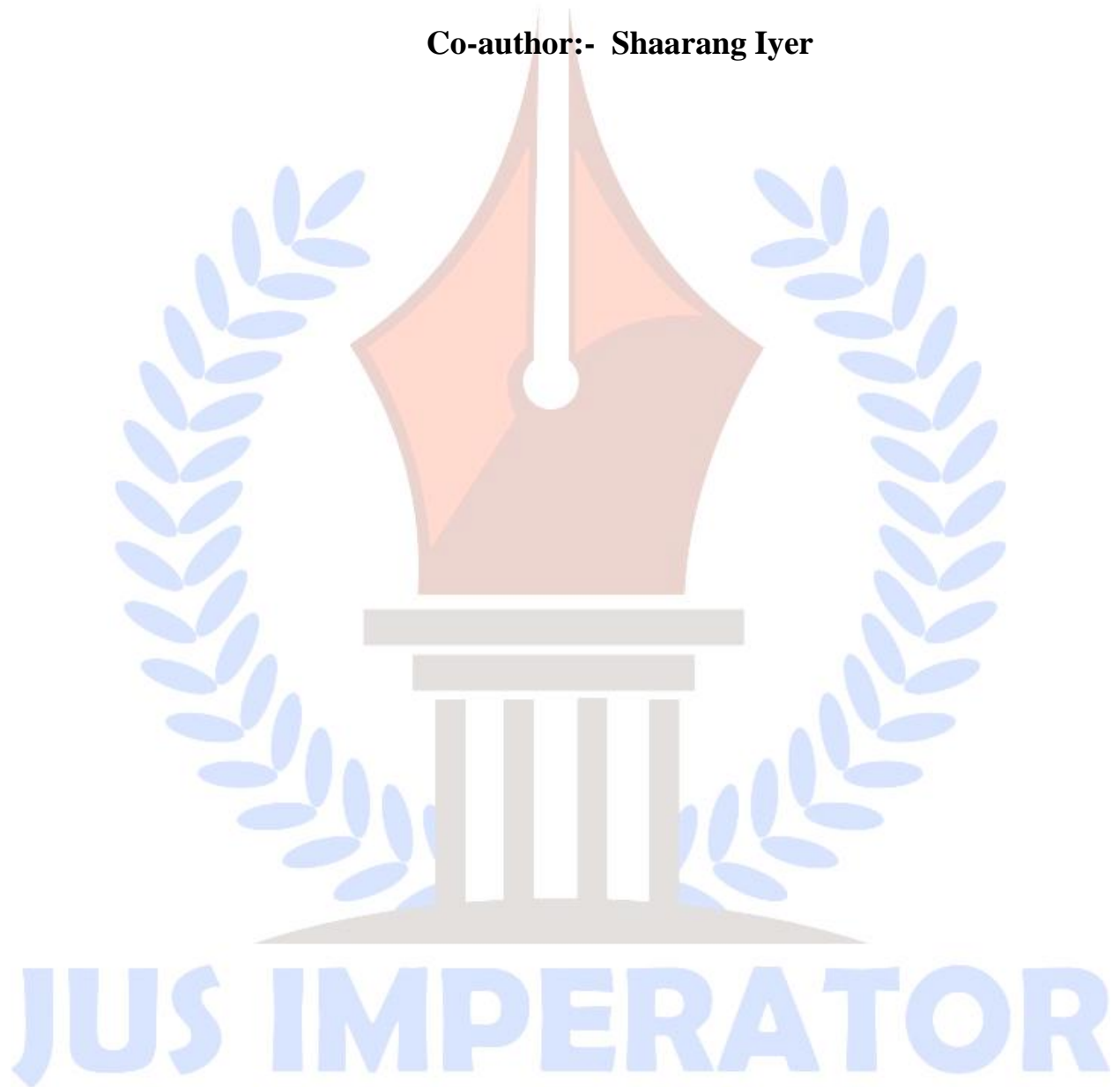


## **FAMILY PLANNING IN URBAN INDIA- INFLUENCE OF RELIGION**

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## INTRODUCTION

### **In India, Isolation leads to Overpopulation through Religion.**

Besides the social prosperity, the monetary success of this cutting edge country, it is subject to the rate of its population's growth. Overpopulation is one the most serious issues for India. It is the underlying root cause of India's poverty and poor health. The rate of increment of the population leaves a stigma over **India's urban family planning mechanism.**

