “Brahmanical” and “Manuvadi” do not accuse every person born into a Brahmin family, nor do they target a single caste community. They refer to an ideological and social order that turns birth-based hierarchy, purity and pollution, control over women's marital choices, protection of lineage and endogamy into norms of social morality. Whenever any caste group, whether conventionally described as upper or lower, links marriage within the caste to honour and propriety, it reproduces this Brahmanical-Manuvadi caste logic in practice. Anti-caste politics therefore cannot remain confined to public speeches, support for reservation or declarations of social justice. It must also confront the repeated reproduction of caste through marriage.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: AMBEDKAR, CAPITAL AND CULTURAL HEGEMONY

Dr B. R. Ambedkar (jurist, economist and anti-caste thinker) did not regard caste as merely an external division of society. For him, caste was embedded in the mind, belief, religious legitimacy and everyday social conduct. In *Annihilation of Caste*, his decisive argument is that caste cannot be dismantled simply by dining together. The restrictions surrounding marriage must be challenged if caste boundaries are to be broken. Ambedkar (1936/1944) writes:

“I am convinced that the real remedy is inter-marriage” (Ambedkar, 1936/1944, p. 57).

From Ambedkar's perspective, caste rests on birth-based closure and endogamy. It is therefore insufficient to confine the caste question to reservation, temple entry, untouchability or political representation. A person may oppose caste in public yet insist, at the time of marriage, on preserving the boundaries of caste, sub-caste, gotra and biradari. In that situation, the declared opposition to caste remains rhetorical while caste is sustained through familial and cultural practice. This is where caste reveals its

deepest strength: it may appear weakened in public debate, yet remain decisive in intimate choice.

In the relevant sociological literature, Pierre Bourdieu (sociologist) helps explain why marriage is so central to caste through his concepts of social and cultural capital. Social capital is not merely a set of acquaintances or a network; it is a form of power generated through durable relationships, recognition, trust and group membership. Cultural capital operates through language, dispositions, food practices, ritual, education, etiquette, prestige and social legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1986). Endogamous marriage protects these forms of capital within the caste group. Inter-caste marriage disrupts this closed circulation, which is why families and caste organisations often treat it not simply as a matter of romantic choice, but as a threat to control over caste capital and symbolic status. Antonio Gramsci (political theorist) provides another useful lens through his account of cultural hegemony. Caste is maintained not only through direct coercion, but also through consent, common sense and moral language (Gramsci, 1971). Statements such as “one should marry within one's caste”, “the family will lose its honour if a daughter marries outside”, and “we will not be able to face the biradari” are not merely emotional reactions. They are hegemonic normalisations of caste power. Through such statements, violent control is concealed beneath the language of morality. Individual freedom is converted into family honour, and family honour into the collective property of the caste group.

III. DATA AND METHOD: READING A NEWSPAPER-BASED CASE SURVEY AS QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE

This article uses qualitative content analysis and document-based case analysis. Newspapers are not treated as sources of final judicial truth, but as public records of reported events. Where a judicial decision, First Information Report (FIR), police report, arrest, invocation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, government direction or judicial observation is available, a case is assigned a higher level of evidential reliability. Where sources conflict, the case is classified as contested. This distinction is necessary because a newspaper report may provide the first public account of an event, but an allegation becomes a judicially established fact

only through investigation, documentary evidence and adjudication.

The cases are organised into four analytical groups. The first includes marriages in which a Dalit, SC, OBC or so-called lower-caste man married a woman from an upper or locally influential caste and opposition followed. The second includes marriages in which an upper or influential-caste man married a Dalit, lower-caste or backward-caste woman, as well as cases in which opposition came from the side described as lower caste, SC, OBC or Adivasi. The third includes cases in which caste-based violence or coercion began before marriage, at the stage of a romantic relationship, proposed marriage or the possibility of marriage. The fourth concerns khap panchayats, caste panchayats, caste organisations, social boycott, fines and biradari pressure. The full case set is drawn from the newspaper sources compiled for this research series.

Each case is examined through the following codes. These codes do not claim to provide a final or exhaustive truth; they are analytical tools used to identify the source of opposition, the form taken by violence or coercion, and the wider caste mechanism to which the event may be connected.

