




Interfaith Marriage in Bangladesh: A Comparative Analysis of Past and Present Trends and Sociocultural Aspects

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines the dynamics of interfaith marriage in Bangladesh, many customs and rituals, different religious society views, and marriage reviews, offering a comparative analysis of past and present trends and exploring the sociocultural aspects surrounding these unions, with specific consideration given to the influence of the Marriage Act of 1872. The objectives of the study aim to investigate the historical evolution of interfaith marriages, analyze the sociocultural factors influencing their occurrence, and assess the impact of the Marriage Act of 1872 on regulating such unions.

Methods and Materials: The research methodology involves a comprehensive review of the literature, an examination of historical data conducted with a qualitative approach.

Findings: The findings suggest a noticeable increase in interfaith marriages, driven by urbanization, globalization, and changing religious perspectives. Despite legal provisions, societal and cultural barriers persist, presenting challenges for interfaith couples.

Conclusion: The study concludes by emphasizing the importance of promoting awareness, understanding, and acceptance of interfaith marriages in Bangladesh and proposing legal reforms and educational initiatives to foster a more inclusive and harmonious society.

Keywords: *Interfaith, Marriage, Bangladesh, Marriage Act 1872; Socio-Cultural Aspects.*

1 Introduction

Marriage in English is called matrimony, or wedlock (Khakimovna & Nawaz, 2023; Sen, 2020). It is a social bond or legal contract through which a marriage relationship is established between two people (Haviland et al., 2016). Although the definition of marriage varies from

country to country, in general, marriage is an institution through which an intimate and sexual relationship between two people is socially recognized. In some cultures, consummation of marriage is recommended or considered mandatory before engaging in any form of sexual activity (McLaren, 2008). Marriage is a global, universal culture (Ji & Yeung, 2014). Marriages may generally be recognized by

a state, an organization, a religious authority, an indigenous group, a local community, or a group of individuals (Cammack, 2009; Hasso, 2010). This is often seen as a contract. Marriages are usually solemnized through religious or secular ceremonies (Hoesly, 2015; Stevens, 2013; Yilmaz, 2013). Matrimonial activity usually creates a socially accepted or legal sense of responsibility between the couple, through which they can legitimately and voluntarily produce children (Nock, 2005).

In some parts of the world, family arranged marriages, child marriages, polygamy, and forced marriages are celebrated as cultural traditions (Monger, 2013; Vogelstein, 2013). Due to international law and women's rights depressing initiatives, the aforementioned marriage practices have been included in laws as punishable offenses in various parts of the world. In terms of legal recognition, most sovereign states and other jurisdictions limit marriage to two people of the opposite sex, and a handful of these states recognize polygamy, child marriage, and forced marriage (Eskridge & Spedale, 2006; Nussbaum, 2009). Over the past 20th century, an increasing number of states and other jurisdictions have legalized interstate marriage, interfaith marriage, and, more recently, some states have lifted their bans on same-sex marriage (Merin, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Some cultures allow through divorce, and in some places, child marriage and polygamy are practiced despite state legal prohibitions (Nnadi, 2014). Family begins with procreation, and inheritance is created through marriage (Reher et al., 2008; Serour, 2008). Men related to each other through marriage are identified as husbands and women as wives. The joint life of a husband and wife is called 'conjugal life'. Different religions have different marriage customs. Similarly, marriages are held in different societies with different customs. Although marriage is primarily a religious practice, it is also a legal practice in modern civilization.

Sex outside of marriage is recognized as illegal and is a sin and crime called adultery. Marriage in Bangladesh is according to the respective religious customs (Amuda &

Tijani, 2012; Faulkner, 2019; Wells, 2015). Marriage customs in Bangladesh refers to marriages and related rituals held in different regions of Bangladesh. Throughout Bangladesh, marriages are referred to as "bibah" but are referred to regionally with different pronunciations. For example, *Biya or Biha, Shadi*, under the influence or imitation of the Hindi language. In the Sylhet region, marriages are sometimes derisively called *henga*. Marriages held in Bangladesh have acquired various religious affiliations through religious interactions, as have they adopted the ethos of this ethno-sovereign region. But in all cases, marriage is roughly divided into three main parts: *gaye haloud* (Body turmeric), marriage, and *baubhat*, or *oralima*. A slight difference is observed in the division of this segment by religion. In Muslim marriages, the marriage ceremony is performed by calling a Qazi at home or at a community center. In the presence of both parties, the *Qazi* seeks the consent of the bride and groom, and with the consent of both, the main formalities of the marriage are completed.

In Hindu marriages, the priest recites the marriage mantra, then circumambulates the flame seven times, leaving the fire in the left hand and completing the main ceremony of the marriage (Achari, 2020). According to Hindu scriptures, 'divine marriage' also takes place, in which the daughter's father goes to the temple and gives the daughter to his son-in-law as a witness to God (Harman, 1992). In Buddhism, Buddhist monks teach marriage by chanting mantras (Kim, 2022; McDaniel, 2016; Shankar, 2020; Yu, 2013). Christian marriages take place in churches, in the presence of priests (Ortmayr, 1997). The priest reads from the Bible and knows the consent of the couple, and the marriage is consummated with the consent of both. In many countries of the world, the wedding ceremony is over in a day, but the marriage in Bangladesh is not over in a day but never in a month. The main event of marriage is at least three or four days long. Several studies have been done on the related issue including (Table 1).

