



## **EXAMINING THE LEGAL AND SOCIO-CULTURAL FRAMEWORK OF LIVE-IN RELATIONSHIPS IN INDIA**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

*This study delves into the legal and socio-cultural framework of live-in relationships in India. Historically devoid of specific legislation, the Indian judiciary has progressively recognized and conferred rights upon partners in such relationships. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and various Supreme Court rulings have played pivotal roles in this recognition. The study also contrasts live-in relationships with marriages, highlighting the nuances of commitment, rights, and societal perceptions. Furthermore, the impact of live-in relationships on children, family dynamics, and societal perceptions, especially in the face of India's diverse socio-cultural fabric, is explored. The study concludes by emphasizing the evolving nature of acceptance and the ongoing journey of live-in relationships in the Indian context.*

**Keywords:** *Live-in Relationships, Indian Judiciary Socio-Cultural Framework< Domestic Violence Act< Marriage vs. Cohabitation< Family Dynamics*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

India is a nation that is slowly adopting western ideas and customs, one of which is the concept of cohabitation. In lawful jargon, a bond between a gentleman and a lady is authentic if it is established on a legitimate matrimony as well as illegitimate if it is not founded on a lawful agreement. Co-habitation partnerships are believed to be a comparatively novel notion. Nevertheless, its beginnings can be traced all the way back to prehistoric eras. In my opinion, the expression 'cohabitant' simply alludes to an antiquated concept. It was referred to as maitri karar in ancient times, and it was a handwritten pact between two individuals proclaiming that they would stay together as companions and also watch over each other. The Vedas establish eight categories of matrimony, wherein one of them is the Gandharva union. It requires the unanimous comprehension of a spouse and partner to wed. The occurrences that transpire in this kind of matrimony are quite comparable to those that transpire in a cohabitation arrangement. Our past instructs us that the Vedas sanctioned cohabitation, and even that is not morally acceptable in present-day Indian society. This concept was considered to be 'ethical' as long as individuals followed in the path of destiny. Any behavior not in alignment with karma was perceived as a grave mistake. In India, an unwed bond between a spouse and partner is still deemed inappropriate. Beyond matrimony, intimate encounters between males and females were utterly prohibited in medieval society and were regarded with disdain and apprehension. Matrimony is the sole contractual entity that bestows the advantage of domicile on an individual, and offspring born outside of wedlock are considered legitimate progeny. The legally wedded spouse is entitled to support during and following the marriage. All of these valid entitlements and classifications are believed to be lacking in a cohabitation partnerships. The cohabitation, also referred to as cohabitating, is an arrangement in which two individuals opt to reside together in an affectionate level and/or intimately passionate connection for a prolonged duration or indefinitely. The expression is primarily employed to denote wedded pairs. In day-to-day conversation, this is commonly known as living together. The fundamental assumption of a cohabitation arrangement is that the potential couple desires to evaluate their compatibility prior to making a dedication. Coexistence is a widespread manner of existence in the Western World currently. People may reside together for a multitude of motives. These might encompass a longing to determine appropriateness or financial autonomy before getting married. This concept has acquired attraction among the nation's young generation. These 'enter, exit collaborations' have cultivated a fan base. Certain countries, like France and the United States of America, offer cohabitation agreements, or papers governing live-in partnerships, in which individuals can specify their authorities and obligations. Nevertheless, the laws of numerous countries do not offer uniform rights and exemptions for offspring conceived in such unions, thereby penalizing non-marital cohabitation partnerships. Unwed cohabitation is firmly established in France, where same-sex and opposite-sex couples can enter into a lawful arrangement to reside together and experience the benefits of a wedded duo without getting married.



## **2. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The concept of live-in relationships is often seen as a modern-day phenomenon, especially in a traditional society like India. However, when one delves deep into history, it becomes evident that forms of live-in relationships or cohabitation without formal marriage have existed across various cultures and eras.

### **2.1 Historical evolution of live-in relationships in India**

#### **Ancient Acceptance and Medieval Conservatism:**

India's earliest scriptures, the Vedas, introduce the Gandharva Vivah, a form of union based on mutual attraction without the trappings of traditional rituals, symbolizing an ancient society's acceptance of relationships outside stringent marital norms. This ancient precedent, however, faced a transformation during the medieval period. As India transitioned into a feudal society, relationships outside the formal institution of marriage were largely frowned upon. The medieval era, stretching from the 5th to the 15th century AD, witnessed a rigidity in societal norms, where cohabitation without a formal marriage structure was not only stigmatized but also socially ostracized.