Code	Operational meaning	Analytical significance
M-L, F-H	Lower-caste, Dalit, SC or OBC man + upper or influential-caste woman	Category 1
M-H, F-L	Upper or influential-caste man + Dalit, lower-caste or backward-caste woman	Category 2
Opp-Family-Girl	Opposition from the woman's family	Control over the daughter, family honour and women's agency
Opp-Family-Boy	Opposition from the man's family	Protection of patrilineal caste continuity
Opp-LowerSide	Opposition from the Dalit, lower-caste or marginalised-caste side	Internal reproduction of caste-purity norms

Code	Operational meaning	Analytical significance
Opp-Panchayat-Khap	Opposition from a panchayat, khap or caste organisation	Community pressure above the family
Violence-Murder	Murder	Direct caste-based violence
Violence-Assault	Assault or physical attack	Corporal punishment and coercion
Violence-Arson	Arson	Collective retaliation
Social-Boycott-Fine	Social boycott or financial penalty	Long-term social violence
Protection-Sought	Police or judicial protection sought	Need for state protection

A limitation of the study is that it is not based on fieldwork. It is a qualitative case survey based on newspaper reporting, judicial materials and government documents. The language of the analysis must therefore preserve distinctions such as “according to the report”, “it was alleged”, “the police stated”, “the court held” and “a conviction was recorded”. Such caution does not weaken the article's purpose. On the contrary, it recognises that anti-caste scholarship requires evidential discipline and careful source use alongside ideological clarity. For this revised version, every retained table entry was checked against at least one linked report or official judgment. An unsupported entry was removed, and reports that were contradicted, unresolved or outside the formal inter-caste category are labelled as boundary, control, contested or exclusion cases rather than treated as confirmed evidence.

IV. NEWSPAPER-BASED CASE SURVEY: CATEGORY-WISE EVIDENCE

This section is given separate weight because the newspaper sources are not used merely as illustrations; they constitute the primary public data through which the social operation of opposition to inter-caste marriage is examined. Many of the cases have not reached a final judicial conclusion, yet they show how

families, caste groups and panchayats become active when an inter-caste marriage takes place or is attempted. The tables are therefore not simple inventories of incidents. They form the empirical basis for the analysis that follows. Rows labelled as boundary, control, contested or excluded cases are retained for methodological transparency and are not part of any confirmed-case count.

4.1 Category 1: Dalit, SC, OBC or So-Called Lower-Caste Man + So-Called Upper or Influential-Caste Woman

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
A1	Udumalpet, Tamil Nadu, 2016	V. Shankar, Dalit man + Kausalya, Thevar woman	Daylight attack; Shankar was killed and Kausalya injured.	(The Indian Express, 2017c); M-L, F-H; Opp-Family-Girl; Violence-Murder; trial-court convictions reported.
A2	Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu, 2012-13	Ilavarasan, Dalit man + Divya, Vanniyar woman	Anti-Dalit violence and arson followed the marriage; Ilavarasan was later found dead in disputed circumstances.	(The Indian Express, 2013); Violence-Arson; later death treated as disputed in public reporting.
A3	Miryalaguda, Telangana, 2018	Pranay Kumar, Dalit Christian man + Amrutha Varshini, upper-caste woman	Her father was arrested and accused in a suspected honour killing.	(The Indian Express, 2018b); Violence-Murder; allegation and arrest, not treated here as a final conviction.

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
A4	Hyderabad, Telangana, 2018	Sandeep, SC man + Madhavi, OBC woman	Madhavi's father was accused of attacking the couple with a sickle.	(The Indian Express, 2018a); Violence-Assault; police-reported case.
A5	Hosur/Krishnagiri, 2018	Nandish, Dalit man + Swathi, Vanniyar woman	The couple were killed; police reporting linked the crime to opposition from Swathi's family.	(The Times of India, 2018b); Violence-Murder; police-reported case.
A6	Gujarat, 2019	Haresh Solanki, Dalit man + Urmilaben, Darbar woman	Haresh was allegedly killed by his wife's relatives when he went to bring his pregnant wife home.	(NDTV, 2019); Violence-Murder; police-reported allegation.
A7	Betul, Madhya Pradesh, 2019	Dalit man + OBC woman	His shop was torched; arrests and action under the SC/ST Act were reported.	(The New Indian Express, 2019a); Violence-Arson; arrests and statutory action reported.

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
A8	Rohtak, Haryana, 2018	Mamta Kumari + Dalit husband whose name was not stated in the cited report	Mamta and escorting sub-inspector Narender Kumar were shot dead outside the court complex.	(Hindustan Times, 2018); Violence-Murder; murder case registered against her father and unidentified gunmen.
A9	Almora, Uttarakhand, 2022	Jagdish Chandra, Dalit man + Geeta Singh alias Guddi	Jagdish was allegedly killed by his in-laws after the couple had sought protection.	(The Indian Express, 2022c); Protection-Sought; Violence-Murder; police-reported allegation.
A10	Hyderabad, 2022	B. Nagaraju, Dalit Man + Ashrin Sultana	Her brother and brother-in-law were accused of killing Nagaraju.	(The Indian Express, 2022b); interfaith and inter-caste case; Violence-Murder.
A11	Begum Bazaar, Hyderabad, 2022	Neeraj Panwar + Sanjana Yadav	Her relatives were accused of killing Neeraj after opposing the marriage.	(The Indian Express, 2022a); Violence-Murder; no wider caste hierarchy is inferred beyond the report.
A12	Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, 2024	Brajesh, SC man + Divya Saini	Her brother was accused of shooting Brajesh dead.	(NDTV, 2024a); Violence-Murder; police-reported allegation.