Table 1

Available studies on interfaith marriage in Bangladesh and related customs and laws

| Aspect | References |
|---|--------------------------|
| Communication, marital satisfaction, and religious orientation in interfaith marriages. | (Hughes & Dickson, 2005) |
| Transnational marriages within the Bangladeshi Muslim diaspora in Britain and the United States. | (Kibria, 2012) |
| How marriage influences and is influenced by regional backgrounds, gender roles, and cultural dynamics in Bengal and Bihar. | (Chaudhry & Mohan, 2011) |
| Garo Adivasi culture in Bangladesh through marriage rituals. | (Islam, 2008) |

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| Interreligious marriage in Bangladesh, emphasizing human rights issues. Bangladeshi society and law make such marriages difficult. The cultural, religious, and individual rights conflicts, revealing the larger societal dynamics. | (Kamruzzaman, 2016) |
| Khasi kinship and marriage among the Khasi people in Bangladesh delves into their cultural dynamics and identity. | (Singha, 2014) |
| Arranged marriages and post-colonial feminism's nuances in Gender, place, and culture Investigates agency within traditional practices. | (Pande, 2015) |
| Singing's role in enhancing marriage aspirations among rural Bangladeshi girls. | (Jordet et al., 2023) |
| The personal status laws in Morocco and Tunisia to analyze the potential for implementing reforms that promote gender equality in Bangladesh. | (Tamanna, 2008) |
| The Hindu marriage system within the context of Bangladesh, identifying and addressing discriminatory aspects within the Hindu marriage laws in the country. | (Zahur, 2014) |
| Gender equality in Hindu marriage and divorce laws in South Asia, specifically Bangladesh, aligns the legislation with international norms and analyzes anomalies. | (Abedin, 2019) |
| Indian Dalit inter-caste marriages Brahmin views on Dalit inter-caste marriages. | (Tamalapakula, 2019) |
| Indian women's inheritance rights and child health Women's inheritance rights affect children's health both legally and socially. | (Ajefu et al., 2022) |

Though partially work has been done about Bangladeshi marriage, this is the first time research has been conducted on different marriage customs in Bangladesh, like dowry, wedding dance, song and dress, ornament, marriage party, interfaith marriage status, act and review, inheritance law, and the decisions of Brahmin and Muslim scholar societies.

2 Methodology

2.1 Research design

Using a comparative design, the study looks at both historical data and current interfaith marriage trends. This comparative framework facilitates the identification of changes over time in family dynamics, legal frameworks, and public perception. The research places interfaith marriages in the larger societal, legal, and religious framework of Bangladesh applying both primary and secondary sources.

2.2 Data collection

To learn about their lived experiences, interviews with married couples from various religious backgrounds—Muslim-Hindu, Christian-Muslim, Buddhist-Hindu, etc.—were undertaken. In order to account for geographical disparities, interviewees came from both urban and rural areas. To get their opinions on interfaith marriage, FGDs were held with the families of interfaith couples, local officials, and religious leaders. These conversations aided in determining the community's support and opposition to these marriages. Throughout order to track interfaith marriage trends throughout Bangladesh's pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods, archival documents, court records, and historical texts were examined. To place this study in the larger perspective of interfaith marriage in Bangladesh and South Asia, a review of previous studies on the subject was conducted.

2.3 Data analysis

The FGD recordings and interview transcripts were examined using thematic analysis. The use of thematic coding allowed for the identification of recurrent themes pertaining to interfaith marriages, family dynamics, legal problems, and society attitudes. After that, the data were divided into sections for comparison is historical and modern.

3 Different Customs of Marriage in Bangladesh

3.1 Dowry

Dowry or bet in Bangladeshi marriage is very old. Until the middle of the 20th century, Bangladesh's economy was based on agriculture, and therefore the source of income for marriageable men was not prosperous. On the other hand, marriageable, fair, and quality brides were few and far between. So at that time, the groom gave a dowry to the bride. This dowry could be any form of cash, ornaments, or furniture. From the middle of the 20th century, agricultural people began to move towards cities, and husbands became urban and began to gain employment opportunities. Brides remain in the same position in the village. As the value of the vessel increased, from that time on, the bridegroom began to give a pledge or dowry to the bridegroom. But once upon a time, not all of the large population moving to the cities found employment, and the price of the handful of employed men increased as the dowry increased and Customs become socially established. When the dowry was given to the bride in the beginning, the girl who knew how to weave *Shital* rugs would get as much as twenty rupees at the time of her marriage. In the *Manipuri* community, looms, bobbins, and other textile accessories are given as dowry by the bride at a competitive price. Because according to the genealogy, women are the mothers of waist looms. The

Dowry Prohibition Act of 1980 in Bangladesh made dowry-taking a punishable offence (Sharma & Gupta, 2022). Dowry is almost everywhere known as dowry or pan, but in the Rajshahi-Pabna region, dowry is called 'Nachari'.

3.2 Wedding Dance

In the Sylhet, Mymensingh, and Rajshahi regions of Bangladesh, a special dance is performed during the bathing of the bride and groom. Neighboring women organize this dance around the bride and groom. They participate in wedding dances with paddy, *durba*, *pan*, *kadi*, etc. Special songs are also common in such dances. Such as-

Ēkaṭu thikāra kōrē lācharē bhābēra mārājāni
Ēkaṭu thikāra kōrē lācharē bhābēra māllānai
Tōkē āmi bāgānēra āmi khā'ōyābō ēkhōni
Tōkē jāma bāgānēra jāma khā'ōyābō ēkhōni

3.3 Wedding Dress

The traditional dress of a yellow groom is *Punjabi* (Gill, 2021). The trend of cotton *Punjabi* dates back to the past, but nowadays, along with *cotton*, *Khadi* or *Andi* is also in trend (Ahmed & Faroque, 2017). Modern men are also seen wearing veils or other northern customs with *Punjabis*. In the past, common on-the-loose pajamas were seen with *Punjabis*, but today the custom of wearing *Churidar pajamas* (a fitted dress like Legins) and even jeans is noticeable. There are tight shoes on the feet." The practice of a yellow sari with a red border and yellow cloths on the bride is age-old. At present, the prevalence of *Jamdani* sarees in different colors such as yellow, red, green, blue, white, purple, etc. is noticeable. Some also wear *Katan*, *Garad*, or graphic print *Sarees* to add variety. Wide-hemmed cotton sarees have been around from ancient times to modern times. Some wear Silk and even *Muslin*. In the past, cut-out blouses were in vogue, but today *kameez*-cut blouses and contrast blouses are in vogue. Some wear long jackets with blouses to winter weddings. Apart from these, there are various clothes. For example, the groom's attire on the wedding day is usually *Punjabi Pajamas* and *Sherwin*'s. The groom wears a cap on his head and a turban over it. The turban (*Pagri*) is sometimes only made of white cloth. The bride's wedding dress is a colorful saree. A red saree is usually worn on the wedding day, but lately purple, green, and pink sarees are also seen in addition to red. The *Saree* is quite elaborate; the combination of wire, embroidery, *Chumki*, beads, etc. makes the wedding saree quite gorgeous. The bride wears a blouse, *Petticoat*, and shoes

along with the saree. High heels, semi-high heels, or flat shoes are usually worn during weddings, but shoes are also worn with *Sarees*. Many times, the practice of keeping handbags in combination with *Sarees* is seen.