#### **Colonial Impacts and the Urban Shift:**

The British colonial period brought with it a blend of Victorian values and legal structures. While these influences did seep into India's social fabric, the traditional core remained largely resilient, continuing its conservative view on live-in relationships. However, post-independence, as India saw rapid urbanization, globalization, and a boom in media, there was a palpable shift in societal perceptions, especially in metropolitan cities. The latter half of the 20th century marked the beginning of a gradual acceptance of live-in relationships, predominantly among the urban youth. This era saw live-in relationships as a means of understanding one's partner before formalizing the union through marriage.

#### **Judicial Interventions and Contemporary Landscape:**

The late 20th and early 21st century witnessed significant legal strides concerning live-in relationships. The Indian judiciary, recognizing the evolving societal norms, began to provide legal sanctity to the rights of partners in such relationships. Landmark judgments and legislations, particularly the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, were instrumental in offering legal protections. Today, while live-in relationships are gaining traction and acceptance, especially in urban centers, India, with its diverse cultural tapestry, continues to balance its deep-rooted traditions with the evolving paradigms of modern relationships.

### **2.2 Changing societal attitudes and norms**

#### **Vedic Openness to Medieval Rigidity:**

Ancient India, with its Vedic roots, showcased a degree of openness towards relationships, as evidenced by the Gandharva Vivah. This form of union, based purely on mutual consent without societal rituals, symbolized a society that valued individual choices. However, as the nation moved into the medieval period, a shift towards a more conservative stance became evident. The intricate caste system, feudal societal structures, and religious orthodoxy contributed to a rigid framework where relationships outside the formal confines of marriage were frowned upon.

#### **Colonial Imprints to Urban Embrace:**

The British colonial era introduced a blend of Western values and societal constructs. While the orthodox sections of society held onto their conservative beliefs, the urban populace, especially in the presidency towns, began getting exposed to Western ideals. Post-independence, urbanization accelerated this change. Cities, with their cosmopolitan ethos, began to view live-in relationships as a personal choice, driven by the desire for compatibility and understanding before formalizing marital bonds. The influence of media, cinema, and literature further played a role in normalizing and portraying the nuances of such relationships.

#### **21st Century Dynamics and Diversified Acceptance:**



The dawn of the 21st century brought with it a more globalized and connected India. Digitalization, increased international exposure, and a growing educated middle class led to more progressive attitudes. While urban areas showcased a growing acceptance of live-in relationships, rural India remained tethered to its traditional beliefs. The generational divide also became evident: while the younger generation viewed live-in relationships as an assertion of personal liberty and choice, the older generation often viewed them through the lens of tradition and societal approval. The contemporary landscape, thus, presents a mosaic of diversified acceptance, with India continuing to grapple and negotiate between its rich traditions and evolving societal norms.

### **3. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

India's legal framework concerning live-in relationships has been a dynamic construct, evolving in response to societal changes and judicial interpretations. Historically, there was no specific legislation addressing live-in relationships, leaving a void in legal protections for partners involved. However, the turn of the century saw the judiciary stepping in to bridge this gap. The Indian Supreme Court, in various judgments, has recognized and conferred rights upon partners in live-in relationships, likening them to those of legally married couples. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, emerged as a significant legal instrument, recognizing the rights of women in live-in relationships, particularly concerning protection from abuse and entitlement to maintenance. Additionally, various High Court rulings have oscillated between progressive judgments and conservative interpretations, reflecting the broader societal debate on the issue. While the legal landscape has come a long way in recognizing and safeguarding the rights of partners in live-in relationships, the absence of a comprehensive, codified law specifically addressing the intricacies of such relationships remains a point of contention and deliberation.

#### **3.1 Marriage vs. live-in relationships: a comparative analysis**

##### **Foundational Basis:**

**Marriage:** Traditionally rooted in religious, societal, and legal ceremonies, marriage is often considered a sacred bond in many cultures. It involves vows and rituals, signifying a lifelong commitment and is recognized universally as a formal union between two individuals.

