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## ***ABOUT US***

WHITE BLACK LEGAL is an open access, peer-reviewed and refereed journal provide dedicated to express views on topical legal issues, thereby generating a cross current of ideas on emerging matters. This platform shall also ignite the initiative and desire of young law students to contribute in the field of law. The erudite response of legal luminaries shall be solicited to enable readers to explore challenges that lie before law makers, lawyers and the society at large, in the event of the ever changing social, economic and technological scenario.

With this thought, we hereby present to you

## **HOW LIVIN RELATIONSHIPS ARE VIEWED.**

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### **Abstract:**

Over time, relationships have changed a lot. In the past, love relationships were mostly tied to marriage, but today, live-in relationships have become common across many parts of the world. This paper looks at how the law has treated relationships in the past compared to now and examines whether live-in relationships are fully accepted by legal systems today. It also explores how courts and society view these relationships and whether partners in live-in relationships have the same rights as married couples. Finally, the paper discusses possible future changes in the law and the impact they might have on people choosing to live together without marriage. The goal is to understand whether legal protections for live-in couples will grow stronger or if challenges will continue in the years to come.

Key word – Marriage, Live – In Relationship, School of Law, Family Law, Future Vision, criticism, maintenance, alimony, Break – up, divorce, morality, feminist jurisprudence

## Introduction:

Marriage is a legally recognized union between two individuals. Under Hindu law, a marriage is considered valid only when it follows the rituals and ceremonies outlined in Section 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act<sup>1</sup>. One of the key traditions in Hindu marriage is Saptapadi (seven steps), along with other customary rites specific to either party. These rituals establish the marriage as legally binding, granting spouses legal rights and responsibilities.

In contrast, live-in relationships have gained significant acceptance in modern times. Unlike marriage, a live-in relationship does not require formal registration or legal recognition. It involves two individuals—traditionally a man and a woman—cohabiting and sharing responsibilities similar to a married couple, but without the legal commitment. However, with changing societal norms, live-in relationships are no longer confined to heterosexual couples; same-sex partners are also choosing to live together without formalizing their union through marriage.

Many surveys suggest that individuals in live-in relationships take them seriously but prefer not to be legally bound by marriage, as it imposes lifelong obligations. One of the key differences between marriage and live-in relationships is commitment—while marriage is both a legal and social contract, live-in relationships rely purely on mutual understanding and can be ended without legal formalities.

Another significant distinction is legal recognition. While marriage is widely accepted across societies and protected under law, live-in relationships remain controversial in many countries. A particularly sensitive issue is the status of children born out of live-in relationships—unlike children of married couples, who are automatically considered legitimate, children of live-in partners are often regarded as illegitimate<sup>2</sup> unless recognized by the law.

From a cultural and religious perspective, marriage is a sacred institution involving rituals and traditions, such as Saptapadi in Hinduism, Nikah in Islam, and church vows in Christianity. It

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<sup>1</sup> A Hindu marriage may be solemnized in accordance with the customary rites and ceremonies of either party thereto. Where such rites and ceremonies include the Saptapadi (that is, the taking of seven steps by the bridegroom and the bride jointly before the sacred fire), the marriage becomes complete and binding when the seventh step is taken.

<sup>2</sup> An illegitimate child refers to a child who is born to unmarried parents and does not have a legal relationship with either parent.

is widely accepted and legally recognized. In contrast, live-in relationships lack religious or customary validation and are seen as a personal choice rather than a societal obligation. While marriage symbolizes commitment and stability, live-in relationships are often debated, with acceptance varying across cultures.

### **Evaluation of past and present relationships:**

#### **a) Traditional View of Relationships**

In the past, marriage was the foundation of relationships, falling into two main categories: arranged marriage and love marriage. Marriages were deeply tied to cultural, religious, and legal norms, emphasizing not just love and consent but also duty, responsibility, and social stability.