3.4 Ornament

Wedding ornaments mean gold ornaments (Zulfiqar, 2022). Sometimes, when the price of gold rises, silver is also used to replace ornaments. One also uses crystal or diamond ornaments, depending on the additional capability. Also, due to a lack of capacity, some use imitation ornaments or gold-plated ornaments. *Tikli*, *Tiara*, *Bala*, Earrings, *Nakful*, *Nolock*, Neck Chain, Big Neck Jewelry, Necklace, Ring, *Payal*, *Nupur*, etc. are widely used in jewelry. For men, wrist rings and necklaces are commonly used. Also, floral ornaments are used in wedding ceremonies, especially for women in the ceremony of wearing yellow dress is decorated with flowers. In the past, marigolds and rosin were commonly used in floral decorations, but today green, purple, pink, and white flowers are the trend. As raw flowers are used in making this kind of ornament, so are dried flowers. Chrysanthemums and orchids of various colors are used in making ornaments. In addition, pearls, crystals or diamonds, stones, and various types of beads are added to make flower ornaments. Floral ornaments include earrings, head tiaras, *Tiklis*, *Ratanchur*, rings, anklets with chains, various types of necklaces, *Sitahara*, etc. Besides, the voice is also created in Dhaka. There are various commercial tools for creating typefaces.

4 Bangladesh marriage parties

There are two sides to a Bangladeshi marriage: the groom and the bride (Ahmed, 1986). The groom typically makes a marriage proposal to the bride. So the groom is an active participant in Bangladeshi marriage. The bridegroom organizes *Baubhat* or *Oralima* during the wedding ceremony. After marriage, the bride is taken to the groom's house, and the bride lives in that house for life. The people of the bride (*Kanyapaksha*) are an important part of marriage in Bangladesh. A marriage proposal is not usually made by the bride. However, if it is necessary to give, it is usually seen that a third party called D is resorted to. In rural areas, even in urban areas, brides seem to be very obsessed with girls. In many cases, as a new version of an apparently extinct culture called dowry, the bride's party has to give a large amount of wealth to the groom's house with the bride during the marriage. In the cultural context of Bangladesh,

the people of bride is quite sensitive. Because if the arranged marriage breaks down for some reason, it becomes difficult for the bride, even for the other daughter of the family, to get a divorce or arrange a new marriage. In many cases, it becomes almost impossible. In this situation, many brides are forced to leave their place. Although the prevalence is lower in urban areas, it is not negligible. And the matchmaker (*Ghatak*) mediates between the bride and the groom and works to complete the marriage.

5 Inter-Faith Marriages in The Past

Interfaith marriage refers to the marriage of a person of one religion to a follower or people of another religion (Hedi et al., 2017; Khatun & Islam, 2023; Sewenet et al., 2017). Most of the people of Bangladesh are Muslims or believe in the religion of Islam and follow religious rules. However, a large section of non-observant believe in religion, so the prevalence of interfaith marriages is very low. However, some well-known families in Bangladesh continue to live together in so-called interfaith marriages between Hindu-Muslim and Christian-Muslim couples. They claim to be following their own religion. Basically, they are not true believers in their religion. They have no recognition in Islamic Sharia, and even in Muslim society, they have no recognition. Their fate is very sad. Because this marriage is not valid in Islam. Their married life involved adultery. Their children's religious identity is complicated and socially embarrassing. However, in some cases, it is seen that a boy or girl of a different religion converts to a Muslim boy or girl and gets married to a Muslim. Although there are some complex social and family perspectives, in almost all religions, marriage and its rituals are now seen by many as mere socialization. But even if marriage is now much more liberal in the eyes of state law, society has really progressed far enough to keep up with it. In South Africa, the marriage of a white person with a black person was a punishable offence (Botham, 2010; Khatun & Islam, 2023; Richter, 2015). There was no price for love here. Even in the Indian subcontinent, there was no less movement about the caste system. *Sati-dah* caste system Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishvarchandra Vidyasagar, and other eminent persons came forward, and these inhuman practices were abolished (Baugh, 2021). At least it's legal. Once widowed at a young age, girls also had to spend the rest of their lives alone. The Widow Marriage Act was also introduced.

6 Marriage under Special Marriage Act

Although there are many religions in the world, only Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews, Parsi, Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jainism are particularly well known. Among them, Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists are the most known. Since marriage is a religious event, all religions have discussed it in detail. However, there is a limit to it. For example, both parties to a marriage, i.e., man and woman, must follow the same religion. Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and Buddhists have the same practice in almost all religions: in the case of marriage, one must marry someone according to their own religion. However, in Islam, its scope is slightly increased for men. Muslim men can marry non-Muslim Kitabiya (Christian and Jewish) women if they wish (Binti Mohammad, 2012). A Muslim woman cannot marry a non-Muslim Kitabiya man (Khatun & Islam, 2023). Besides, in the case of all other religions, they can only marry people of their own religion. But people are worshipers of beauty. So in terms of love or marriage, can it not be said that only people of one's own religion will be preferred. And since marriage is once in a lifetime, one must give importance to one's choice. And, while giving that importance, it is not unusual to like someone of another religion based on attitude, region, nature, or beauty. However, what is unusual is marriage. If there is no custom of marrying someone of a different religion in any religion, then how can the marriage be consummated and this has been answered in the law of 1872. India under British occupation in 1872. Then the religious reformation began. Raja Rammohan Roy led Rabindranath Tagore's grandfather, Dwarkanath Tagore, and father, Devendranath Tagore (Doulah, 2016). As a result, the caste system was abolished, and women's liberation and women's education movements were strengthened. The greatest achievement of this movement was the "Civil Marriage Act," which was passed in 1872 (Rao, 2017). Under this Act, the bar on marrying a boy or girl of any religion to a boy or girl of another religion was removed. Not only that, considering the era. Several groundbreaking steps were also taken in this Act. This Act states that no one can be forced to practice their religion or belief. No one can remarry while the husband or wife is still present. That is, remarriage will be possible only after divorce. The minimum ages of the bride and groom are also given. Even if one wants to get married under the Special Marriage Act, the bride and groom have to seek the help of a lawyer. After signing the affidavit prepared under the supervision of a lawyer, the affidavit must be notarized by a notary public (Ghosh, 2019; Kareng et al., 2019). The affidavit must contain the Special Marriage Act. The phrase "marriage under" should be