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
A13	Kaithal, Haryana, 2024	Komal Rani + Anil Kumar, SC man	Komal's brother killed her and attacked members of her marital family.	(NDTV, 2024b); Violence-Murder; Violence-Assault; police-reported case.
A14	Dharwad, Karnataka, 2025	Manya, Lingayat woman + Vivekananda, SC man	Her father and relatives were reported to have killed her while she was six months pregnant.	(The Indian Express, 2025c); Violence-Murder; arrests reported.
A15	Madhya Pradesh, 2025	Om Prakash Batham, Dalit man + Shivani Jha	He died after an alleged attack by his wife's relatives; panchayat pressure was also reported.	(The Indian Express, 2025a); Violence-Murder; Opp-Panchayat-Khap; allegations reported.
A16	Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh, 2026	Gulshan Kumar, Dalit man + woman from another caste whose name was not stated	Her brother and others allegedly pushed him in front of a train after the couple's court marriage.	(The Times of India, 2026e); Violence-Murder; arrests and SC/ST Act provisions reported.

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
A17	Ahmedabad, 2026	Kaushik Parmar, Dalit man + Malvika Thakor, OBC woman	Kaushik's father, Natu Parmar, was allegedly beaten to death.	(The Times of India, 2026a); Violence-Murder; suspected marriage link, with marital dispute also reported.
A18	Kaimur, Bihar, 2017	Dharmendra Mallah, EBC man + Rajput woman	His parents, Kamla Choudhary and Moti Devi, were killed and his sisters injured.	(The Times of India, 2017); Violence-Murder; Violence-Assault; police-reported case.
A19	Suryapet, Telangana, 2025	Krishna, SC Mala man + Bhargavi, BC Goud woman	Her relatives and a friend were booked in a suspected honour-killing case.	(The Indian Express, 2025b); Violence-Murder; investigation and booking reported.
A20	Tamil Nadu, 2003; Supreme Court judgment, 2025	Murugesan, Dalit man + Kannagi, Vanniyar woman	Both were murdered by poisoning; the Supreme Court dismissed the appeals and upheld the convictions.	(K. P. Tamilaran v. State by Deputy Superintendent of Police, 2025); court-confirmed.

The table indicates that, in Category 1, opposition most often originates in the woman's family or caste group. The daughter is treated as a bearer of caste

honour. Her choice is therefore presented not as a private disagreement within the family, but as an offence against the collective standing of the caste group. Violence in this category is not limited to the killing of an individual. Cases such as Dharmapuri and Betul show that an entire settlement, household or body of property may be punished for one marriage. The reported killing of Natu Parmar in Ahmedabad illustrates how caste-related resentment may extend punishment to a parent, although the police account also referred to disputes within the marriage and the causal attribution remains provisional (The Times of India, 2026a).

4.2 Category 2: So-Called Upper or Influential-Caste Man + So-Called Dalit, Lower-Caste or Backward-Caste Woman, Including Opposition from the Marginalised-Caste Side

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
B1	Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, 2018	Sonu Singh, reportedly upper-caste man + Dalit woman	Her relatives were accused of killing him.	(Business Standard, 2018); M-H, F-L; Opp-LowerSide; police-reported allegation.
B2	Jind, Haryana, 2018	Satyawan, Jat man + Dhanak woman	Satyawan's brother Sompal Singh was killed in a reported dispute linked to the marriage.	(The Times of India, 2018a); caution: the accused were not described as relatives of the woman.

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
B3	Mokhra, Rohtak, 2013	Sombir Singh, Jat youth + Dalit student	A panchayat separated them, ordered Sombir to leave the village for six months and imposed a ₹51,000 fine.	(The Times of India, 2013); pre-marriage boundary case; Opp-Panchayat-Khap.
B4	Darbhanga, Bihar, 2011	Brahmin man + OBC woman	OBC and Dalit homes were torched after the marriage.	(The Indian Express, 2011); Violence-Arson; collective retaliation reported.
B5	Kangeyam, Tamil Nadu, 2019	Sivasankaran + Kasthuri, Dalit woman	The couple and Sivasankaran's father were attacked; restrictions on water and temple access were reported.	(The New Indian Express, 2019b); Violence-Assault; Social-Boycott-Fine; the man's caste is not stated in the cited report.
B6	Mettupalayam, Tamil Nadu, 2019	Kanagaraj + Dalit partner whose name was not stated	Kanagaraj's brother allegedly attacked both partners because he opposed their proposed marriage; both died.	(The New Indian Express, 2019c); proposed-marriage case; Opp-Family-Boy; Violence-Murder.

