

## Types of Hindu Marriage

### Part 1

From the days of Grihas Sutra, Dharma Sutra and Smritis the forms of marriage are said to be eight. But according to the historical point of view there were more prevalent forms than eight. It is believed that the other forms of marriage, apart from the eight forms of marriage as ordained by the sastrakaras, were based on custom and convenience of 18 people. N. C. Sengupta believes that inferior forms of marriage might have been adopted in the Aryan society from non-Aryan sources. However, the smriti recognized eight modes of obtaining a maiden as one's wife and these have come to be known in Hindu law as the eight forms of marriage.

#### (1) Brahma form of marriage:

Brahma form of marriage is said to be the best and mostly practiced throughout India. It is considered an advanced stage of social progress. Manu, the Hindu law-giver, laid so much importance on this form of marriage that he placed it even above divine marriage. Manu described this Brahma form of marriage as "the gift of a maiden spontaneously after clothing and reverencing her, to one learned in the Vedas and of good character,"

Thus the "gift of the daughter, clothed and decked, to a man learned in the Vedas, whom her father voluntarily invites and respectfully receives, is the nuptial rite called "Brahma" C.D. Banerjee is of the view that this form of marriage was called so because it was fit for the Brahmans. But in the Mahabharata it is also found that the Kshatriyas practiced the Brahma form of marriage.

The Hindu Sastrakaras have considered it the highest, purest and most evolved method of marriage as it was free from physical force, carnal appetite, imposition of conditions and money. In the Brahma form of marriage social descency was fully maintained and the religious rites were fully observed. It also implies an advanced stage of social progress as the form appears to have been intended as a reward for learning in the Hindu scriptures and thought to be an impelling force for the study of the Vedas. The Brahma form of marriage resembles the "Confarreation." marriage practiced in Rome

Manu and Yajnavalkya held that the son born of a Brahma marriage redeems from sin, ten ancestors, ten descendants and himself.

### (2) Daiva form of Marriage:

The Daiva form of marriage was slightly different from the Brahma form of marriage in the sense that the suitor was an official priest. Special qualities like good character, scholarship in the Vedas or good family background of the bridegroom were not emphasized in selection. "The rite which sages call 'Daiva' is the gift of a daughter whom her father has decked in gay attire when the sacrifice is already begun, to the officiating priest, who performs the act of religion. The Daiva form of marriage was described by Manu as "the gift of a daughter, after having adorned her, to a sacrificial present rightly doing his work in a sacrifice begun."

Manu and Yajnavalkya hold the view that the son born of such a marriage is said to redeem from sin seven parental ascendants and seven male descendants and himself. This form of marriage is exclusively for the Brahmins, because the Brahmins can only officiate in the sacrifices, as priests. But this form of marriage was rated lower than the Brahma form of marriage because here the father or other guardians of the bride took into account the services of the bridegroom. On the contrary, in the Brahma form of marriage, the bride figured as an object of 'dana' or gift by her father or guardian to the bridegroom.

### (3) Arsha form of Marriage:

"When the father gives his daughter away after having received from the bridegroom one pair of kine, or two pairs for uses prescribed by law, that marriage is termed Arsha". This form of marriage is called Arsha because it was current mostly in the priestly families as its very name suggests. In this form of marriage, the pair of kine, or two pairs, constitute the price of the bride. Sir Gooroodas Banerjee holds the view that "it means the ceremony of the Rishis and is perhaps indicative of the pastoral state of Hindu society, when the free gift of daughters in marriage was not common and cattle formed

the pecuniary consideration for the gift.” The epics and Puranas contain many examples of this form of marriage, one such being the marriage of sage Agastya with Lopamudra.

The number of persons redeemed by the male offspring of such marriage is only six (three male descendants and three female ascendants), Nevertheless, the importance of this form of marriage has been highlighted in the Visnu Purana and the Matsya Purana. It is said in the Visnu Purana that the person who gives a maiden in this form of marriage earns the competence of reaching the region of Vishnu in heaven.

Briefly speaking, this Arsha form of marriage symbolizes the pastoral stage of the Hindu society where cattle were considered indispensable. This form of marriage was also peculiar to the Brahmins. However, the Arsha form of marriage could not be practised in the later period due to the decline of sacrifices and conception that marriage is a pure gift by the father is an offence to the religious sentiment of the Hindus.