written following that, the government-approved special marriage registrar must complete the marriage ceremony in the presence of three witnesses while filling out the required form. It should be noted that the custom of dowry and the marriage of invited guests are not valid in the case of marriage under the Special Marriage Act. Below is the Special Marriage Act of 1872:

1. This Act extends to the whole of [Bangladesh]. An Act to provide a form of Marriage in certain cases. Preamble Whereas it is expedient to provide a form of marriage for persons who do not profess the Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, Buddhist, Sikh, or *Jaina* religion and for persons who profess the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, or *Jaina* religion and to legalize certain marriages the validity of which is doubtful, It is hereby enacted as follows: – Conditions upon which marriages under the Act may be celebrated:
2. Marriages may be celebrated under this Act between persons neither of whom professes the Christian or the Jewish, or the Hindu or the Muslim, or the Parsi or the Buddhist, or the Sikh or the *Jaina* religion, or between persons each of whom professes one or other of the following religions, that is to say, the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, or *Jaina* religion, upon the following conditions: (a) Neither party must, at the time of the marriage, have a husband or wife living: (b) the man must have completed his age of eighteen years and the woman her age of fourteen years, according to the Gregorian calendar; (c) each party must, if he or she has not completed the age of twenty-one years, have obtained the consent of his or her father or guardian to the marriage: (d) The parties must not be related to each other in any degree of consanguinity or affinity that would, according to any law to which either of them is subject, render a marriage between them illegal. 1st Proviso: No such law or custom, other than one relating to consanguinity or affinity, shall prevent them from marrying. 2nd Proviso: No law or custom as to consanguinity shall prevent them from marrying, unless a relationship can be traced between the parties through some common ancestor who stands to each of them in a closer relationship than that of a great-great-grandfather or great-great-grandmother, or unless one of the parties is the

lineal ancestor, or the brother or sister of some lineal ancestor, of the other.

7 Special Marriage Act

Under the Special Marriage Act, 1872, it is expedient to prescribe a form of marriage for persons who are not Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Buddhists, Sikhs, or Jains and to grant the validity of certain marriages where there is doubt as to the validity of such marriages. Conditions of Marriage Ceremony in the Special Marriage Act According to Section 2 of the Special Marriage Act, the conditions of marriage ceremonies are as follows:

- Neither of the parties to the marriage shall have a living spouse at the time of the marriage.
- The male person shall have attained the age of 18 years, and the female person shall have attained the age of 14 years, according to the Gregorian calendar.
- The parties cannot be related by blood or marriage, so the marriage may be invalidated by the law applicable to one of them.

Notice is very important in the case of a special marriage. Section 4 of the Special Marriage Act, 1872, states that either of the parties to the marriage shall send notice of the marriage to the Registrar 14 days in advance (Mody, 2002). The marriage can be solemnized only if no one objects within this period. Manner of Solemnization of Marriage According to Section 11 of the Special Marriage Act, the marriage must be solemnized in the presence of the Registrar and three witnesses signing the declaration. Note that the parties must state in the presence of the registrar and witnesses that they accept each other as lawfully married. The provisions of Section 11 have been made mandatory. Marriage is a civil contract under the Special Marriage Act, 1872, so consent is essential. Section 11 of this states that the marriage must be solemnized in the presence of the registrar and three witnesses signing the declaration. When the two parties to the marriage declare before the registrar and three witnesses, I accept a name as my legal wife or husband; there should be no female witnesses in the case of Islam. Even two female witnesses are not acceptable. Marriages held under this Act are registered if the witnesses are valid, and there are specific registry books for this. Three witnesses and five thousand rupees should appear. And two photocopies, along with a passport photocopy. Then the two will be married. If the marriage ceremony is not performed, the marriage will be annulled. The provisions of Section 11

have been made mandatory. Effect of certain marriages on co-inheritance under Section 22 Any member of a joint family belonging to the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, or Jain religion shall be deemed to have severed his ties with such family if he marries under this Act. 'Bangladesh Special Marriage Act' It is mandatory to follow the appropriate rules under the Special Marriage Act to arrange a marriage between a person in Bangladesh who is not a Muslim, Christian, Jew, Parsi, Buddhist, Sikh, or Jain, or one of them believes in this or any other religion. In this case, after the affidavit is executed by a lawyer, the affidavit is notarized, and all formalities are to be completed in the presence of the special marriage registrar.