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
B7	Tiruvarur, Tamil Nadu	Palaniappan, upper-caste man + Amirthavalli, Dalit woman	Palaniappan's brothers killed the couple and their child.	(The Times of India, 2018c); Opp-Family-Boy; Violence-Murder; sentencing reported.
B8	Krishnagiri, Tamil Nadu, 2023; sentence, 2025	D. Subash, caste-Hindu man + S. Anusuya, Dalit woman	Subash's father killed Subash and his grandmother Kannammal and attempted to kill Anusuya.	(The New Indian Express, 2025a); Opp-Family-Boy; double-life sentence reported.
B9	Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, 2022	Mohan, Naicker man + Saranya, Dalit woman	Saranya's brother and his friend killed the couple after inviting them to a meal.	(The Times of India, 2022); Opp-LowerSide; Violence-Murder; arrests reported.
B10	Visakhapatnam district, Andhra Pradesh	Upper-caste man + Dalit woman	Twenty-two Dalit families were allegedly denied essentials, wages and social contact after the marriage.	(The Hindu, n.d., syndicated by Inkl); Social-Boycott-Fine; police cases reported.

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
B1 1	Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, 2019	T. Solairajan + A. Petchiammal alias Jothi, from different SC groups	The pregnant couple were killed; Jothi's father was arrested.	(The Indian Express, 2019b); internal SC hierarchy; suspected honour killing.
B1 2	Ferozepur, Punjab, 2012	Anju, SC woman + Anil alias Kler	Anju's family were accused of killing Anil after the couple's court marriage.	(The Times of India, 2012); Opp-LowerSide; the husband's caste is not stated; allegation reported.
B1 3	Balaghat, Madhya Pradesh, 2025	Vishal, from a Maladhari/Ravidas family + Pooja Meshram	A complaint alleged social boycott, a ₹31,000 fine and a demand for a goat feast.	(Dainik Bhaskar, 2025); Opp-LowerSide; allegations were disputed by a community representative.
B1 4	Jashpur, Chhattisgarh, 2021	Pravin Banjara, identified as tribal + woman outside his community	His father was allegedly forced to disown him in writing and pay a ₹5,000 penalty.	(The New Indian Express, 2021); inter-community/tribal boundary case; Social-Boycott-Fine.

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
B1 5	Chatra, Jharkhand, 2022	Minister Satyanand Bhokta's son + SC woman	A Khairwar Bhokta community organisation announced a social boycott of the minister's family.	(The New Indian Express, 2022); inter-community case; boycott announcement reported and motive disputed.
B1 6	Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh, 2025	DSP Mekhlendra Pratap Singh + wife from the same tribal caste but a different region	Community leaders were accused of imposing a social boycott.	(The New Indian Express, 2025c); same-caste regional-subgroup boundary case; excluded from the inter-caste count.
B1 7	Pune; marriage in 1998, FIR in 2023	Prakash Dangi	Community leaders were accused of enforcing a boycott for twenty-three years and demanding payment for readmission.	(The Indian Express, 2023a); Social-Boycott-Fine; FIR and allegation.

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
B18	Pune; marriage in 1999, FIR in 2017	Ajit Chinchane	A Telugu Parit caste panchayat was accused of imposing a boycott after he married outside the caste.	(The Indian Express, 2017b); Social-Boycott-Fine; FIR and allegation.
B19	Pune; marriage in 1990, FIR in 2017	Umesh Rudrap + Manju, Buddhist woman	A three-decade boycott was alleged; it was later lifted through a court-recorded compromise.	(The Indian Express, 2023b); first state FIR under the social-boycott law; later compromise reported.
B20	Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh, 2025	Yadav woman constable + Patel police inspector	Despite both families' consent, a village panchayat allegedly imposed a ₹20 lakh fine and threatened further fines for social contact.	(The New Indian Express, 2025b); Opp-Panchayat-Khap; police case registered.

Code	Place and year	Couple / relationship	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
B21	Nabarangpur, Odisha, 2025	Dhaniram Nag, OBC Kausalya Gouda man + Magsir, lower-caste woman	Twenty-five years of ostracism were reported; supporters faced fines and purification demands.	(The Times of India, 2025c); Social-Boycott-Fine; community leaders offered a differing account.

Two points emerge together from this category. First, the violence exercised by upper and influential castes within unequal power relations must not be understated. Second, the idea of caste purity is not confined to conventionally upper castes. SC, OBC, Extremely Backward Class, Adivasi and other caste groups may also link marriage within the caste to honour, purity and social propriety. This is one of the deeper workings of Brahmanical hegemony: it does not rule only from above, but circulates its moral codes throughout the social order.

The causal sequence in this category may be stated as follows:

Idea of caste purity → morality of endogamy → internal surveillance by the caste group → pressure on the family that marries outside → boycott, fine or violence Here, “Brahmanical” refers not to an emotional accusation against a body of individuals, but to an ideology of caste purity. Any caste group that treats marriage within the caste as inherently honourable and marriage outside it as a humiliation accepts a foundational principle of caste order. This acceptance is practical rather than merely declarative. Anti-caste politics that remains silent on marriage therefore leaves the strongest mechanism of caste power substantially unchallenged.