India is the 2<sup>nd</sup> most populous country in the world but also world's first country to initiate family planning program in 1952. India has 1.24 billion people with 2.3% total fertility rate and India acquires 80<sup>th</sup> position out of 223 countries in world's total fertility rate by Published Mundi[1]. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is the administration unit in charge of figuring and executing family planning in India. Ministry has launched the National Urban Health Mission in 2013, which would intend to enhance the health status of the urban population yet especially of poor people and other distraught segments, by encouraging evenhanded access to quality health care services through a revamped public health framework, organizations, group based component with the dynamic inclusion of the urban neighborhood bodies. But financial attributes and individual encounters can suppress, and in addition to a great extent represent, religio-ethnic contrasts in fertility inclinations. These religio-ethnic differentials are related to fluctuations in particularized religious philosophies or general esteem introductions (like child inclination) crosswise over gatherings. What's more, individual and family religiosity are both decidedly connected with favored family estimate, apparently in light of their relationship with religious convictions that are probably going to shape fertility techniques.

Therefore the Indian government wants to introduce Uniform Civil Code to tackle this impediment, which is excessive dominance of religion in family planning mechanisms with Secularism being in effect.

So how general public can access their secular right over religion for family planning under democratic UCC?

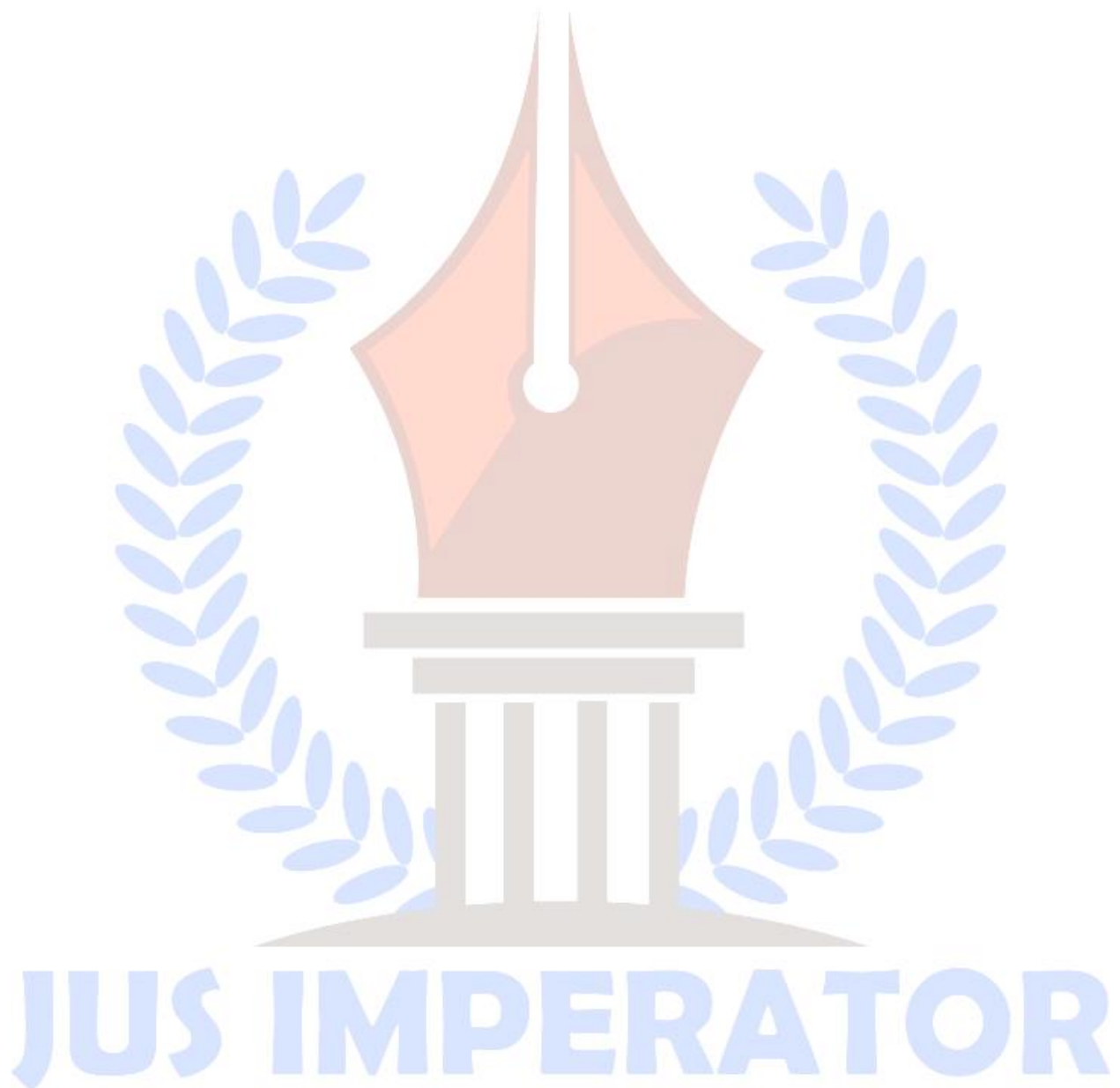
## **FAMILY PLANNING IN URBAN INDIA**

Family planning is a relatively less-emphasized upon process when seen in the Indian context, even in Urban India. It has the potential for a plethora of positive impacts on public health such as reducing unintended pregnancies and mortality rates of mothers and infants caused due to the same, as well as help resolve socio-economic issues such as increasing lack of space in urban areas, unemployment, decreasing resources, etc. All of the aforementioned issues are directly or indirectly a result of overpopulation, which makes family planning all the more significant in Urban India.

