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# **An Analysis Of Forms And Evolution Of Hindu Marriage**

Marriage among the Hindus is a Sacramental Relation. This paper deals with Evolution and History of Hindu Marriage. It shows the ancient perspective of marriage and its customs. The paper elaborates forms of marriage practiced during the ancient era. It explains the changes and progress of marriage from the Vedic period to the current date. The Dharmasastra is the original customary rules for Hindu religion, and this paper shows how much the time has drifted our culture from original form.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Hindu marriage brings two people for eternal bond of life, so they can serve the purpose of Dharma (duties), Arth (meaning) and Kama. The Marriage ties two families together and everybody celebrates this union. Blessed by elders, blessed by the gods, the Hindu marriage is filled with rituals and lights to chase the darkness away. Hindu marriage holds a tradition that is held and followed through out the years. Right from the ancient period Hindu marriage is not just a ritual for consummation, it is merging of two souls that vows to be together forever. The ritual and produces of Hindu wedding differs from people to people, region to region but the core is Vedic yajna ritual and three ritual play a key role in every marriage: 1) Kanyadan ( a father giving his daughter to the groom), 2) Panigraha (marriage ritual happening before the sacred fire showcasing the union) and 3) Saptapadi ( the seven steps and vows). The primary witness of the marriage is fire (agni).

According to Indian law no marriage is complete unless and until the seven steps and vow are done.

## **TYPES OF MARRIAGE**

### **Brahma marriage**

It is a marriage where a man does marriage of daughter to a man who has well versed himself in Hindu Vedas. The man invites the groom himself. The parents of the girl learn everything about the groom's background. Through out India it is considered to be the best form of marriage. It holds high position of social progress. This method of marriage was free from force, condition and imposing etc. Brahmins followed this method.

Technically it is like an arranged marriage term used now a day where the family of both brides and the groom are holding the marriage with no compulsion of any sort. The girl's concern is considered in the styles of marriage.

### **Daiva marriage**

This is practiced when woman doesn't get a perfect marriage and is married a person (groom) chosen by the family or give her to priest as dakshina. These types of marriage often followed to create a diplomatic tie between enemies, allies, friends etc. in royal families during ancient

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times. They propose this marriage for political reasons and make allies to secure the future. Jodhabai's marriage with Abkar by her father Bharmal, Uttara's marriage with Abimanyu and Gandhari's marriage with Dhirutharashren are few examples. Though now a day this type of marriage is hardly practiced. Some business delegates and political figures in India follow Daiva marriage but with the name of Brahma marriage wrapped over them.

### **Arsha marriage**

An Arsha marriage where a woman is married to a sage or rishi in exchange of bulls and cows. These sages are powerful and their demand can't be refused. Even kings cannot stand against them. Sage Agasthya married Lopamudra under arsha marriage and many sage in Mahabharatha got married this way.

### **Prajapatya marriage**

In this marriage no monetary trades and kanyadan is required. In this the pair swore vows and live their life keeping up to the vows. The wife should be treated as companion for secular and religious matters. They vow a bond to face every problem together, pay their debts and raise their children. In this the bride's father goes in search of the perfect groom and treats him with respect and welcomes him to marry his daughter with respect.

It's almost similar like the modern day arrange marriage but involvement of the money is not happening. Here the bride's concern is considered as well as the groom's. Though sometimes it will be the groom's family searching for the brides, and during ancient times it was considered to be a shameful act .

### **Gandharva marriage**

This is love marriage of ancient times. The union of man and his lady love without parents knowledge is called Gandharva marriage. The man and woman fall in love and with each others concern they tie each other in marriage. This is not a sating like modern culture. In this the couple take vows of marriage and exchange promises in presence some person or nature.

There are many marriages in this type in ancient time. King Dushyanta and Shakunthala's marriage were married in this method.

### **Asura marriage**

In Asura marriage, the bridegroom gives as wealth he could to marry a girl. The payment to father is made and bride is complied to marry the bridegroom even he is not the compatible one. Sometimes the groom may also pose abnormalities which are blinded by the payment. During ancient times a woman was objectified and a man could pay the price if he desires to marry her. In this marriage woman's concern and her wish are not considered at all. Sometimes if girl's father is burdened with debt the groom would pay the debts off and in return the father would pay marry his to the groom. This type makes father in debt to the groom and even if the bride is not willing to marry the groom she is complied. But in some cases the bride would willing o marry the groom.