**Live-in Relationships:** A modern concept where two individuals cohabit without undergoing formal matrimonial ceremonies. It is based on mutual consent and understanding without the binding legalities of a marriage.

##### **Legal Recognition and Rights:**

**Marriage:** Offers clear legal rights and responsibilities. Partners have well-defined rights related to property, maintenance, custody of children, and inheritance. The dissolution process involves legal procedures, either through divorce or annulment.

**Live-in Relationships:** Traditionally, there was no specific legal framework for live-in relationships in India. However, recent judicial pronouncements have extended certain rights to partners, especially women, akin to those in marriages. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, for instance, grants rights to female partners in live-in relationships, providing them with legal protection.

##### **Societal Perception:**

**Marriage:** Universally accepted and celebrated. It's considered a rite of passage in many cultures and is associated with societal respect, stability, and recognition.

**Live-in Relationships:** While gaining acceptance in urban areas and among younger generations, it still faces resistance and stigmatization in various parts of society, especially in rural and conservative regions.

##### **Commitment and Duration:**

**Marriage:** Viewed as a lifelong commitment. The bond is expected to last till death do us part, barring legal separations or personal choices to part ways.



Live-in Relationships: Generally perceived as a more flexible arrangement without lifelong commitment expectations. Partners have the freedom to walk away without legal procedures, but the relationship can also be as enduring and committed as any marriage

#### **Children and Legitimacy:**

Marriage: Children born are automatically deemed legitimate with both parents having defined responsibilities. They have clear rights to inheritance and other legal benefits.

Live-in Relationships: Children's legitimacy was once a gray area. However, recent court rulings in India have stated that children born out of live-in relationships should not be penalized and have rights similar to those of children from formal marriages.

#### **Economic and Financial Aspects:**

Marriage: Financial responsibilities and rights are well-defined, with both partners having claims on marital assets. Legal provisions exist for maintenance and alimony in the event of separation or divorce.

Live-in Relationships: Financial aspects are based on mutual understanding, with no legal obligation to support unless explicitly agreed upon. However, recent legal developments have started recognizing the rights of female partners in long-term live-in relationships to seek maintenance.

In essence, while marriages have a deep-rooted cultural, religious, and legal foundation, live-in relationships represent a shift towards personal autonomy and flexibility in interpersonal relationships. Both have their merits and challenges, and the choice between them often hinges on individual priorities, societal influences, and personal beliefs.

### **3.2 Indian laws related to live-in relationships**

#### **Judicial Recognition and Rights Extension:**

In the absence of a specific statute governing live-in relationships, the Indian judiciary has played a pivotal role in recognizing and bestowing rights to partners in such unions. The Supreme Court, in its various rulings, has emphasized that living together is a right to life and not a criminal offense. In the landmark case of *Khushboo vs. Kanniammal*, the apex court upheld the legitimacy of live-in relationships, asserting that living together is a part of the fundamental right to life. Another significant judgment was in the *D. Velusamy vs. D. Patchaiammal* case, where the court ruled that a 'relationship in the nature of marriage' under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, must also fulfill certain criteria. It essentially means that merely spending weekends together or a one-night stand would not be a domestic relationship.

#### **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005:**

This act has been a cornerstone in providing rights to women in live-in relationships. It doesn't explicitly use the term 'live-in relationships', but it provides relief to a woman living in a relationship in the nature of marriage. Such women can seek legal remedies against any form of domestic violence, just as a legally wedded wife can. Moreover, the act allows the woman to claim monetary relief, custody of children, compensation, and even residence rights.

#### **Children's Rights and Maintenance Issues:**

The rights of children born from live-in relationships were elucidated in the Supreme Court judgment of *Tulsa vs. Durghatiya*. The court held that children born from such relationships have the right to inherit the property of their parents. Another significant development was in the *Indra Sarma vs. V.K.V. Sarma* case, where the court stated that if a man fails to maintain a woman with whom he had a live-in relationship, he could be subjected to proceedings under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which deals with maintenance rights.