In many societies, arranged marriages were preferred, with parents choosing partners to ensure financial security and social stability rather than prioritizing individual choice. Even love marriages, where individuals chose their own partners, were often discouraged or disapproved by families due to societal norms.

Marriage also provided legal rights and obligations to spouses, as outlined in various marriage laws. These laws ensured financial support, inheritance rights, legitimacy of children, and responsibilities between partners.

#### **b) Modern View of Relationships**

In earlier times, cohabitation without marriage was socially unacceptable. However, in recent years, relationships have evolved, and one significant shift is the increasing preference for live-in relationships over traditional marriages.

Many couples today choose live-in relationships due to the freedom and flexibility they offer. Unlike marriage, live-in relationships come with fewer legal and social obligations, allowing individuals to focus on their careers and personal growth without the burden of traditional marital expectations. Another major reason for this shift is the fear of legal complications associated with divorce, which can be emotionally and financially draining.

Live-in relationships allow partners to stay together without legal formalities, making it easier to separate if things do not work out. Some countries have recognized certain rights for live-in partners, particularly in cases of domestic violence and financial dependency. However, live-in relationships remain controversial in many societies, with ongoing debates about their legal and social acceptance.

While marriage continues to be the preferred institution in many cultures, live-in relationships reflect a modern shift toward personal choice, independence, and changing social values.

### **Comparison with other school theories:**

a) Natural School of Law

The Natural School of Law<sup>3</sup> believes that laws should be based on morality, ethics, and universal justice. According to this school, relationships should align with traditional values and societal norms, making marriage the preferred institution. Marriage is seen as both a social and legal bond, deeply rooted in religious and customary practices.

Critics from the natural law perspective argue that live-in relationships lack societal and cultural validation, as they do not follow religious or traditional customs. Since these relationships do not fulfil the moral and ethical expectations set by society, natural law theorists do not support live-in relationships.

However, modern natural law thinkers take a different view, suggesting that if a live-in relationship is based on love, respect, and commitment, it aligns with natural justice and should be acknowledged legally. This reflects the evolving nature of human relationships and their acceptance in changing societies.

b) Positive School of Law

The Positive School of Law<sup>4</sup> states that law is what is written and enforced by the state, independent of morality or tradition. This school supports marriage over live-in relationships because marriage is regulated by legal frameworks such as the Hindu Marriage Act, Christian Marriage Act, Parsi Marriage Act, and Muslim Personal Laws. These laws provide legal validity, rights, and responsibilities to married couples, including divorce provisions and inheritance rights.

Since live-in relationships do not have a uniform legal framework, positivist scholars traditionally do not recognize them as valid unions. However, as societal norms evolve, some courts and lawmakers have started granting legal rights to live-in couples based on their long-term commitment. This shift suggests that if live-in relationships become widely accepted, they could be recognized under positive law with proper legal provisions.

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<sup>3</sup> See <https://lawbhoomi.com/natural-law-school-theories/>

<sup>4</sup> See <https://blog.iplers.in/legal-positivism-evolution-and-challenges/>

c) Feminist Jurisprudence

Feminist jurisprudence<sup>5</sup> focuses on gender equality, women's rights, and the dismantling of patriarchal legal systems. Traditional marriage has been criticized by feminists for reinforcing gender roles, where women were historically expected to be financially and emotionally dependent on their husbands.

Live-in relationships, on the other hand, are seen as offering greater independence and equality for women, as they are free from many legal and social pressures tied to marriage. Feminists advocate for the right of individuals to choose their relationships freely, without being forced into marriage due to social or family expectations.

However, feminist scholars also argue that women in live-in relationships should have legal protections, particularly in areas such as:

- Domestic violence laws
- Financial security in case of separation
- Child custody and inheritance rights

Feminist jurisprudence supports legal recognition of live-in relationships only if they ensure protection and equality for women.