8 Decision of Brahmin Society

Whether people belonging to the Brahmin community are Hindus or not, how will their marriage rituals be performed according to Hinduism? If so, then will Brahmin children get inheritance rights under any law? Keshav Chandra Sen declared, as the coordinator of all religions, that people of any religion could become members of the Brahmin society (Jones, 1966). In that case, if a Muslim or a Christian takes the initiation of Brahma, then, according to some rules, their marriage will be completed. Keshav Chandra Sen took the initiative for the legal solution of these problems. On October 20, 1867, at a session of the Indian Brahmin society, he appealed to the Brahmins to determine the best way to legalize Brahmin marriage (Mukherjee, 2017). When the Civil Marriage Bill was introduced in 1968, the bill, supported by the government, said that if a person is a Hindu, a Muslim, or any other religion prevalent in India and disbelieves in that religion, and the said person does not renounce this religion openly and marries according to the marriage system of that religion, then the marriage will be considered valid in court. But there was a strong disagreement in society at that time. As a result, this law was sent to the review committee for reconsideration without becoming statutory. The Review Committee, after considering various aspects for two years, recommended the formulation of the Brahmin Marriage Act. Finally, after many arguments, debates, and apprehensions, the Brahmin Marriage Act was passed in 1872 as the Civil Marriage Act (Saxena, 2003). The characteristics of Brahmin society are that young brides and grooms can attend the Brahmin society temple, get married in civil marriage, act according to Brahmin rituals, and maintain their own religion (Knott, 2016). The Civil Marriage Registrar registers the marriage

even though the Acharya of the temple preside over it. This registrar should be appointed legally by the Bangladesh Brahmin *Samaj*. In Brahmin marriages, chanting is done in Bengali instead of Sanskrit (Biswas, 2015; Islam, 2008). At the end of the wedding, the guests attend a prayer meeting and wish the bride and groom well by singing Brahmin songs. In this type of marriage, there is no need for a dowry or extravagant entertainment. Jalaluddin Mia, a Muslim youth belonging to the Brahmin community, married *Pari Bibi* in a Brahmin marriage ceremony in *Baisakh* of 1281 Bangla year and created a commotion everywhere. Reverend Pranesh Samaddar, the country's only civil marriage registrar, performed the marriage under the Special Marriage Act at the Bangladesh Brahmi community office at 2-4 Loyal Street, *Patuatupi* Road, north of Dhaka's historic *Sadarghat* and *Kotwali* police stations and adjacent to Jagannath University and Dhaka Collegiate High School. 84-year-old Pranesh Samaddar, who is in charge of the civil marriage registrar, said that if the religious beliefs of the spouses are different and they want to marry by following their respective religions, then the marriage must be completed under the special marriage law. 5000 rupees and three witnesses are required for this. According to the Chamber of Special Marriage Registrar Pranesh Samaddar, Chittagong girl Falguni Barua and Mustafa Bhuiyaan of Jatrabari's Shahid Hossain Road (now *Karnaphuli* Garden City), son of Manjurul, sat on the marriage ladder under the Special Marriage Act about two months ago. Many people like Falguni and Manjurul are getting married while keeping their religious beliefs and values intact. Currently, 8-10 marriages take place every year. There is no option to get married under the Special Marriage Act to live together as spouses for life, even if they are of two religions. Special marriages in Bangladesh are held under the Special Marriage Act, 1872. But for whom is this marriage applicable? What are the terms and conditions of the marriage ceremony? Who will perform this marriage? Will the child born as a result of this marriage grow up in any religion? Will the husband or wife of this marriage follow any religion? What is the inheritance from this marriage? Things such as being able to enjoy yourself are unclear to many. This marriage can take place between people who are not Muslims, Hindus, Jews, Parsis, Buddhists, Sikhs, or Jains. In addition, the Act provides an alternative form of marriage for persons who have converted to Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, or Jainism. It is further to be noted that certain marriages where there is doubt as to their validity are recognized by this Act. Abandonment of religion is essential for special marriages.

If both parties do not renounce religion, the marriage is considered null and void. Under the provisions of this Act, any kind of false statement is a punishable offense. If the applicant has not actually apostatized, he is presumed to have made a false statement. In Bangladesh, a Muslim person can marry a person of another religion according to Muslim law if he wishes. If the other party converts to Islam, then there is no problem, i.e., the marriage is a valid marriage. And if the other party does not convert to Islam, the marriage can still be performed according to Muslim family law. But in this case, the marriage will be irregular. Christianity has no obligation either. There is no problem if the other party accepts Christianity. However, if the other party does not convert to Christianity, the marriage will be an irregular marriage according to Christian Family Law. A written notice must be given to the registrar by one of the parties wishing to perform the marriage. The registrar of the district in which the notice is to be served, the person serving the notice must have resided there for at least 14 days prior to the service of the notice. The registrar must be from the district in which at least one of the parties has resided for at least 14 days before the notice is given.

9 Presently Interfaith Marriage

An old daily in Bangladesh recently published a report on interfaith marriages. According to the report, there is an increase in the number of marriages between people of different religions without changing their religion. Many are coming out of the idea that two people of the same religion should marry and start a family. Two people of two religions are marrying according to their respective religious beliefs. He is following the rituals according to his beliefs. In this way, many couples are getting married according to the laws of the country. There are many such pairs in different parts of the country, including Dhaka. And a new generation is growing as a result of this marriage. Those who are not inheriting any religious identity. Many people do not think it is necessary in modern society. Some of these inheritors are choosing a religion themselves. Some are moving away from religion. But even with state-mandated marriage arrangements, there is no law for the distribution of property in these families. In a free, sovereign country, everyone can enjoy freedom of expression. People of different beliefs and religions will live together; that is democracy, an ideal society. The marriage is taking place in accordance with the Bangladesh Special Marriage Act 1872 (amended in 2007). According to this law, a Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Buddhist,

Sikh, Jew, or person of any other religion can marry anyone. A change of religion will not be necessary. Or both can marry without religious belief, or one can accept the other's religion. According to reports, such marriages are taking place almost every month, and the rate has increased in the last few years. According to one estimate, since 1983, about 500 couples have had such marriages without changing their religion. Although inter-faith marriage is no longer valid in Brahmin society, this law has not been repealed in Bangladesh. This Act of 1872 was amended. In 2007. A Brahmin preacher named Pranesh Samaddar was the only registrar of special marriage laws in the country. After his death a few years ago, a section of society also protested that no one else should be appointed. But still, the number of marriages under the Special Marriage Act is increasing. Since 1983, more than 500 couples have married without changing their religion. Most of them are Hindu boys, Muslim boys, Hindu boys and girls, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, or other religions. People are free to live with whomever they want, there are no barriers. One of the best relationships between two people of two religions the issue of stage marriage actually arises. There are two problems here: one is society and family, and one is not knowing the rules. That is why one converts and lives with another person. In this case, one has to change his religious beliefs. One has to make a lot of concessions. But some are getting married without moving away from someone's faith. It is a big change in society. Examples of society emerging from superstitious tyranny include showing open-mindedness and trusting the beliefs of others. Giving everyone the opportunity or freedom to express their opinion. However, this freedom is not as much enjoyed by the people in the urban areas of the country as in the villages. In this case, the problem is about the share of inheritance property. Islamic, Hindu, and Christian religious laws divide property in Bangladesh. But if the parents do not divide the property of this family or do not make a will, then there is no way to divide it. However, after the deaths of these family members, the report does not mention how their funerals will be conducted. It does not mention whether the dead person will be buried, buried underground, or cremated.

