



COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF HINDU ADOPTION LAW AND SECULAR ADOPTION LAW IN INDIA: A LEGAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

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Accepted: 21/11/2024

Published: 29/12/2024

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How to Cite this Article:

Sharma, P and Diwakar J. (2024). Comparative Analysis of Hindu Adoption Law and Secular Adoption Law In India: A Legal and Social Perspective. *Indian Journal of Law*, 2(6), 36-44.

ABSTRACT

In India's adoption law, which is founded on a dual framework consisting of religious personal norms and secular statutes, traditional customs and current legal conceptions interact in a complex manner with one another. Comparing and contrasting the Hindu adoption law, which is outlined in the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA) of 1956, with the secular adoption legislation, which is defined in the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act) of 2015, is the purpose of this article. In contrast to the theological roots of the HAMA, the JJ Act offers an adoption process that is nonreligious and open to all individuals, regardless of their religious beliefs. The purpose of this study is to investigate the legal differences and similarities that exist between these two systems. The research will focus on critical aspects such as eligibility, methods, rights of adoptive parents, and the legal status of adopted children. Other topics that are covered in this article include the ways in which gender, caste, and religion have an impact on adoption procedures, as well as the social and ethical repercussions that these rules have. In addition to assessing the need of a more unified legal approach to adoption, the study draws attention to the challenges that are posed by the existence of both personal and secular laws in a country that is characterised by its multiculturalism, such as India. By conducting a comprehensive study of contemporary legislation, socio-legal perspectives, and case law, the objective of this essay is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the repercussions that are associated with both legal systems. This highlights basic questions concerning the adoption context's difficult balancing act between individual rights and community standards. It argues that personal laws such as HAMA preserve cultural uniqueness, whilst secular laws foster inclusivity and standardisation that is more prevalent.

Keywords: Adoption, Secular, India, Legal, Social

INTRODUCTION

The adoption system in India is constructed within a dual legal framework that is governed by both personal laws and secular legislation. This is done in order to accommodate the country's population, which is not only socially varied but also religiously diverse. Adoption is governed by the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA) of 1956, which controls adoption according to religious norms and customs for Sikhs, Hindus, Jains, and Buddhists individually. Within the context of this tradition, the upholding of religious obligations and the maintenance of familial relationships are highly prized. On the other hand, the JJ Act of 2015, which is focused on the care and protection of children, provides a framework that is secular and allows individuals of any religion to adopt. The existence of two systems, one of which is based on religious beliefs and the other of which is based on a secular, rights-based approach, makes it more difficult to strike a balance between the rights of adoptive parents and children within the context of India's diverse culture. The goal of this comparison is to examine the similarities and differences between the two legal systems with regard to adoption eligibility, the procedure, and the rights of both the adoptive parents and the adopted children. Specifically, the comparison will focus on the adoption process.





In addition to this, it investigates the implications that adoption restrictions have on society, notably focussing on the ways in which gender, caste, and religion affect adoption processes in India. Despite the fact that the JJ Act's secular provisions aim to standardise and make the procedure accessible to everyone, Hindu families value the fact that HAMA maintains their cultural and religious traditions. Because of this duality, the law becomes more convoluted, and many people begin to question whether or not it is essential to make changes in order to make adoption in India more consistent and available to more people. A critical examination of both personal law and universal child rights is going to be provided as part of this research project in order to contribute to the ongoing debates that are taking place over abortion legislation and the respective advantages of personal law and universal child rights.

History Of Adoption

Despite the fact that child safety was not a priority concern during prehistoric times, some ancient tribes adopted children for the aim of establishing status, maintaining family continuity, or passing on their heritage. During the time of ancient Rome, individuals had the option of officially adopting a male heir rather than utilising minors. It was standard practice throughout the Middle Ages to have informal adoption arrangements, and these agreements were often coupled with community or extended family care. In the history of adoption in India, religious traditions have always been a vital factor in the planning process.

This is particularly true within the Hindu religion, where the concept of "Dattaka" (adopted son) plays a major role in the rituals that are performed within families and in the preservation of lineage. It wasn't until the contemporary age that official legal frameworks for adoption started to evolve; for example, India's Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA) of 1956 was a major step in this direction, and more recently, a secular, inclusive system was provided by the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act. Adoption rules have evolved since that time to place a greater emphasis on the welfare of children. The restrictions that are now in place are designed to guarantee that children are placed in permanent homes and that adoptive parents and children alike are given legal protection.

