Race, Religion and Law in Colonial India: Trials of an Interracial Family (Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society)

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How did British rule in India transform persons from lower social classes? Could Indians from such classes rise in the world by marrying Europeans and embracing their religion and customs? This book explores such questions by examining the intriguing story of an interracial family who lived in southern India in the mid-nineteenth century. The family, which consisted of two untouchable brothers, both of whom married Eurasian women, became wealthy as distillers in the local community. A family dispute resulted in a landmark court case, Abraham v. Abraham. Chandra Mallampalli uses this case to examine the lives of those involved, and shows that far from being products of a 'civilizing mission' who embraced the ways of Englishmen, the Abrahams were ultimately - when faced with the strictures of the colonial legal system - obliged to contend with hierarchy and racial difference.

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