### **4. JUDICIAL PRECEDENTS**

In the backdrop of India's evolving societal fabric, the judiciary has played an instrumental role in shaping the



discourse around live-in relationships. While the legislative framework remained largely silent on this modern relational construct, the courts stepped in to provide clarity and ensure justice. Landmark judgments, such as the *Khushboo vs. Kanniammal* case, reinforced the idea that living together outside of marriage is not an offense and falls under the right to life enshrined in the Constitution. The Supreme Court, in the *D. Velusamy vs. D. Patchaiammal* ruling, provided contours to what constitutes a 'relationship in the nature of marriage' under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, emphasizing certain criteria for the relationship to be recognized. Further, in the *Tulsa vs. Durghatiya* case, the apex court upheld the rights of children born out of live-in relationships, granting them legitimate rights to inheritance. Another pivotal judgment, *Indra Sarma vs. V.K.V. Sarma*, threw light on maintenance rights, asserting that men could be held responsible under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code for not supporting women in live-in relationships. Collectively, these judicial interventions have been paramount in safeguarding the rights of individuals in live-in relationships, emphasizing their legitimacy, and ensuring justice in the absence of codified laws.

#### **4.1 Landmark court cases related to live-in relationships**

##### **Khushboo vs. Kanniammal (2010):**

In this landmark case, the Supreme Court of India upheld the legitimacy of live-in relationships, stating that living together is a right to life and not a criminal offense. The court emphasized that living together is a part of the fundamental right to life as enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution.

##### **2. D. Velusamy vs. D. Patchaiammal (2010):**

This case was pivotal in defining what constitutes a 'relationship in the nature of marriage.' The Supreme Court ruled that not all relationships will qualify under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. The court laid down specific criteria that such a relationship should fulfill, emphasizing factors like pooling of financial and domestic resources, duration of the relationship, and societal recognition.

##### **3. Tulsa vs. Durghatiya (2008):**

This case focused on the rights of children born out of live-in relationships. The Supreme Court held that such children are not to be termed illegitimate and have the same rights to inherit the property of their parents, just as children born out of traditional wedlock.

##### **4. Indra Sarma vs. V.K.V. Sarma (2013):**

This case further elucidated the rights of women in live-in relationships. The Supreme Court stated that if a man fails to maintain a woman with whom he had a live-in relationship, he could be subjected to proceedings under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which ensures the maintenance rights of women.

##### **5. Badri Prasad vs. Director of Consolidation (1978):**

One of the earliest cases that recognized the legitimacy of live-in relationships, the Supreme Court in this case upheld the validity of a 50-year-long live-in relationship, equating it to a marriage. The court noted that if a man and a woman have lived together for a long time, they should be treated as a married couple.

#### **4.2 Interpretation of laws by Indian courts**

In the intricate landscape of live-in relationships, the Indian judiciary has been a beacon, interpreting existing laws to provide clarity and justice to couples who choose such relationships over formal marriages. The courts, especially the Supreme Court, have largely adopted a progressive approach, interpreting laws in favor of safeguarding individual rights and ensuring gender justice. A noteworthy interpretation is regarding the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005. While the Act does not explicitly mention live-in relationships, the courts have interpreted the phrase relationship in the nature of marriage to include long-term live-in relationships. The courts have emphasized that women in such relationships should not be deprived of legal protections against abuse, and they should be entitled to relief similar to married women. In cases relating to maintenance rights, the courts have interpreted Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which provides for maintenance of wives, to occasionally include women in long-term live-in relationships. The rationale is to prevent injustice and ensure that women,



especially those who are vulnerable, are not left destitute. Furthermore, in matters of inheritance, the courts have interpreted laws to protect the rights of children born out of live-in relationships. Recognizing them as legitimate, the judiciary has ensured that such children have the same rights as those born out of wedlock. Another crucial interpretation pertains to the legitimacy of live-in relationships itself. Using the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution, the courts have upheld the right of adults to choose their life partners and the nature of their relationship, emphasizing that living together without marriage is not a crime and is a part of an individual's fundamental rights. In essence, the Indian courts, through their interpretations, have strived to adapt the existing legal framework to contemporary societal realities, ensuring justice, equality, and protection for partners in live-in relationships.

#### **4.3 Legal rights and liabilities of partners in live-in relationships**

**Right to Maintenance:** One of the fundamental rights that has been extended to women in live-in relationships is the right to seek maintenance. The Supreme Court, in interpreting Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code, has occasionally ruled that women in long-standing live-in relationships are entitled to maintenance similar to wives, especially if the relationship has a semblance of being in the nature of marriage.