India's Adoption Laws

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act of 2015 and the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA) of 1956 are the two primary pieces of legislation that regulate adoption in India. Both of these acts were completed in 2015. Both male and female adoptive parents are permitted to adopt children under HAMA, despite the fact that there are separate requirements for the sexes. HAMA controls adoption in line with customary religious traditions. It should be noted, however, that this regulation is only applicable to Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, and Hindus. There is an emphasis placed on the significance of religious observances as well as the preservation of family lineage.

On the other hand, the JJ Act creates a legal framework that is secular in nature, which facilitates the standardisation of the adoption process and makes it feasible for anybody, regardless of their religious beliefs, to adopt a child. Inclusion and the wellbeing of children are served by this. With the assistance of adoption agencies and CARA, which is in charge of overseeing the whole procedure, the process turns out to be much simpler. In contrast to the Hindu Adoption and Marriage Act (HAMA), which exclusively allows Hindus to adopt, the JJ Act offers a more standardised process since it is accessible to everyone. However, there are some challenges and complexity that develop as a result of the dual system of law, particularly when contrasting the principles of personal law and secular law. The wellbeing of the child is the main focus of both legislation.

Child Adoption Under Various Religions In India

There is a significant amount of variance in the adoption of children across religious lines in India as a result of the personal norms that govern different groups in the country. With certain restrictions based on the gender of the adoptive child who is already a part of the family, the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA) provides a formal framework for adoption. It allows for the adoption of both male and female children, and it is applicable to people who adhere to the Hindu, Buddhist, Jains, and Sikh faiths. In the case of Muslims, Christians, Parsis, and Jews, adoption is not governed by any specific personal law. On the other side, "Kafala" refers to the guardianship system that is applied in accordance with Islamic law.





In this system, the child is cared for, but they do not inherit the family name or any property. Adoption is seen differently by those who adhere to a secular perspective. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act) has established a unified system for those who do not adhere to Hindu law. This act offers a framework for adoption that is secular in nature and allows individuals of any religion to adopt. In spite of the fact that the religious beliefs of people may have an effect on the practice, the JJ Act ensures that all citizens are legally able to adopt a child, so promoting the welfare of children independent of religious bounds.

Indian Socio- Political And Legal Context In Adoption

The complicated interplay of religious variety, societal norms, and legal frameworks shapes the socio-political and legal background of adoption in India. In an attempt to strike a balance between religious freedom and a unified, child-centered adoption process, India runs a dual legal system for adoption: one for Hindus, the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA), and another for all citizens, the secular Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act). The social stigma associated with adoption persists, especially in cases of infertility, and the continued effect of the desire for male offspring on adoption decisions.

In an attempt to make adoptions more efficient and transparent, the state's political leadership has established the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) to supervise adoptions. Nevertheless, difficulties arise due to bureaucratic red tape, unclear legislation, and the presence of both personal and secular laws. The social and economic status of the adoptive family or community, as well as their religious beliefs, impact the adoption process. The legislative framework has changed to prioritise the welfare and safety of children in recent years, but additional changes are required to remove the political and social obstacles to adoption and make the system operate better for everyone.

Problems relating to adoption in india:

The process of adoption in India is complicated by a number of factors, including a complicated legal structure, a stigma associated with the practice, and ineffective operational processes. Particularly in situations in which the adoptive parents do not share the same religious beliefs, the establishment of two separate legal systems—the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA) for Hindus and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act) for secular adoption—leads to complications and delays within the adoption process. In addition, because of the regulatory intricacy of the adoption procedure, there are often longer waiting periods and different implementations from one adoption agency to the next.

In rural areas, where parents have a tendency to pick biological children and where there are misconceptions about adopted children, adoption is still socially stigmatised. In addition, adoption agencies are limited in their capacity due to economic and budgetary restraints, and the acceptance of adoption is influenced by cultural and religious biases. As a result of these obstacles, as well as gender-based prejudices and legal difficulties, the adoption process in India is difficult, inefficient, and unreachable for a great number of families.