### **Recognition of Live-In Relationships Across Countries:**

#### Legal Recognition of Live-In Relationships Worldwide

The legal status of live-in relationships varies significantly across different countries. Some nations provide legal recognition and protections similar to marriage, while others oppose or even criminalize cohabitation outside of wedlock. Generally, developed countries tend to be more accepting of live-in relationships due to their emphasis on personal freedom, individual rights, and evolving cultural norms. In contrast, traditional societies, influenced by deep-rooted cultural, religious, and familial values, often resist the idea of cohabitation without marriage.

#### Legal Status of Live-In Relationships in Different Countries

##### 1. United States

- The legal recognition of live-in relationships in the U.S. varies by state.
- Some states<sup>6</sup> provide legal protections similar to those of marriage for cohabiting couples, particularly through common-law marriage, which grants

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<sup>5</sup> See [https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/feminist\\_jurisprudence](https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/feminist_jurisprudence)

<sup>6</sup> Example: Texas

rights related to property, inheritance, and financial support if specific criteria—such as long-term cohabitation and mutual commitment—are met.

- However, not all states recognize live-in relationships legally, and the rights of cohabiting partners may be limited compared to married couples.

## 2. Australia

- Australia recognizes live-in relationships under the category of de facto relationships, granting cohabiting partners legal rights similar to those of married couples.
- These rights include property division, inheritance, financial support, and access to social security benefits.

## 3. China

- While live-in relationships are becoming increasingly common in China, particularly in urban areas, they lack formal legal recognition.
- Partners in cohabitation do not have rights related to property ownership, inheritance, or financial maintenance unless a legal contract is signed.
- With societal attitudes gradually shifting, discussions about possible legal reforms are ongoing.

## 4. France

- France has a legal framework known as Pacte Civil de Solidarité (PACS)<sup>7</sup>, which allows couples in a live-in relationship to register their partnership.
- This registration provides legal benefits such as shared property rights, inheritance rights, tax benefits, and social security entitlements.
- De facto couples who have been cohabiting for at least two years may claim property division and financial support rights in case of separation.

## 5. Islamic Countries (Saudi Arabia, UAE, etc.)

- Many Islamic nations prohibit live-in relationships, considering them unlawful under religious and legal frameworks.
- Cohabitation outside marriage can result in severe penalties, including fines, deportation (for expatriates), or imprisonment.
- However, some countries, like the UAE, have recently decriminalized cohabitation as part of broader legal reforms, signalling a slow but notable shift in societal attitudes.

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<sup>7</sup> See [https://www.ined.fr/fichier/s\\_rubrique/18987/publi\\_pdf2\\_pop\\_and\\_soc\\_english\\_369.en.pdf](https://www.ined.fr/fichier/s_rubrique/18987/publi_pdf2_pop_and_soc_english_369.en.pdf)

## Constitutional Basis of Live-In Relationships

In many countries, constitutional provisions related to personal freedom, privacy, and equality influence the legal treatment of live-in relationships.

- Other Countries:
  - In Western democracies, constitutional rights emphasizing privacy, equality, and freedom of choice support the recognition of live-in relationships.
  - In Middle Eastern and some Asian countries, legal frameworks prioritize religious and traditional values, limiting or prohibiting cohabitation outside marriage.

## Cultural Perspectives on Live-In Relationships

Culture plays a critical role in determining the acceptance of live-in relationships. Societal norms, religious beliefs, and traditional family values shape attitudes toward cohabitation before marriage.

### 1. Western Countries

- Western nations, including the United States, Canada, Australia, France, and the United Kingdom, have progressively accepted live-in relationships.
- Cultural values in these countries emphasize individual freedom, career priorities, and personal choice, making live-in relationships a widely accepted alternative to marriage.
- The ease of legal separation and evolving social structures contribute to the increasing normalization of cohabitation.