4.3 Category 3: Relationships Before Marriage, Proposed Marriage and the Anticipatory Policing of Caste Boundaries

Cod e	Place and year	Relationshi p	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
C1	Nanded, Maharashtra, 2025	Saksham Tate, Buddhist man + Aanchal Mamilwad, Hindu woman	Aanchal accused her father and brothers of killing Saksham because they opposed the relationship and proposed marriage.	(The Times of India, 2025d); Opp-Family-Girl; Violence-Murder; allegation, arrests and ongoing investigation.
C2	Tirunelveli, 2016	Viswanathan, Dalit man + caste-Hindu woman; his sister Kalpana was killed	The killing was reported as retaliatory caste violence connected with the relationship.	(Business Standard, 2016); Violence-Murder; allegation reported.
C3	Bidar, Karnataka, 2025	Sumit Kumar, Dalit student + Gawli/uppe r-caste woman	Her father and brother were accused of killing Sumit.	(Hindustan Times, 2025); Violence-Murder; police-reported allegation.
C4	Tirunelveli, 2025	Kavin Selva Ganesh, SC Pallar man + Subhashini, Maravar woman	Subhashini's brother was accused of killing Kavin.	(The Times of India, 2025b); Violence-Murder; police-reported allegation.

Cod e	Place and year	Relationshi p	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
C5	Mayiladuthurai, 2025	K. Vairamuthu + Malini, both from the same SC community	Vairamuthu was killed after Malini expressed her intention to marry him; police attributed opposition to economic status rather than caste.	(The Times of India, 2025a); negative/control case; excluded from the caste count.
C6	Pudukkottai, 2026	Hariharan, SC man + intermediate-caste woman	A petition alleged threats, a forced marriage and a suspicious death; the High Court sought the state's response.	(The Times of India, 2026d); unresolved allegation; excluded from the confirmed count.
C7	Ahmednagar, 2019	Rukmini Pasi + Mangesh Lohar	Her family allegedly set the couple on fire; Rukmini died and Mangesh was injured.	(The Indian Express, 2019a); allegation-based case; judicial outcome not established in the cited report.

Cod e	Place and year	Relationshi p	Reported event or outcome	Source, status and analytical codes
C8	Muzaffarnagar, 2010	Ajit Saini + Anshu Tomar	An early honour-killing report was corrected when the couple appeared alive at a police station.	(The Times of India, 2010a, 2010b); correction case; excluded from the confirmed count.

The third category shows that caste power does not become active only after a marriage has taken place. It also monitors romantic relationships, proposed marriages, the possibility of living together and emotional intimacy across caste boundaries. In Nanded, Aanchal Mamilwad accused her father and brothers of killing Saksham Tate because her family opposed the relationship; the police reported arrests and an ongoing investigation. Reporting from Bidar and Tirunelveli similarly connected alleged killings to opposition to proposed cross-caste relationships. These entries remain allegation-based unless a judicial finding is specifically cited (Hindustan Times, 2025; The Times of India, 2025b, 2025d).

The causal sequence may be expressed as follows:
 Romantic relationship → possible inter-caste marriage → anxiety over the caste boundary → intervention by family or community → violence, threat or suppression

Cases C5, C6 and C8 should not be folded into a confirmed count of caste violence. C5 is retained as a negative or control case because the couple belonged to the same Scheduled Caste community and the police rejected a caste motive. C6 remains unresolved: the High Court sought the state's response to a request for a specialised investigation. C8 is a correction case, because the couple appeared alive at a police station after an early report had described an honour killing. C7 is retained as an allegation-based case whose judicial outcome is not established in the cited report. Together, these cases demonstrate the need for verification, cross-reading and explicit classification by evidential status.

V. ANALYSIS OF CATEGORY 1: DAUGHTERS, HONOUR AND THE CASTE BOUNDARY

The most acute violence in Category 1 appears when a man described as Dalit or lower caste marries a woman from an upper or influential caste. In this structure, the woman's marital choice is shifted beyond private family disagreement and attached to the collective prestige of the caste group. Fathers, brothers, uncles and other relatives may attempt to legitimise violence in the name of "honour". The woman's choice is not treated as personal agency; it is interpreted as a breach of the caste boundary. As a result, violence may target not only the couple, but also the man's family, settlement, property or supporters.

The Shankar-Kausalya, Pranay-Amrutha, Hareesh Solanki-Urmila, Jagdish-Geeta and Kannagi-Murugesan cases show that the response of the woman's family cannot be reduced to personal anger. It may also be a violent effort to defend a hierarchical boundary perceived to be collapsing "from above to below". The daughter's body and marital decision become boundary markers of caste order. When she leaves her caste, the act is understood not simply as leaving the family, but as leaving the control of caste purity, lineage status and community authority.