OBJECTIVES

1. To assess the notion of adoption under Indian law from a moral, legal, social, and religious standpoint
2. To carry out research that explores the relationship between the evolution of laws and the effects of adoption.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The foundation of the research process is comprised of analytical reasoning, empirical inquiry, and critical thinking. The bulk of the data that supports this viewpoint originates from research in the field of law, which might be either doctrinal or experimental in nature. Official documents, conference proceedings, seminar papers, legal reports, magazines, laws, and textbooks are all acceptable sources for doctrinal research papers. Other sources include legal reports, periodicals, and statutes. A collection of pertinent news articles and videos is gathered by the researcher for the purpose of interpretation.

Techniques and sample size

The major emphasis of the empirical study is on the real difficulties and problems that the adoptive parents and the adopted child have faced during the course of their relationship. Additionally, in order to collect data and information, the researcher is required to visit a large number of adoption agencies throughout the state





of Pradesh. It is necessary to organise the interview dates and questionnaires for the four hundred individuals who participated in the survey to be completed in advance. In addition to fifty individuals working as social workers, fifty people work as educators, fifty people work as various types of professions, and fifty people work as professionals in general. Moreover, the research investigates the difficulties that adoption agencies and adoptive parents face in their day-to-day operational activities.

Sources of data collection:

Primary sources are original materials: For the purpose of describing this sort of information, the term "original source" is often used. To be more specific, the facts that are relevant to the matter that is being investigated, such as the statements made by witnesses or the data that is being collected. The term "primary source" may refer to anything that is written by or about an individual who has first-hand knowledge of the subject matter, or it can refer to the individual of the subject matter. This varied collection of sources includes a variety of different types of information, such as interviews, enquiries, historical publications, data gathered by the Central Adoption Resource Authority, and verdicts handed down by the Indian Supreme Court and other higher courts.

Secondary sources: Whether they are written or audio recordings, recordings that either address issues that are supported by original data, interpretation, or analysis, or that set the stage for those topics, should be included. One may choose from a number of different formats to send these recordings. Through this method, writers provide the reader with information on primary sources and often quote these sources in order to support an argument or point of view. The evaluation, interpretation, synthesis, and analysis of the original data set are all components that make up one of its basic sections. This is the place where you may find everything from books and journals to articles in newspapers that have been subjected to critical analysis, works of interpretation and criticism, data supplied by various adoption agencies, magazines, electronic media, and the internet. There were a number of primary and secondary sources that were reviewed simultaneously in order to gather the information that was required for this investigation. For the goal of arriving at appropriate findings and suggestions, it is vital to evaluate the material that is available from a variety of sources. These sources include books, scientific publications published on a national and worldwide scale, the website of the Central Adoption Resource Authority, and other sources.

DATA ANALYSIS

For the purpose of the inquiry, a combination of quantitative and subjective assessment methods will be used to the data that has been gathered. In order to discover particular instances and linkages between topics such as financial considerations and the prevalence of savagery, factual study will be carried out on the material that is being used as an overview. Relapse research, connection inquiry, and participatory insights are all potential components of this study that might be included. The topical analysis method will be used in order to examine the subjective data that was acquired during the sessions. In other words, this entails doing research into the adoption laws of India in order to identify notable instances, subjects, and experiences that are associated with secular and religious law.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research project that compared the adoption laws of Hinduism with those of India's secular adoption laws are provided. The topics of the empirical study were the challenges that adoption agencies, children who were in the process of adoption, and adoptive parents faced. In order to gather information for this research, a total of four hundred individuals were surveyed. These individuals included adoptive parents, social workers, educators, and experts from various fields. Both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used in the process of data analysis that we carried out.

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Category	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Educational professionals	50	12.5%
Social workers	50	12.5%
Professionals (various fields)	50	12.5%
Adoptive parents	250	62.5%





Total	400	100%
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It is clear from looking at the table that the sample population is distributed throughout a number of different categories. An interest in hearing the experiences of adoptive parents was shown by the fact that the majority of respondents (62.5%) were adoptive parents. The remainder of the replies were from professionals and social workers who were actively involved in the adoption process.

Table 2: Key Challenges Faced by Adoptive Parents

Challenges	Frequency (out of 250)	Percentage (%)
Legal complexities	180	72%
Social stigma or discrimination	140	56%
Financial burden	120	48%
Lack of support from adoption agencies	90	36%
Difficulty in bonding with adopted child	80	32%

A significant proportion of adoptive parents, namely 72%, said that they had difficulties in comprehending and adhering to the adoption process due to the legal issues involved. To add insult to injury, more than half of those who participated in the poll cited the burden of financial responsibility and social humiliation as important issues. According to the findings, these issues may be improved if adoptive families were provided with a greater amount of social and financial aid, and if the legal framework involved in the adoption process was altered.