It can be carried out through multiple mechanisms, including mechanical barriers (condoms, cervical caps, etc) and chemical means such as spermicidal and contraceptives. While traditional societies may find it hard to gain access to such mechanisms, they are readily available in urban areas. Mechanisms such as condoms are cheap and readily available at medical stores throughout cities. Moreover, initiatives of the Government of India such as the National Urban Health Mission ensure that such basic health requirements of the urban poor are taken care of. But despite such heavy measures taken by the Government, the rate of fertility is still on the rise. In a diverse and relatively young independent country such as India, infrastructure, improper implementation of programmes, education and public opposition proved to be barriers for initial family planning attempts. However, looking at the infrastructure in Urban India, it would seem as though most of these difficulties may have been overcome- increased technological advancement enabling advertising the importance of family planning and courses in schools highlighting the same, along with Government programmes to facilitate the poor coming into picture make it seem like the situation is under control. That doesn't seem to be the case. Based on a study conducted by Dr. Hajira Sabha and Dr. K. Kishore, Department of Community Medicine at B.R. Ambedkar College in Bangalore to evaluate family planning mechanisms among married women in Bangalore, it was found that nearly 42% of women in Bangalore do not use contraception. Among other factors, 10.5% of

these women listed religion as a factor that made them refrain from curbing their pregnancies, although unwanted in many instances.

So how does religion come into conflict with family planning and birth control?



## **RELIGIOUS IMPACT ON FAMILY PLANNING IN URBAN INDIA**

In India fertility rates are more closely related to educational levels and to religious beliefs. So do religious leaders possess excess dominance over family planning?

Last year, the Census Commissioner of India released a report on fertility rates for Indian population and the conversation was manipulated by the difference in population growth rates across religions. It has been showed that Muslim women had higher fertility than non-Muslim women and the percentage of Muslims in the population was growing steadily. The numbers demonstrated that the extent of Muslims in India had grown to 14.2% of the aggregate populace in 2011, up from 13.4% out of 2001, while the extent of Hindus had decreased to 79.8% from 80.5%. The level of Christians and Jains did not altogether change at 2.3% and 0.4%, separately, while the extent of Buddhists diminished from 0.8% to 0.7%, and that of Sikhs decreased from 1.9% to 1.7%.