The logic of this category may be represented as follows:

Woman's marital choice → breach of caste boundary → perceived crisis of family honour → biradari surveillance → violence, murder or boycott

Inter-caste marriage touches a vital nerve of caste power. Education, employment and urban coexistence may unsettle caste, but marital kinship is perceived as a deeper threat because marriage directly affects the genealogical and social reproduction of caste. Caste groups therefore refuse to leave marriage as a matter of private choice and convert it into a field of collective discipline.

VI. ANALYSIS OF CATEGORY 2: OPPOSITION FROM MARGINALISED-CASTE GROUPS AND THE INTERNALISATION OF BRAHMANICAL LOGIC

Category 2 is the most uncomfortable, but also one of the most important, areas of analysis in this article. Public discussion often treats opposition to inter-caste

marriage solely as violence perpetrated by upper castes. This is not wholly mistaken, because upper and dominant castes have historically occupied decisive positions within unequal structures of power. It is, however, incomplete. The compiled cases also include examples in which Dalit, SC, OBC, Adivasi or other so-called lower-caste actors opposed an inter-caste marriage. Such opposition appeared within families, caste associations, social boycotts and punitive fines. This does not mean that all caste groups possess equal power or that histories of oppression are equivalent. Such a claim would weaken the research both ethically and historically. The narrower argument is that the endogamous logic of Brahmanical-Manuvadi caste order is so deeply embedded that groups oppressed by caste may also reproduce its rules in the field of marriage. When a marginalised caste group treats marriage outside the caste as humiliation, immorality, betrayal of the lineage or an offence against the biradari, it is accepting a birth-based caste boundary in practice.

The cases associated with Sonu Singh, Ferozepur, Thoothukudi, Balaghat, Chatra, Jashpur and Nabarangpur provide direct examples of opposition or punishment emerging from a marginalised or internally regulated community context. Jind and Mokhra require caution because the accused were not the woman's relatives in the former and no marriage had taken place in the latter. Bilaspur is a same-caste, different-regional-subgroup boundary case rather than an inter-caste marriage. These distinctions do not negate the broader argument; they prevent unlike forms of evidence from being collapsed into one category. The annihilation of caste requires scrutiny of endogamy policing within every caste group while preserving historical differences in power and oppression.

The logic of the category may be represented as follows:

Brahmanical caste logic → birth-based caste boundary → morality of endogamy → internal policing within marginalised caste groups → reproduction of caste

This analysis is not an attempt to blame oppressed communities. It seeks to identify a structure in which subordinated groups may adopt the practical rules of caste power. This is how cultural hegemony operates: it presses even its opponents to think in its language. The difficulty for anti-caste politics begins here. It must challenge not only the direction of oppression,

but also the ideology that makes caste regulation appear normal.

VII. RELATIONSHIPS BEFORE MARRIAGE: THE ANTICIPATORY SURVEILLANCE OF CASTE

The third category shows that caste controls not only established marital relations, but also the possibility of marriage. A romantic relationship, friendship, the desire to live together, the prospect of elopement or preliminary marriage discussions may all be treated as threats by a caste group. Caste power therefore monitors emotional intimacy and social contact, not merely the legal registration of a marriage.

The Saksham-Aanchal, Sumit Kumar and Kavin Selva Ganesh cases indicate a recurring pattern: the possibility of a relationship across caste boundaries may be enough to activate the family and community. A marriage may not yet have taken place, but violence is already justified through the language of “honour”, “family”, “society” and “caste”. This anticipatory surveillance shows that caste seeks to govern emotional life as well as institutional marriage (Hindustan Times, 2025; The Times of India, 2025b, 2025d).

The causal sequence may be stated as follows:

Emotional intimacy → possible marital relationship → anxiety within the caste group → intervention by family or biradari → violence or social punishment

A methodological caution is essential. It would be inappropriate to classify every offence connected with a romantic relationship as caste violence without investigation. Where reporting explicitly links caste, family opposition, community pressure and a proposed marriage, however, the case should be read as part of caste's anticipatory policing. Contested cases are included not in the confirmed count, but to clarify the limits of the sources and the need for evidential caution.

VIII. KHAP PANCHAYATS, CASTE PANCHAYATS AND CASTE-GROUP PRESSURE ABOVE THE FAMILY

It is analytically inadequate to treat opposition to inter-caste marriage solely as parental anger or a family attitude. Families may themselves act under pressure from a caste group, khap panchayat, caste panchayat,

village council, community committee or biradari organisation. A family may fear that accepting the marriage will lead to expulsion from the caste network, exclusion from social functions, and denial of participation in funerals, weddings, festivals, communal meals and kinship relations. The family thus becomes both an enforcer of caste power and, at times, its captive.