10 Inter-Faith Marriages Are Common

It is known that the APS (Assistant Private Secretary) of Law Minister Akshir M. Chowdhury has been appointed to register the marriages of men and women who are interested in getting married regardless of their religious beliefs. Until

now, the only place to teach this marriage was *Patuatuli Saratchandra Brahma Pracharak Nibhas* in old Dhaka. Pranesh Samaddar was the only registrar appointed by the government. Now both can register this marriage. Here, everyone can freely marry men and women of any religion (Hindu-Buddhist, Christian-Muslim). According to this law, a Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Jew, or person of any other religion can marry anyone. For this reason, neither spouse should convert. They can enter married life without changing their religion. Both husband and wife, or either of them, can drop their religious beliefs if they wish. Children born through such marriages will have no religious identity. As adults (18 years old), they can choose any religion or live without religious beliefs. It is known that this is being done in light of the Marriage Act enacted in 1872.

11 Inter-Religion Marriage and Inheritance Law

The opposition of the country's clerics to the government's initiative to allow inter-faith marriages by enacting a special marriage law and to amend the Muslim family law by making daughters the sole owners of property if there are no sons has become public. After the Act indicated two passes various organizations of scholars have been giving speeches and protesting, calling it anti-Islam. On the other hand, the government says the proposed law does not contain any anti-Islamic language. The government has taken the initiative to amend the Muslim Act of 1961 to ensure the right of girls to inherit property. This amendment will ensure the full right of the daughter to the property of the father in the absence of the son. If this law comes into force, female relatives will have no right to the property of a childless person. On April 19, the Law Minister announced such a law at a function in the capital. However, the minister also said to discuss the issue with religious experts before passing such a law at the event. According to top scholars, such an amendment to the inheritance law is completely un-Islamic and in direct contradiction with the Qur'an. The extent of inheritance is clearly stated in the Qur'an. There is no need for new legislation. Law Ministry Explanation on the Special Marriage Act Since taking the initiative to pass the law, the scholars of the country have been giving speeches and protesting, calling it anti-Islamic. Islamic-minded leaders of all parties and religious people of all classes have protested against it. In view of this, the government says that there is nothing anti-Islamic in the proposed law. On May 15 (Monday), the Law Ministry explained the Marriage Act and said that the Special

Marriage Act was enacted in 1872. This law is still current. This law has not been amended during the current government. The law remains unchanged. It is also said that according to this law of 1872, a Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Jew, or person of any other religion can marry anyone (Carroll, 1984). For this reason, neither spouse should convert. Children born through such marriages will have no religious identity. They can choose any religion after the age of 18. An explanation of the Special Marriage Act has been given by the Ministry of Law. It states that the Special Marriage Act was enacted in 1872. This law is still current. This law has not been amended during the current government. The law remains unchanged. Therefore, the statement of the government and the law minister to exclude religion from marriage and to pass the law that children have no religious identity is baseless. According to the explanation, the Special Marriage Act of 1872 provides that certain marriages between persons who are not Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Buddhists, Sikhs, or Jains and persons who are Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, or Jains are doubtful and lawful. This law has been made to do so. This Act is in no way related to the Muslim Marriage Act. Under this Act, the government issues special marriage registrar licenses. A licensed marriage registrar cannot register a Muslim marriage under this Act. The inheritance of registered couples under this Act will be governed by the Inheritance Act, 1925.

12 Islamic Scholars Protest

Both the laws regarding interfaith marriage and inheritance have been opposed by the country's top clerics. Although they have internal disputes on various issues, they have all agreed to oppose such laws. They claimed that the Special Marriage Act, which was enacted by the British government in 1872, is being reintroduced by the current government. They complained and said, 'The government is conspiring to destroy the Muslim identity of the next generation by making a special marriage law. By introducing inter-faith marriages for people of all religions, there is a conspiracy to create a secular generation in the country. Besides, many people have said, 'by enacting this law, the government has hurt the religious beliefs of Muslims in the country.'" The marriage law that has been passed by validating the marriage of children while keeping their respective religions intact is in conflict with the law of the Qur'an.

13 Aspects of Inter-Religion Marriages

When the destruction of a nation is certain, the leaders of that nation begin to stumble. In other words, if someone wants to destroy the nation, the nation's educators, politicians, journalists, intellectuals, artists, businessmen, industrialists, lawyers, etc. must be apostates or create religious hatred among them. But the religious foundation of a country or nation would also be easier to destroy. Love marriage, living together, polygamy, civil marriage, or inter-faith marriages have long been hated by the people of our country (Kaufmann, 2010). Encouraging conversions by baiting beautiful girls, encouraging immoral activities, fueling housebreaking, destroying family systems, etc. seems to be a new window of mischief for anti-Islamic forces. Today, a new history of persecution of religion and religious leaders has been created. Religion has been made a source of terror and a vehicle for militancy. These works are being sponsored by the state. Jihad is being mocked. Attempts are being made to destroy madrasa education. Sexual harassment is rampant, and there is currently no safety for girls on the streets, in workplaces, or in schools across the country. In this situation, the issue of interfaith marriage has added a new dimension to the opposition to Islam. In this regard, it is essential to be aware of your countrymen, including the scholarly community. Moral values are an invaluable element of nation-building (Chia, 2011). No nation can survive without nurturing eternal values like honesty, truthfulness, justice, sexism, discipline, maintaining uniform standards in all aspects of individuals, families, and society, accountability, etc. Again, the primary areas of practice for these values and characteristics are the family, society, and educational institutions. It later expanded to the state level. Again, the values of the individual and the family are developed based on religion. Where there is no religion, values cannot survive or be sustained. Among the reasons that Mikhail Gorbachev, the last president of Soviet Russia, analyzed for the collapse of the Soviet Union was contempt for religion and the resulting erosion of values (Zubok, 2009). This decadence culminated in the collapse of the communist country at every stage. The Chinese are a clever nation. After the fall of Mao Zedong, they did not end their work by identifying the four quacks. They have also tried, and are trying, to bring back their ancient religious values and have also freed the propagation and practice of banned religions. Besides, the country has also created obstacles in the way of the free development of western culture. Children and youth are the life of a nation.