### 2. Asian Countries

- Many Asian nations uphold traditional family values and consider marriage a fundamental institution.
- Countries such as India, China, and Japan are experiencing a gradual shift in attitudes, particularly in urban areas where young couples increasingly choose live-in arrangements.
- However, in more conservative regions, societal and familial pressures continue to favour traditional marriage over cohabitation.

### 3. Middle Eastern Countries

- Middle Eastern nations, including Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Qatar, strictly adhere to Islamic laws, which prohibit live-in relationships outside marriage.
- Cohabitation is generally criminalized, and violators may face severe legal consequences.

- Some countries, like the UAE, have recently introduced reforms decriminalizing cohabitation, though cultural resistance remains strong.

## Levels of Acceptance Across the Globe

### 1. High Acceptance

Countries where live-in relationships are legally recognized and socially accepted:

- France, Canada, Sweden, Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom.

### 2. Moderate Acceptance

Countries where live-in relationships are increasingly common but still face societal and legal limitations:

- India, China, Japan, South Korea.

### 3. Low Acceptance

Countries where live-in relationships face strong legal restrictions or outright criminalization:

- Saudi Arabia, Iran, Qatar, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and other conservative regions in the Middle East and Africa

## Laws In India:

- In India, while live-in relationships are not explicitly regulated under marriage laws, the Supreme Court has recognized long-term cohabitation as marriage-like in certain cases.
- Partners in stable and committed live-in relationships can claim legal rights such as maintenance, protection from domestic violence, and property claims under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005)<sup>8</sup>.
- Although women in live-in relationships may be granted maintenance, they do not have direct property rights. Children born from such relationships are entitled to property inheritance, but they do not have claims over ancestral property.

Under Indian Consitution:

- The right to life and personal liberty under Article 21<sup>9</sup> of the Indian Constitution provides a legal basis for individuals to choose their partners and cohabit without formal marriage.

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<sup>8</sup> See protection of women from domestic violence act.

<sup>9</sup> See Article 21

- Article 19(c)<sup>10</sup>, which guarantees the right to form associations, further supports an individual's freedom to engage in relationships of their choice.
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) extends legal protections to women in live-in relationships that resemble marriages, providing legal remedies in cases of abuse.
- Maintenance claims for women in live-in relationships are granted based on the stability and longevity of the relationship.
- While women can claim maintenance, they do not automatically inherit their partner's property unless specifically mentioned in a will.
- Children born from such relationships have normal property rights but do not have claims over ancestral property.
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### **In Uttarakhand (India)**

Uttarakhand's implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in January 2025 introduced significant legal changes, particularly concerning live-in relationships. These developments are pivotal for research on evolving family law frameworks and the intersection of personal autonomy and state regulation.

#### **\*Legal Framework: The Uniform Civil Code (UCC)**

The UCC of Uttarakhand is a comprehensive legislation that standardizes laws related to marriage, divorce, inheritance, and live-in relationships, irrespective of religion. Notably, it mandates the registration of live-in relationships, aiming to provide legal recognition and protection to individuals in such partnerships. The law applies uniformly to all residents of Uttarakhand, including those in live-in relationships outside the state.

#### **\*Registration Requirements for Live-In Relationships**

Under the UCC, couples entering live-in relationships are required to register their status within 30 days of cohabitation. This process involves submitting a formal statement to the registrar, along with necessary documentation such as proof of age and residence. For individuals under 21 years of age, parental consent is mandatory. Failure to register within the stipulated time frame may result in penalties, including fines or imprisonment.

#### **\*Legal Implications and Rights**

The UCC extends certain legal rights to individuals in registered live-in relationships:

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<sup>10</sup> See Article 19 ( c )

\*Maintenance Rights: Partners deserted in live-in relationships are entitled to maintenance, ensuring financial security.

\*Inheritance Rights: Children born to partners in registered live-in relationships are recognized as legitimate, granting them equal rights in inheritance.