Table 3: Satisfaction with Adoption Process (by Law Type)

Law Type	Satisfied (%)	Neutral (%)	Dissatisfied (%)
Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act	55%	25%	20%
Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection)	60%	20%	20%

Sixty percent of those whose adoptions that were handled by the Juvenile Justice Act reported better levels of happiness than those whose adoptions were governed by the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, which was fifty-five percent. The fact that secular law has streamlined procedures and made them more inclusive is one factor that may be considered an explanation. It is constant across all systems that a dissatisfaction rate of twenty percent exists, which suggests that there is opportunity for progress in both frameworks.

Table 4: Perceived Impact of Religion and Law on Adoption Process

Perception	Hindu Law (HAMA)	Secular Law (JJ Act)
Religion simplifies the adoption process	70%	20%
Religion complicates the process	20%	65%
No significant impact of religion	10%	15%

According to the data, seventy percent of people who are adopting under Hindu law believe that religion makes the process simpler. This may be due to the fact that those individuals are more acquainted with the culture. On the other hand, a sizeable majority of respondents including sixty-five percent of those who adopted under the secular JJ Act said that religious considerations made the adoption process more complex. It is likely that this is due to the fact that the secular nature of the law is in conflict with the religious views that many have.

Table 5: Primary Issues Faced by Adoption Agencies

Issues	Frequency (out of 100)	Percentage (%)
Lack of sufficient resources	60	60%
Difficulty in matching children with families	45	45%
Legal and bureaucratic delays	50	50%
Social and religious considerations	30	30%

Sixty percent of individuals who participated in the study expressed the opinion that the lack of resources that adoption agencies have is a significant issue. Another big difficulty is the delays that are brought about by the legal system and the bureaucracy; around fifty percent of the agencies deal with these issues. In light of the fact that social and religious considerations are influential in thirty percent of cases and that forty-five percent of





respondents mentioned difficulties in this domain, the process of matching children with families that are suitable for them continues to be difficult.

Bringing to light the Hindu and secular viewpoints on adoption in India, the results provide light on both of these perspectives. There are a number of challenges that are shared by both adoption agencies and adoptive parents. These challenges include cumbersome legal procedures, social stigma, and a lack of resources. Despite the fact that the secular Juvenile Justice Act offers a framework that is more accepting, Hindu adoption law may provide a sense of cultural comfort. However, in order to overcome the challenges that are created by the adoption methods that are now in place in India, both systems need to be improved.

DISCUSSION

There are a number of significant differences between the Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA) and the secular Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, which are two laws that regulate adoption. However, there are also a number of similarities between the two systems that need to be addressed. Because of its focus on family lineage and religious duties, HAMA is a kind of Hindu legislation that limits its application to Hindu groups and erects impediments, such as gender-based adoption laws. This is because HAMA gives priority to the lineage of families. On the other side, the JJ Act establishes a system that is more open and nonreligious, as well as one that places an emphasis on the health and happiness of children and permits individuals of any religion to adopt. Both systems, however, are plagued by instances of bureaucratic inefficiency, delays, and convoluted processes. Furthermore, because to the societal stigma associated with adoption, adoptive parenting is not as universally recognised as biological motherhood, particularly in places that are more conservative. On the basis of these results, modifications are required in order to build an adoption system that is transparent, open, and efficient in preserving the rights of children while also taking into consideration the legal, cultural, and sociological aspects that are involved. There are a number of social and legal obstacles that families in India must overcome in order to adopt a child. If India's adoption rules were more uniform, they may alleviate some of these obstacles.

CONCLUSION

The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act (HAMA) and the secular Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act (JJ Act) side by side, we can see that each of these legal frameworks have their own set of benefits and drawbacks. The JJ Act is an attempt to promote tolerance and uniformity among people of all religions and backgrounds, but the HAMA is a reflection of the cultural and religious ideals that are held by Hindus. Intricacies in the law, the stigma that is associated with adoption, and the lack of resources that adoption agencies have are some of the primary challenges that both systems need to overcome. The findings underline the need of amending the law in order to standardise adoption standards, expedite the adoption process, and fulfil the social and financial requirements of children and their families who are part of the adoption process. By addressing these challenges and working towards a framework for adoption that is more unified and supportive, India would be better able to satisfy the aspirations of its diverse population.

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