As children cherish the traditions of a family or clan, they retain the good things. They also play an active role in their continuation. It fills our hearts when we see our descendants engaged in virtuous practices and constructive activities that establish family, society, and the state. Those who die, leaving their children in this condition, also rest in peace. They can leave the world with a satisfied heart. The initial seeds of values are sown in the minds of children and adolescents in the family. If the surrounding conditions, including educational institutions and society, are favorable, the saplings of values sprouted from these seeds can turn into damage over time. And if the environment is unfavorable, then it is destroyed in the bud, and the beloved child then emerges as a disgrace to the parents, the family, and society as a whole. A child born innocent like a flower is often seen transformed into a great criminal due to family, social, and environmental conditions. It is our misfortune that people are changing a lot with time and conditions, and values are deteriorating. Western family and social filth have begun to strike at our ethnicity. But are they fulfilling their responsibility to guard the nation's heritage, culture, and ideological boundaries? I consider the scholars and political leaders of the country to be part of these watchmen. For more than three decades, blue film occupied a large part of the video culture that was slowly developing on a large scale across the country. This group of them was not gaining social control in the presence of our climate values, this culture was going on secretly in the dark of night, behind the public's eyes. The free invasion of air culture and the introduction of dish antennas directly introduce the entire nation, including our children, adolescents, and youth, to the destructive sexual immorality and obscene programs of the West. Parents, siblings, and all family members are now exposed to pornographic films and shows on a daily basis, something that was unimaginable a few years ago. As a result, the barrier of shame is being removed, and social sophistication is increasing. Boys and girls of rising age are becoming morally bankrupt. The sense that premarital and illicit sex are crimes is also disappearing. Many of those who have the opportunity to watch foreign and neighboring television programs, including CNN, BBC, Star Plus, and Channel V, are expressing concern about this. Added to this are floating prostitutes and prostitution in elite areas. Disbelief in the afterlife and addiction to materialism and consumerism are driving many educated women and men in our society to engage in extramarital sex and the army. As a result, families are breaking up, society is breaking down, and animals are coming out of man-made factories instead

of people. This process needs to be prevented. The consensus among Muslims is that it is not halal for a Muslim woman to marry an infidel. Be it a pagan Jew, Christian, or something else. Allah says: Do not marry a polytheist man until you believe; even if a polytheist man charms you, a believer's bond slave is better than that. They call to the fire, and Allah calls you to Paradise and Forgiveness by His grace. He makes His law clear to people so that they can learn from it. Then, if you know that they are believing women, do not send them back to the disbelievers. The believing women are not lawful for the disbelievers, and the disbelievers are not lawful for the believing women. Shaykhul Islam Ibn Taymiyyah (RA) said, 'Muslims agree that no infidel should inherit from a Muslim. No infidel can marry a Muslim girl. Therefore, a Kafir cannot be given authority over a Muslim woman. Because Islam is the true religion, all religions other than Islam are invalid. If a Muslim girl knowingly marries an infidel, she will be considered an adulterer. Her punishment is the adulterer's punishment. And if he gets married without knowing it, then the woman's incapacity is acceptable; however, it is obligatory to separate the relationship between the two of them without divorce. Because this marriage is annulled.

14 Terrible Consequences of Interfaith Marriage

Marriage is a religious and social bond. There is no opportunity to deviate from the rules of this bond as you wish. Islam embraces all occasions and associations in all stages of human life. It also gave unequivocal directions as to what the individual, family, social, economic, political, religious, and state systems would be like. There is no lump in this life's direction, which Allah has given. There is no alternative to following Allah's instructions regarding marriage to build a beautiful society. To try to go beyond it is to bring about our own destruction. The name of individual freedom. There is no freedom in Islam to do anything with impunity. Those who destroy the religion, honor, customs, and freedom of others with their own freedom are enemies of humanity. The consequences of patriarchal marriages can be dire. Earlier in Bangladesh, if someone wanted to marry someone other than his own religion, he had to leave his own religion and get married, so no one could easily go the other way. Now the matter has become easier. Young men and women are able to fulfill the dirty desires of their instincts without abandoning religion. No religious identity remains. As a result, in the near future, the entire social system will become less religious. Adultery

seems to have become a common thing. However, adultery is prohibited by the Book of Allah, the Sunnah of the Prophet (peace be upon him), and the consensus of the entire Ummah. Allah says: 'And do not go to fornication; surely it is an immoral act and an evil way. Apart from adultery, any type of obscenity has been declared haram in Islam. Allah says, Tell me, my Lord has forbidden indecency—that which is open and that which is hidden, sin and wrongful transgression, associating partners with Allah for which Allah has not sent down any evidence, and saying about Allah what you do not know. Allah says, Meaning: 'Say, come, let me recite to you what your Lord has forbidden. That is, do not associate anything with Him, be kind to your parents, and do not afflict your children with poverty. It is I who provide for you and them. And shall not come near indecent acts—from that which is revealed to that which is hidden. And do not kill that life without a valid reason, which Allah has forbidden. Allah has commanded you that you may understand. The Messenger of Allah (S.M.) has repeatedly warned mankind about the dangers of adultery. For example, on the authority of Abu Hurairah (RA), the Messenger of Allah (S.M.) said, A fornicator is not a believer when he commits fornication, and a drunkard is not a believer when he drinks wine; a thief is not a believer when he steals; a robber is not a believer when he robs ears, and people look at him with astonished eyes. The Prophet (S. M.) said, 'When a servant performs *zina* (sin), faith departs from him, and it dangles like a shadow (in the void). Then, when he is freed from that deed, return faith to him.