However, the law has faced criticism for being intrusive and over-regulatory, with concerns about privacy and the potential undermining of the institution of marriage.

#### \*Implementation and Public Response

Despite the legal provisions, the uptake of live-in relationship registrations has been low. As of May 2025, only 28 live-in relationships had been registered, compared to over 1.4 lakh marriages. Authorities attribute this to concerns over privacy, lack of awareness, and pending legal challenges. To address these issues, local authorities plan to conduct awareness campaigns and registration camps to encourage compliance.

#### \*Ongoing Legal Challenges

The UCC has been subject to legal scrutiny. Petitions challenging the law's provisions, particularly concerning live-in relationships, are currently under consideration by the Uttarakhand High Court. The court has sought responses from the Centre and is scheduled to hear the matter further in October 2025.

### **Rights and Duties of Partners in Live-In Relationships:**

Live-in relationships, though not universally recognized as marriages, offer certain rights and responsibilities to partners depending on the legal framework of the country. These rights typically concern property, maintenance, domestic violence protection, and inheritance. However, the duties and obligations of partners in such relationships may vary depending on legal recognition and societal acceptance.

#### 1) Rights available to the partners in live – in relationship:

##### a) Domestic violence

One of the major issues faced by the women in the current society is the problem domestic violence which can be either physical or mental traumas also. There have been several legislations and acts being passed in order to safeguard women against domestic violence. Many countries, including India, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, extend domestic violence protection to partners in live-in relationships. India's Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005) provides legal remedies for women facing abuse in live-in relationships.

b) Right to maintenance and legal support:

Live-in relationships are recognised if there are stability and intimacy. A relationship for long term is recognised and accepted. Women in long-term live-in relationships can claim financial maintenance if they can prove the stability and longevity of their relationship. In India, courts have ruled that a woman in "marriage-like" live-in relationships can seek maintenance under Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC). In Australia and Canada, financial support is available for partners who were in de facto relationships.

c) Property Rights

Partners in live-in relationships generally do not have an automatic right to each other's property unless they jointly acquire assets. In countries recognizing de facto relationships<sup>11</sup>, property rights may be granted if both partners contributed financially. In India, live-in partners do not have a legal right over each other's property unless a will or agreement explicitly states otherwise.

d) Parental and Child Rights

In many countries, children born from live-in relationships enjoy the same legal rights as children born from marriage, including inheritance and custody rights. In India, children from live-in relationships have property rights over their parents' self-acquired property but not ancestral property. In Western nations, live-in partners share equal parental rights and responsibilities towards their children, including custody and child support obligations.

### Divorce or separation in live – in relationship

Since live-in relationships are not legally classified as marriages, the concept of divorce does not formally apply to such unions. However, when live-in partners decide to separate, they may encounter legal challenges, particularly concerning financial support, child custody, and asset division. The legal complexities surrounding separation depend on the jurisdiction and whether the relationship was recognized under existing laws.

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<sup>11</sup> e.g., Australia, Canada, and France through PACS

### 1. Informal Separation vs. Legal Proceedings

- In most countries, live-in couples dissolve their relationship informally, without the need for legal proceedings.
- If there are no shared financial responsibilities, properties, or children involved, partners typically part ways without legal complications.
- However, if joint assets, financial obligations, or children are involved, legal intervention may be required to ensure a fair settlement.

### 2. Financial and Property Settlements

- In countries like Australia, Canada, and France, where de facto relationships or PACS partnerships are legally recognized, partners may claim financial compensation or property rights upon separation.
- If both partners contributed financially to acquiring assets, they may have a legal claim over shared property, even if ownership is in one partner's name.
- In some cases, courts may grant spousal support or financial maintenance to the economically weaker partner, similar to divorce settlements in formal marriages.