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During ancient times this was practiced by many kings and prince who desires to marry the princess. King Dasaratha gave a large amount to marry princess kaikaiyi and it is said that King Pandu paid a huge amount to King of Madra to marry his daughter Madri.

### **Rakshasa marriage**

This method was used by man who wages war against the girl's family and overcome them and claim the girl as his trophy, kidnap them and force them into marriage. The man who force woman into a marriage with himself is regarded as rakshas( demons). This marriage completely violates girls right and choices. Rakshasa marriage is a punishable act today. This method is considered as rape in modern times.

Arjun - Subadra's marriage in Mahabharatha was regarded as rakshasa marriage but Lord Krishana dismissed it saying both bride and groom were in love prior marriage and it is a Gandharva marriage

### **Paishaca marriage**

In this marriage girl's wish never mattered. The man who love the girl seduces her, sleeping under intoxicated or mental instability. This type is considered as inferior compared to others. A woman is forced into this marriage even she is completely against it. Bride 's family gets nothing out of it. This regarded as sinful in Manusmirti. In modern days it is Date rape that is punishable under law.

## **EVOLUTION OF HINDU MARRIAGE**

Over hundreds of years humans evolved gradually creating and accepting the changes around us. Humans changed drastically with every period of existence of life. Certainly Hindu cultures did undergo many changes. Right from the start of civilization switch did happen, from Vedic era to Medieval era then to modern era.

### **Marriage in Matriarchal era**

During Indus valley civilization, woman were respected and was given high status of goddess that eventually brought the existence of Matriarchal society. As the word suggests the female spouses were given privileges. A man would marry a woman and live next the bride's parents house. Their children would be brought up with them. Therefore the girl children would stay with their family even after the marriage . It forms the bond of 4-5 generations girl children living together.

### **Cross culture**

There are certain evidences that shows practice of cross cultural matrimony incidents. This evidence is assumed of belonging to harappan age. It was concluded that harappans might have involved in cross cultural marriages.

### **Polygamy and Monogamy**

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Polygamy and polyandry were practiced during the ancient times. It were very lawful act those days. When a woman are unable to fulfill the duty or religious matters or have complications in getting a child, especially if they fail to produce the male child their husband have free privileges to marry another woman again. A man is allowed to marry any count of wives he wants. This method was famous with kshatriyas. In Mahabharatha, Draupadi married 5 pandavas because of their mother's wish but Draupadi's own family was against it. This was the practice of polyandry where one woman had more than one husband. While the pandavas followed polygamy , Arjuna the third pandava married four women Subathdra ( krishnan's sister), Chitragada, Ulpuli including Draupadi.

But viewing Vedic period. Its vivid that polygamy was not practiced. It was during the medieval times this did come to act. Certainly with passing of time polygamy was replaced with monogamy. Though bigamy still in practice under the wraps. Monogamy held right as standard method in modern times.

## **Concept of Swayamvara**

Swayamvara is of Vedic culture. It was such famous in royal families that is during the middles ages. Sita and Rama were married this way in Ramayana. Kunti and Pandu also got married by swayamvara in Mahabharata. In the swayamvara is arranged by Kings for their daughter. The brides (kings daughter) were given chance to choose the groom according to abilities. Brides parents invite the best man around the place for the swayamvara. The bride is given knowledge about every participants prior to the event. The bride would see all the men and put the garland around the man she desires to marry.

Sometimes the father would keep some competition for the suitors to test their strength and abilities that help in selection. In Mahabharata, Draupadi's swayamvaram had such task was kept forth. In Ramayana, Sita's swayamvaram had the task which Rama won and got married to her.

## **Patriarchy**

Slowly the society changed its perspective as orthodox mentality. The matriarchal went towards the Patriarchy and caste based rules. In this the prominence of woman was taken away and they lost their freedom. They were placed under the male guardianship forever and woman went to their husbands house after marriage.