**Protection from Domestic Violence:** The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, while not explicitly mentioning live-in relationships, has been interpreted by courts to cover women in such relationships. Under the Act, women can seek protection and relief from physical, emotional, verbal, and economic abuse. They can also claim the right to reside in a shared household.

**Rights of Children:** Children born out of live-in relationships have been a significant concern for the judiciary. The courts have ruled that these children are legitimate and have the same rights as children born from wedded unions. This includes rights to inheritance, guardianship, and all other rights extended to children.

**Property Rights:** Typically, unless there's a specific agreement, partners in live-in relationships do not have legal claims over each other's properties. However, if a partner can prove their financial contribution towards the acquisition of a particular asset, they might have a claim over it.

**Sexual Relations and Consent:** Partners in a live-in relationship, like any other individuals, have the right to give or withhold consent for intimate relations. Any intimate act without consent can be a ground for legal action, including charges of rape.

**Relief upon Separation:** In the absence of formal divorce proceedings available to live-in partners, the separation process might seem simpler. However, the courts have sometimes intervened to ensure justice, especially in cases where one partner might face grave financial or social repercussions due to separation.

**No Formal Ceremonial Rights:** Unlike married couples, live-in partners do not have ceremonial rights such as performing last rites unless specifically mentioned in a legal will or document.

In conclusion, while the rights and liabilities of partners in live-in relationships are still evolving in India, the judiciary has progressively leaned towards ensuring justice, equity, and dignity for those in such relationships. The aim has been to protect the vulnerable and ensure that the lack of a formal marital bond does not lead to grave injustices or exploitation.

#### **5. SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS**

Live-in relationships, emerging as a modern relational construct in India, have stirred a pot of socio-cultural debates and discussions. Rooted deeply in traditions, Indian society has historically valued the sanctity of marriage as an unbreakable bond, both spiritually and socially. The rise of live-in relationships challenges this very foundation, ushering in a paradigm shift in how relationships are perceived. On one hand, the urbanized and educated sections view it as a reflection of personal freedom, autonomy, and a progressive step away from the binds of traditional marital pressures and responsibilities. They argue for the right to choose and test compatibility before making long-term commitments. On the other hand, conservative sections view it as a threat to the societal fabric, fearing it might erode family values, traditions, and lead to moral degradation. The dichotomy also has implications on gender roles, with live-in relationships often offering women more agency and freedom from conventional expectations. However, they also face a greater brunt of societal judgment and stigma. Furthermore, the younger generation's acceptance of



such relationships is often seen in stark contrast to the apprehensions of the older generation, leading to inter-generational conflicts. Overall, the emergence of live-in relationships in India signifies a society in transition, grappling with the intersections of tradition and modernity, personal freedoms, and societal expectations.

### **5.1 Societal acceptance and stigmatization**

The advent of live-in relationships in India has been met with a mixed bag of reactions, oscillating between acceptance and stigmatization. At the forefront of this duality is the urban-rural divide. Metropolitan cities, with their cosmopolitan culture, have witnessed a more accepting attitude towards such relationships. Exposure to global perspectives, education, and a desire for personal autonomy have played pivotal roles in this acceptance. Young professionals, students, and the millennial generation often view live-in relationships as a practical choice, a way to understand compatibility without the immediate bindings of marriage.

However, juxtaposed against this is the profound stigmatization, particularly evident in smaller towns and rural areas. Here, the fabric of society is tightly woven with traditional norms and values where marriage is not just a union of two individuals but two families. Live-in relationships, thus, are often seen as a direct challenge to these age-old conventions. They are perceived as a moral degradation, a deviation from the 'norm', leading to whispers, gossip, and in some extreme cases, even ostracization from the community.

Women, more than men, bear the brunt of this societal judgment. While men might face disapproval, women in live-in relationships are frequently subjected to character assassinations, questioning their 'virtue' and 'morality'. They are often labeled as 'modern' in a derogatory manner, indicating a departure from traditional values.

Furthermore, while Bollywood and other media platforms have started portraying live-in relationships, often glamorizing them, it has also led to misconceptions and myths about those choosing this path. The portrayal often lacks the depth and complexities such relationships entail in real life.