### 3. Legitimacy and Custody of Children Born from Live-In Relationships

- The legal status of children born from live-in relationships varies by country. In some jurisdictions, they may be considered illegitimate unless the parents take formal steps to establish paternity.
- However, most modern legal systems prioritize the child's welfare over the parents' marital status, ensuring that children from live-in relationships receive equal rights and protection.

### 4. Child Custody and the 'Best Interests' Principle<sup>12</sup>

When live-in partners separate and have children together, courts follow the "best interests of the child" principle to determine custody arrangements. This principle considers three key factors:

1. Child's Wishes and Preferences – If the child is of a mature age, their personal preference may be considered in custody decisions.
2. Financial Stability of Each Parent – The financial capability of each parent to provide for the child's needs, including education, healthcare, and overall well-being, is evaluated.

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<sup>12</sup> See Best interest doctrine

3. Living Environment and Emotional Stability – The court assesses which parent can offer a more stable, nurturing, and supportive environment for the child's growth and development.
5. Maintenance and Support for Financially Dependent Partners
    - Some jurisdictions, including India, Australia, and Canada, allow financially dependent partners to claim maintenance or financial support post-separation.
    - In India, the courts have ruled that women in long-term, stable live-in relationships can seek maintenance under the Domestic Violence Act and Section 125<sup>13</sup> of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).
    - However, maintenance claims are granted only if the relationship is proven to be stable, continuous, and marriage-like in nature.

### **Challenges and Future of live – in relationship in law:**

As live-in relationships become more prevalent worldwide, legal systems are increasingly challenged to define the rights and responsibilities of cohabiting partners. While some countries have adopted legal frameworks to offer protection, others remain resistant, leaving many partners without adequate rights. The evolving nature of relationships and societal attitudes creates legal uncertainties, particularly in matters related to property, inheritance, parental rights, and social acceptance.

#### **a) Issues Faced in Live-In Relationships**

Despite the growing acceptance of live-in relationships, couples in such arrangements face multiple legal, social, and financial challenges. Some of the key issues include:

1. Parental and Child Rights Uncertainty
  - One of the most critical concerns surrounding live-in relationships is the status of children born from such unions.
  - In many cases, parental responsibilities and rights—such as custody, inheritance, and legal guardianship—are questioned, particularly in societies where marriage is the norm.
2. Lack of Clear Legal Frameworks
  - In many countries, live-in relationships remain legally unregulated, leading to

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<sup>13</sup> During the pendency of an application in the court of law, the order may be passed by the magistrate directing the husband to pay the monthly allowances to the wife.

ambiguity in matters related to property ownership, maintenance, and financial security.

- Without a legal structure, partners in live-in relationships may not have access to rights that married couples automatically receive.

### 3. Property and Financial Disputes

- Many live-in couples jointly purchase property or make financial investments without legal safeguards, leading to ownership disputes upon separation.
- Unlike in marriage, automatic property rights do not exist for live-in partners, meaning one partner may face financial loss if their contributions are not legally documented.

### 4. Inheritance Issues

- Since live-in relationships often lack formal legal recognition, partners are not granted automatic inheritance rights unless explicitly stated in a will.
- Children from such relationships may also struggle to claim inheritance, especially in societies where traditional family structures dominate legal proceedings.

### 5. Social Discrimination and Stigma

- In conservative societies, live-in relationships are still stigmatized, leading to judgment and discrimination from the community, workplace, and even family members.
- Women in live-in relationships often face greater scrutiny and trauma due to societal perceptions, which can impact their mental health and social standing.

## b) Future of Live-In Relationships in Law

As societies continue evolving, discussions about the legal recognition of live-in relationships are gaining momentum. Just as gender and LGBTQ+ rights have become central topics in legal debates, the legality and rights of live-in partners are also being actively discussed in many nations.

### 1. Increasing Legal Recognition for Cohabitation

- Many countries are expected to introduce legal protections similar to France's PACS system or Australia's de facto relationship laws, ensuring live-in partners have legal rights related to property, maintenance, and inheritance.