15 Special Marriage Act and Review

Children of bi-religious couples will suffer the most if the special marriage law comes into effect in Bangladesh. They will be mentally disturbed. Muslim fathers will say, Allah is one and not three gods, or we have many gods. What a Muslim father says is true, a non-Muslim mother says is false. From this opposite position of parents, hatred will be born in the mind of the child. From the dawn of life to mid-heaven, he will wallow in the sands of indecision. Apart from this, the child will have to face trouble to enjoy the property of the parents as an heir. According to the existing law, they have to bear the trouble to get the rights of husband and wife. In short, there is no way out without anarchy. A professor of Sociology at Dhaka University told *the Daily Nayadiganta* about the Muslim wife of a professor of the same university and said, "The problem between husband and wife has now reached the level of defilement by deciding

whether the child adopted for that family will adopt any religion." He said, "The husband of a famous expatriate singer in the country is Muslim. He is Hindu. After the death of her child, there was a great crisis over whether to cremate him. So such marriages cannot bring any good results to society. It can only create unrest'. Therefore, no religion in the world takes kindly to marrying a follower of another religion. This is an unusual situation. The only exception is Judaism. Their story is quite funny. Jews give their daughters in marriage to people of other religions, but they never give this permission to their sons. Because of their beliefs, children are influenced by their mothers' religion. Because of this, the Council of Jews strongly criticized Bill Clinton's marriage to a Jewish boy. Therefore, it is the trick of the Jews to encourage free mixing with all other religions while keeping their own race pure. This is hinted at in the colonel story of Syed Mujtaba Ali, the great son of Bengali poetry. According to secular ideals, if a child is considered a follower of the religion of his parents, his personal freedom is preserved. Initiating any principle or ideology with the child is against his freedom! So perhaps it is left to his discretion not to imitate any religion as he grows up. So the question is, is the issue of patriotism also in his will? Does he have the right not to believe in the country's constitution and ideals when he grows up? Even the most liberal, secular, or democratic state will not grant this right. In fact, people are never completely independent. His freedom is limited and controlled. And the first condition of a Muslim's freedom is that he should be at the pleasure of Allah. Allah says: 'And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, never accept it from him; it will not be done, and he will be the least of the losers in the Hereafter. It is not possible for someone to ignore Allah's law by enjoying a beautiful heathen woman and be satisfied with thinking that he is a very good Muslim. They are basically living in a fool's paradise. There is no scope in Islam to accept or not accept something. As Allah says, do you believe in some parts of the Book and deny some parts? So what is the reward for those among you who, in the life of this world, accept disgrace? And on the Day of Resurrection, they will be thrown into the most severe punishment. And Allah is not Heedless of what you do. Not like one's own mind; all our actions should be according to the ideals of the Messenger of Allah (S. M.). Allah says, meaning: 'Therefore, by your Lord, they will not be believers until you judge the dispute that arises between them, then feel no doubt in their hearts about the decision you give and accept it in full agreement'. Allah says, 'Accept what your Messenger gives you and

what he tells you to abstain from. 'Whoever opposes the Messenger and follows a path other than the path of the believers (companions) even after the clear guidance has come, We will direct them to that direction and cast him into Hell, and how worse is that? Therefore, in the name of inter-faith marriages, incitement to adultery and degradation of social culture have been observed the most. No element of objectivity was found in it. Families are separated, and two children of two religions are forming a family by getting married in a non-religious and secular way. Their children have no religious identity. It is not good for any society, country, or nation. Especially in a Muslim-majority country like Bangladesh, such a situation is a threat to our tahajib tamuddun and social order. Therefore, inter-faith marriage of Muslim men should not be done, even if it is legal. In the eyes of Islam, marriage is a moral bond and the foundation of the family. A woman and a man form a family through marriage, and society and nations are formed around this marriage. According to the law of Islam, marriage is valid between all Muslim women, except for men and women, and Allah has given guidance for Muslims in this regard in verses 24 and 25 of Surah *Nisa* of the Holy Qur'an. In this case, the permission of the parents has been made mandatory. The mutual consent of the spouses is not sufficient here. In this context, there is no opportunity to run away and marry in Islam. Some may say that it is in Islam to allow Muslim men to marry Ahli al-Kitab girls. But in the present state, where those books such as the Torah, Jabur, and Injil have been completely distorted by Judeo-Christians, they are not in their original state. And the Holy Qur'an is the only incorruptible divine book that exists, and the Almighty God has declared Islam as the only religion and way of life. There, scholars discourage marital relations with those who have the Book. Social scientists have also given their opinion that such marriages are not good for the country. Those who have knowledge about religion, experts in Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqah, and Usul, have said that this marriage is not beneficial. Also, Hindu priests or experienced Christian priests are opposing interfaith marriages.

16 Conclusion

This study illuminates the phenomenon of interfaith marriage in Bangladesh, offering a comparative analysis of historical and contemporary trends and exploring the sociocultural factors surrounding these unions, with particular emphasis on the impact of the Marriage Act of 1872. The research findings reveal a significant rise in

interfaith marriages in recent years, driven primarily by urbanization, globalization, and evolving religious attitudes. However, despite legal provisions allowing interfaith marriages within the framework of the Marriage Act of 1872, interfaith couples still face substantial challenges due to societal and cultural barriers. These obstacles include social stigma, disapproval from families, and religious tensions. To foster a more inclusive and harmonious society, it is crucial to promote greater awareness, understanding, and acceptance of interfaith marriages in Bangladesh. Achieving this goal necessitates comprehensive legal reforms that address the concerns and rights of interfaith couples. Moreover, educational initiatives should be implemented to encourage interreligious dialogue, tolerance, and respect. By undertaking these measures, Bangladesh can strive towards constructing a society that values diversity and ensures equal rights and opportunities for all individuals, irrespective of their religious backgrounds.

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All authors equally contributed to this article.

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