In conclusion, while segments of Indian society are gradually warming up to the idea of live-in relationships, a significant portion still views it through the lens of skepticism and prejudice. The journey towards widespread acceptance is ongoing, with societal dynamics constantly evolving in response to changing mindsets and cultural influences.

### **5.2 Impact on children and family dynamics**

Live-in relationships and their implications extend beyond the couple, particularly when children are involved. The dynamics of family structures and the experiences of children born out of such relationships are distinctly complex in the Indian socio-cultural milieu.

Firstly, children born to couples in live-in relationships often find themselves at the crossroads of societal acceptance. While legally, as established by various court judgments, these children have rights akin to those born from wedded unions, socially, they may face questions about their legitimacy. They can become subjects of whispered conversations and may face isolation or discrimination in more conservative communities. Such experiences can lead to psychological and emotional challenges as these children grapple with identity and belonging.

Secondly, the absence of a formal marital structure might mean that family roles and responsibilities are more fluid in live-in relationships. This can be both an advantage and a challenge. On the positive side, children may witness relationships based on equality, shared responsibilities, and mutual respect, devoid of the weight of marital obligations. However, the absence of established norms could also lead to ambiguities in familial roles, potentially leading to conflicts.

Furthermore, interactions with extended family become crucial. In traditional Indian families, where the extended family plays a significant role in a child's life, the acceptance of the child's immediate family living situation can influence the child's sense of family identity and security. A supportive extended family can provide a buffer against societal prejudices, while a non-accepting family can exacerbate feelings of exclusion.

Lastly, the transient nature often associated with live-in relationships can impact family stability. While marriages too face breakups, the societal structures around marriage often push couples towards conflict resolution. In live-in relationships, the absence of these binding structures might lead to easier exits, potentially affecting children's



perceptions of commitment and stability.

In essence, while live-in relationships offer a space for modern, egalitarian partnerships, the implications on children and family dynamics are profound. The key lies in the couple's ability to provide a nurturing environment for their children, irrespective of societal norms, ensuring emotional security and a strong sense of belonging.

### **5.3 Economic and emotional implications**

The emergence of live-in relationships in the Indian context carries with it a myriad of economic and emotional implications that transcend traditional marital structures.

Economically, live-in relationships present a unique set of challenges and benefits. Without the legal bindings of marriage, financial responsibilities and assets are often divided based on mutual understandings rather than legal mandates. This can lead to more flexibility and individual financial autonomy. Partners might find it easier to retain control over their individual assets, making decisions about shared expenses more negotiable. However, this lack of legal structure can also be a double-edged sword. In the event of a breakup, claims to shared assets, property, or investments can become contentious, given the absence of clear legal guidelines. Moreover, women in live-in relationships might be at a disadvantage if they aren't economically independent, especially if the relationship ends unexpectedly. They may not have the same rights to financial support or maintenance as a legally wedded wife.

Emotionally, live-in relationships in India navigate a complex web of personal freedom and societal judgment. On the one hand, such relationships allow partners to build their bond free from the pressures of marital expectations. This can lead to genuine companionship based on mutual respect, understanding, and shared life goals. The choice to cohabit without the ceremonial bindings of marriage can also be empowering, signaling a departure from societal norms in favor of personal choices. However, the very act of defying these norms can come with emotional costs. The couple may face societal stigmatization, which can strain the relationship. The constant need to justify their choice, especially to close family and friends, can be emotionally draining. Additionally, the lack of societal recognition might make partners feel insecure about the longevity and commitment in the relationship.

Furthermore, the emotional implications extend to familial ties. Parents and extended family, if they hold conservative views, might express disappointment, concern, or outright disapproval. This can lead to feelings of alienation, affecting the emotional well-being of the partners.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

Live-in relationships, as a contemporary relational construct in India, have witnessed dynamic interplays between societal perceptions, legal interpretations, and individual freedoms. While the urban sections are showing increasing acceptance, conservative sections remain apprehensive. The Indian judiciary has taken proactive steps to bridge legal voids, ensuring rights and protections for partners in such relationships. However, while the legal landscape has evolved, socio-cultural perceptions, especially concerning children and family dynamics, still pose challenges. The journey towards holistic acceptance and understanding of live-in relationships in India remains a work in progress, reflecting a society at the intersection of tradition and modernity.

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