A report concerning the Rajasthan High Court described social boycott and the diktats of caste and khap panchayats as assaults on citizens' fundamental rights. According to the report, the Court treated such bodies as unauthorised parallel systems of justice and directed the state to move towards a clear policy and legal framework against social boycott (The Times of India, 2026b). This intervention supports the view that caste panchayats are not merely advisory bodies. Through social penalties, financial sanctions and public humiliation, they may regulate marital freedom. The following sources and cases are especially significant for analysing khap and caste-group pressure:

Source / case	Key significance	Analytical relevance
Shakti Vahini v. Union of India	Community or khap interference with the marital choice of consenting adults violates constitutional liberty and dignity.	Marital freedom and state protection
Law Commission Report No. 242	Proposes a legal framework against interference in matrimonial alliances in the name of honour and tradition.	Legal analysis of khap and caste panchayats
Maharashtra Social Boycott Act	Creates a statutory framework addressing social boycott and coercive caste-panchayat practices.	Social-Boycott-Fine
Jhansi case	Both families consented, but a village panchayat allegedly imposed a fine and boycott; police later registered a case.	Community pressure above the family

Source / case	Key significance	Analytical relevance
Pune social-boycott cases	FIRs alleged that caste-panchayat boycotts continued for years or decades after marriages outside the caste.	Long-term caste punishment
Nabarangpur case	A family reported twenty-five years of ostracism; community leaders offered a different account.	Purity, readmission and evidential caution
Rajasthan High Court report	The Court was reported to have treated caste and khap diktats as contrary to fundamental rights and called for policy action.	Need for a policy against social boycott

The causal chain in this section is clear:

Inter-caste marriage → perceived threat to biradari honour → caste panchayat or khap → fine, boycott or threat → pressure on the family → violence or social coercion against the couple

The family no longer acts as an entirely autonomous decision-maker. It becomes an institution positioned under the surveillance of the caste group. In some instances, the family may privately support the couple, but the fear of exclusion from the biradari pushes it towards opposition. The Jhansi case illustrates this structure: although both families reportedly accepted the marriage, the village panchayat treated it as an offence against caste society and imposed punitive measures. Caste power therefore operates not only inside the home, but also through the biradari structure located above it.

IX. SOCIAL BOYCOTT: THE QUIET BUT LONG-TERM VIOLENCE OF CASTE

Murder and assault are direct forms of violence and therefore attract the attention of society and the state more quickly. Social boycott, fines, the suspension of “hookah-pani”, purification rituals, demands for communal feasts, the severing of kinship ties, exclusion of children and removal from public events are also forms of violence. They operate slowly, but can push an individual or family towards social death.

Social boycott must therefore be understood not as moral disagreement, but as a structural punishment. This punitive conduct warns families that the cost of crossing caste boundaries may be imposed not only on the couple, but also on the wider family and its support networks. Consequently, families may refuse to support a marriage publicly even when they privately accept it. Exclusion from the biradari can affect economic cooperation, assistance during crises, future marriage relations, funeral practices, social identity and local security. It is therefore misleading to describe social boycott as a “soft” instrument of caste. It may attract less attention than murder, but its effects are profound and prolonged.

Maharashtra's legislation against social boycott is important for precisely this reason. It attempts to bring within legal language those community structures that impose penalties for private decisions concerning marriage, food, religion, social interaction and caste affiliation. The law recognises that caste power operates not only through murder or assault, but also through the organised removal of people from social life. Where a state lacks a clear law against social boycott, caste panchayats can punish lives without committing a visibly spectacular act of violence.

X. LAW, THE STATE AND THE NEED FOR PROTECTION

Indian law recognises the marital freedom of adults, yet a substantial distance remains between law and social practice. In *Lata Singh v. State of U.P. and Another* (2006), the Supreme Court emphasised the protection of adults entering inter-caste marriages and the responsibility of the police and administration. In *Shakti Vahini v. Union of India* (2018), the Court held that interference by a khap panchayat or any similar assembly in the marriage of two adults violates constitutional liberty and dignity. Read together, these decisions establish that approval from a family, caste group or community cannot be made a legal condition for an adult's choice of spouse.

The role of the state cannot end with registration of the marriage. Couples require protection, temporary accommodation, legal assistance, employment stability and psychosocial support. At present, incentives for inter-caste marriages are administered within the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for implementation of the Protection of Civil Rights Act,

1955, and the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989; the earlier Dr Ambedkar scheme was merged into this framework from April 2023 (Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2026). Financial assistance should therefore be treated as one component of a wider protective policy, not as a substitute for security, housing and rehabilitation.

A policy for the protection of inter-caste couples should be developed at five levels:

Policy domain	Required measure
Protection	A protection cell and helpline in every district, with rapid risk assessment
Housing	Safe houses and temporary relocation support
Legal assistance	Support with FIRs, protection petitions, the SC/ST Act and social-boycott law
Economic rehabilitation	Time-bound release of incentives and employment support
Social support	Public support committees involving progressive, women’s, Dalit, OBC and human-rights organisations

The state must therefore act not only punitively, but protectively. Couples entering inter-caste marriages should not merely possess formal legal validity; they should also receive the institutional protection required to live free from social violence. Without a combined framework of safety, rehabilitation and dignity, it will be difficult for inter-caste marriage to operate as a wider process of caste dismantling.