Religious leaders to most act as a link between themselves and their deity along with the beliefs surrounding their deity. Religious leaders have been accorded a position whereby their interpretations and versions of religious texts become the sole doctrines that people (who are not in a position to understand these themselves or are too religious to analyse further) believe in. As such, these leaders (including priests, self-styled godmen, cult leaders with political affiliations) are capable of directing public or (more specifically) community behaviour to their statements.

With regard to the topic at hand, these leaders have a great deal of potential to improve the birth-control scenario in the country. But many, mostly politically backed/affiliated preachers tend to ignite a birth rate war between communities. Each religion has leaders who speak about the

dominance or rising dominance of the other community and how it threatens their own, directly and indirectly pushing their followers to increase their community's population. For e.g., RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat has remarked several times that the Muslim growth rate is likely to result in India becoming a Muslim state, and questioning the power of laws to limit Hindu birth rates.

Quranic verses such as Sura 17:31 are open to ambiguous interpretations, one of which may literally translate into "do not kill your children, Allah shall provide for them". This interpretation depends mostly on the word of the mullahs/imams. Praveen Kumar Chaudhary in his book, "Communal Crimes and National Integration: A Socio-legal Study" has stated that he was told by Muslims living in Brussels and New York that they were told by their imams not to participate in birth control activities, and have even made statements like "We cannot take over this country by force, so we must do it by increasing our numbers" with reference to several countries including India.

The Hindu castes and sub-castes are entirely endogamous. In conventional Indian culture, the individuals from every position and sub-rank were to wed inside their own particular endogamous gathering. Up to this point, any infringement of this administer was a genuine offense, the punishment for the same was excommunication from the caste. Inter-caste marriage i.e., the union of a man and a lady having a place with two distinct castes was incomprehensible till recent times. But this problem has been solved now still another problem is in the queue i.e. inter-religion marriages.

Unlike caste, religion is a way of life. Religion has far more deeper and broader effects on how a person leads his life, how he thinks, what he thinks etc., than caste. The Hindu castes and sub-castes are entirely endogamous. In conventional Indian culture, the individuals from every position and sub-rank were to wed inside their own particular endogamous gathering. Up to this point, any infringement of this administer was a genuine offense, the punishment for the particular was excommunication from the caste. Inter-caste marriage i.e., the union of a man and a lady having a place with two distinct castes was incomprehensible till recent times. But this problem has been solved now still another problem is in the queue i.e. **inter-religion** marriages.

The challenges of inter- religious couples get through lot of complexities, some of them are:

1. Lack of support from family, friends and society
2. Difficulties in understandability between families.
3. Acceptance and patience

But before all these challenges another obstacle need to be overcome i.e. inter-religious marriage.

Every religious family has some orthodox view which says that “their religion is the most sacred one than others and these religious people won’t let other’s religion to get mix and adulterate their religion”.

So this is the biggest hurdle which needs to be resolved and for this government of India introduced Special Marriage Act, 1954 which is the 1<sup>st</sup> and biggest step to handle this problem with care.



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## CONCLUSION

You may be wondering how inter-caste or inter-religious marriages become a part of this topic. It may seem to most that the two topics are not anywhere related; however, what if such marriages were seen as a key to overcome the negative impact of religion and religious leaders on family planning?

Urban India is not an exception to aversion to religiously exogamous relationships; nor is it immune to “religious factors” affecting family planning mechanisms. Apart from the simple aversion to contraception and viewing children as “gifts of God” which should not be refused another very important factor is the role of religious leaders. With a view to promote their own religion, they have often preached negatively of others. This dislike for the others’ sect has escalated to a “birth-rate war”.

Population is always viewed as a sign of dominance. The majority sect has the ability and perhaps natural tendency to dictate terms to the minority sects and would seek to ensure their dominance is retained, while the minorities may seek to assert themselves by increasing their dominance through population. This applies to most religions in India- Hindus (the majority), Muslims, Christians (the minority) and even Parsis (a diminishing group found in prominent urban areas). The leaders of these groups often encourage this increase in population (i.e., having more children) and promote the birth-rate war.

Promoting of inter-religion marriages will help eliminate these dislikes and differences and will definitely help bring about a more secular outlook towards family planning techniques.



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