- Governments may encourage cohabitation agreements that allow couples to define their rights, financial responsibilities, and child custody arrangements in case of separation.
2. Strengthening Property and Inheritance Laws
    - Future laws may address property ownership rights for live-in partners, preventing financial disputes after separation.
    - Countries may also introduce reforms to grant children from live-in relationships full inheritance rights, ensuring they are legally protected.
  3. Equal Parental and Child Rights
    - Legal systems may streamline paternity and custody rights, ensuring that children born in live-in relationships have the same legal protections as children of married couples.
    - Child support laws may evolve to guarantee equal parental responsibility, regardless of marital status.
  4. Financial Security for Women
    - Governments may expand laws to grant maintenance and financial security to women in long-term live-in relationships, ensuring they are not left financially vulnerable post-separation.
    - Courts may consider relationship duration and economic dependence when ruling on financial support for partners after separation.
  5. Equal Social and Legal Rights
    - Future legal developments may aim to provide live-in partners with the same rights as married couples in areas such as tax benefits, social security, healthcare, and employment benefits.
    - Countries with restrictive family laws may move toward decriminalizing and recognizing live-in relationships, as seen with the UAE's recent reforms.

### **Case Laws:**

**\*S. Khushboo v. Kanniammal & Anr. (2010)<sup>14</sup>**

\*Issue: Whether live-in relationships are illegal or immoral.

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<sup>14</sup> (2010) 5 S.C.C.600

\* Held: The Supreme Court ruled that live-in relationships are not illegal and fall within the ambit of the Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution. It emphasized that adults have the freedom to choose their partners, including the right to cohabit without marriage.

**\*D. Velusamy v. D. Patchaiammal (2010)<sup>15</sup>**

\*Issue: Whether a live-in relationship can be considered a "relationship in the nature of marriage" under Indian law.

\*Held: The Supreme Court held that a live-in relationship can be recognized as a "relationship in the nature of marriage" if it fulfills certain criteria, such as living together for a significant period, sharing a household, and presenting themselves as a couple. This recognition grants limited rights to partners in such relationships.

**\*Indra Sarma v. V.K.V. Sarma (2013)<sup>16</sup>**

\*Issue: Whether a woman in a live-in relationship is entitled to maintenance under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

\*Held: The Supreme Court extended the right to maintenance to women in live-in relationships under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, provided the relationship is akin to marriage. Factors like duration of the relationship, shared household, and financial dependence are considered in determining entitlement.

**\*Tulsa & Ors. v. Durghatiya & Ors. (2008)<sup>17</sup>**

\*Issue: Whether children born out of live-in relationships are considered legitimate and entitled to inheritance.

\*Held: The Supreme Court held that children born out of live-in relationships are not illegitimate and have the right to inherit their parents' property, provided the parents have cohabited under the same roof for a considerable period.

**\*Rohit Sagar v. State of Uttarakhand (2021)<sup>18</sup>**

\*Issue: Whether adults have the right to choose their life partners, including in same-sex live-in relationships.

\*Held: The Uttarakhand High Court recognized the fundamental right of legal adults to select their own partners, irrespective of gender, and instructed the police to ensure the safety and protection of a gay couple in a live-in relationship facing opposition from their families.

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<sup>15</sup> (2010) 10 S.C.C. 469

<sup>16</sup> (2013) 15 S.C.C. 755

<sup>17</sup> (2008) 4 S.C.C. 234

<sup>18</sup> (2021) U.K.H.C. 123

### **Conclusion:**

Live-in relationships have gained widespread acceptance in modern society, offering individuals freedom and flexibility in their personal lives. While some countries have granted legal protections to live-in partners, many still lack clear regulations, leading to legal ambiguities. The future of live-in relationships depends on evolving social attitudes and legal reforms that can balance personal freedoms with legal security. As society continues to change, live-in relationships may become as widely recognized and protected as traditional marriages.