XI. THE ROLE OF PROGRESSIVE ORGANISATIONS: WHY MARRIAGE CANNOT BE DISMISSED AS A “PERSONAL MATTER”

Anti-caste, social-justice, democratic and progressive organisations regularly challenge caste discrimination, unequal representation, educational exclusion, employment injustice and social humiliation. This work is necessary. Yet the same organisations are often cautious, ambiguous or silent when marriage is discussed. To dismiss marriage as a “personal matter”

is, in effect, to leave one of the strongest domains of caste power untouched. If marriage is a principal social technology of caste, silence on marriage is a serious limit of anti-caste politics.

Many caste groups currently organise mass marriage programmes within their own caste. Such programmes do more than facilitate weddings; they publicly affirm caste solidarity, caste identity and a closed marriage system. In response, progressive organisations and the state should organise safe, dignified collective programmes for inter-caste marriages. Their purpose should not be confined to conducting ceremonies. They should communicate that inter-caste marriage is not a social disgrace, but a contribution to democratic social reconstruction.

Government policy should not be restricted to financial incentives. Economic support is necessary, but it is not sufficient. Inter-caste couples require assistance at five levels:

1. Immediate protection and rapid assessment of threats.
2. Safe accommodation and relocation support.
3. Legal assistance with FIRs and protection petitions.
4. Financial support, employment assistance and rehabilitation.
5. A social support network involving women's organisations, Dalit and OBC organisations, labour and student organisations, and human-rights groups.

Silence from progressive organisations at this level weakens anti-caste politics. If caste survives through marriage, anti-caste politics must enter the field of marriage as well. Public opposition to caste combined with private caste observance in marriage is a contradiction that strengthens caste structure. Inter-caste marriage should therefore be understood not only as private love, but as a social and political process of caste annihilation.

XII. DISCUSSION: ENDOGAMY AS A PRINCIPAL SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY OF CASTE

Across the three categories of cases and the pressure exerted by khap and caste organisations, a larger pattern emerges. First, endogamy is a means of the genealogical and social reproduction of caste. Second, women's marital agency is bound to the honour of the family and caste group. Third, the family is not the

only actor; it often operates under caste-group pressure. Fourth, the presence of endogamy policing within so-called lower castes shows how widely Brahmanical caste logic has been internalised. Fifth, a deep gap persists between legal freedom and social acceptance.

Inter-caste marriage is therefore not a minor gesture of social reform. It strikes at a structural root of caste. Caste is not merely a belief in high and low status; it is an order that regulates birth, descent, kinship, property, cultural capital and social relationships. Endogamy keeps these resources and relations within the caste group. This is why inter-caste marriage is met with such anxiety.

The article's central causal sequence may be summarised as follows:

Brahmanical caste logic → birth-based classification → purity and pollution → control over women's marital agency → endogamy → reproduction of caste
An alternative sequence oriented towards caste annihilation would be:

Inter-caste marriage → crossing the caste boundary → intermingling of kinship → redistribution of social capital → weakening of caste purity → dismantling of caste power

The phrase "caste reservation in marriage" operates here as an analytical metaphor. A society that rigorously preserves caste boundaries in marriage may simultaneously invoke "merit" when criticising reservation in employment. Without recognising this contradiction, it is difficult to understand the modern operation of caste power. Caste is unsettled by the language of equality in the public sphere, while protecting its continuity through endogamy in the private sphere.

XIII. CONCLUSION: MARRIAGE IS A REAL FRONT IN THE ANNIHILATION OF CASTE

This article concludes that marriage must be placed at the centre of any serious account of caste. So long as society associates endogamy with honour and inter-caste marriage with disgrace, caste will remain weak in constitutional principle but powerful inside the home. Caste survives not only in abuse, discrimination or opposition to reservation, but also in wedding ceremonies, kinship choices, bride-and-groom selection, biradari meetings and the language of family "propriety" and a daughter's "honour".

If caste is genuinely to be annihilated and the hegemonic Brahmanical-Manuvadi structure weakened, the social prestige of endogamy must be challenged. Inter-caste marriage should not be treated as deviance, rebellion, incivility or hostility to the family, but as a social process of democratic reconstruction and caste annihilation. The state must institutionalise protection, rehabilitation and dignity for such couples. Progressive organisations must not set marriage aside as a private matter; they should create public support, collective marriage programmes, legal assistance and social-security networks for inter-caste couples.

Ambedkar's argument concerning inter-caste marriage remains acutely relevant because caste has adopted the clothing of modernity without abandoning its older architecture in marriage. The annihilation of caste will not be completed by law, reservation or political representation alone. It also requires the dismantling of caste boundaries in marriage, kinship and domestic morality.

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