## **MODERN HINDU MARRIAGE**

AS the days past, cultural and tradition was compromised. The religion methods and practices were changing drastically due to the invasion of Muslim rulers and British, Dutch, French colonialism. The Foreign rulers were unable to understand the religious customs of our country and they imposed their religion into our soil and propagated their customs. Their interference in Hindu customs was acknowledged. Gradually people were fascinated with western culture. This influence affected the root of Hindu philosophy and culture.

Though some changes are considered for betterment of our live. Certain changes did brings great things to the culture. As it was clear some specific cultural action in Hinduism were

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violating our own right to live . With the rapid moving of time, modernizing our thoughts was the only option to survive the developing world. The English education altered the perspective of the relationship. With western tradition in our country, Hindu marriage customs went through major changes which had merits and demerits as usual. Here are the significant points about the changes:

Marriage is not as important as it was prior and was not considered mandatory. In ancient times marriage was compulsory for both men and women. A man who does not have son wouldn't attain salvation. One can't perform yajna without a spouse. It was a need for religious matters. But due to Foreign cultures men and women does not consider marriage necessary. Educated women doesn't want to accept the slavery of males. They do not consider ancient religious values at all. Ancient custom rejects the matrimony of people in same gotra and paver. In present these are not practiced and it is restricted by the law too.

During middle age the tradition of child marriage was in the trend. After the passing of Sarada Act (child marriage restraint act 1929). This became unlawful and a criminal offence. This leads to promise of women 's education. Previously inter caste marriage was restricted and was considered a sin. But now it is a lawful permitted. Sue the raise of co-education and the ideals of equality and freedom, these marriages are sign of modern development.

After immense effort of social reformers Hindu remarriage was accepted. Formally widows were thrown in fire with the dead husband as a practice of sati. Due to the efforts of Raja Ram it vanished. Widow remarriage was restricted those days and was seen as wrong act in the eyes of Hindu society. Later British enacted Widow remarriage act in 1856. Along with time, Hindu Society accepted the remarriage and was encouraged for the betterment of women.

Rejection of polygamy was the great effort towards woman right. According to Hindu marriage Act Polygamy unlawful and punishable. One shouldn't marry another woman when the first wife is alive. The Hindu marriage act gives privilege of Separation of their marriage under certain conditions. In ancient once united by holy theme of marriage they cant separate until death but now any body not willing to live together they can apply for divorce.

## **Love marriage**

Love marriage is common method now a day. It is between two people who choose each other as their life partners. These happen as the result of infatuation. Love marriage has its own consequences at the end. Inter caste, Interfaith marriages are still unacceptable concepts among many Hindu society . Many love marriages has ended violently but some are united forever. The results depend on their faith and trust on each other. Under law inter caste has no issue but inter faith marriage should be done under special marriage.

Same-sex marriage has started in India. It is still a bending approval in Supreme court. Many High court has approved living together but hasn't made same-sex marriage legal. Still protest are going on for this issue. But people consider this against the Indian culture .

## **Live-in relationship**

It is next issue that is traumatizing Hindu culture. A man and woman live together without life

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long commitment and without wedlock. Today Society does not make a face on this concept. Couples follow these methods for various reasons and some of them are , to under stand each other before marriage, couples whom completely gave up on Hindu culture and stopped believing them. Most couples who involve in this either split up or marriage each other but doesn't live like that forever. This method is still not encouraged in many areas in India.

## Conclusion

Right form start of human existence in this earth, changes are the only constant and permanent thing or action. Every period of time evolved gradually and the changes were accepted. People changed and cultures changed and marriages changed. Still the Hindu custom of marriage are followed but with slight changes. The influence of western culture is the main reason but not every change affected the culture in the wrong way. Not every custom and tradition were a favorable one for Hindus. Some were right violating their right of liberty and right to live, hence these evolution were a gain too. But at the same time some budding issues are completely against Indian culture and moral codes. There are various laws to protect the culture and the person from the injustice. Its personal right of major to select a person of their own choice as a mate. So there no imposing on them regarding the marriage.

Hindu marriage act and special marriage act secure the people whose rights of marriage are violated. Evolution of Hindu marriage had its own pros and cons respective to the person. We people accept the change and move on to the next generations.