PREFACE

The sacrament of marriage is a very important sāmkara from various points of view. It gives a religious and legal sanction to the matrimonial relations of the persons concerned. Socially, it is an announcement of the new relationship. Marriage affects the personal life of every individual. The sacrament of marriage is discussed and accepted by the faculty of law also. Hence the concept of marriage determines the character of society. It has a great impact on social welfare. Particularly to an Indian mind marriage is not a mere legal contract, but it is a sacrament which lends a sort of permanency to the wed-lock. The religious aspect of the Hindu marriage is very important from this point of view. The rite gives a special meaning to sexual intercourse which otherwise would be a simple gratification of the sex- instinct. Hence this investigation is undertaken to explore the real character of the marriage ritual. Another purpose of this study is to examine if the present day ceremony is justified by the Vedic and Sastric texts. The procedure of marriage ceremony prescribed by the Sutras is too complicated and clumsy for the fast life of the twentieth century. Young men and women of to-day have started questioning the necessity of performing the marriage ritual itself. In this changing attitude it is necessary
to investigate and bring out the significance of the marriage ritual.

While investigating this problem I have collected and analysed the data from the Vedic texts up to Dharmasastras. The *Vivaha Sūkta* of *Rgveda* gives first clear picture of the primary marriage ritual, while the *Sūtra* and *Sastra* texts give a fully developed marriage ritual prescribing a number of details to be followed. Further the *Sastra* texts represent a land-mark in social history of India. The do's and don'ts prescribed by the law-givers like *Manu* still continue to affect the present social life of the Hindus. Hence this particular period was chosen for investigation.

The method of study followed is that of critical and analytical investigation of the original Sanskrit texts pertaining to the sacrament of marriage. All the data collected is presented under different heads. In the first section all the Vedic texts are studied starting from the *Vivaha Sūkta* i.e. *Rgveda* X.85. The texts from the *Atharvaveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Brahmanas* and the *Upanisads* are also included in this section. Along with the ritual aspect of marriage, the social aspect of marriage is also considered. At the end of the section are noted the conclusions
arrived at after the textual analysis. In this an attempt has been made to examine the view that polyandric and chaotic conditions prevailed during the Vedic period.

The topic of marriage has been studied by many scholars from different points of view like social, legal etc. The special aspect of this work is that herein one will find an analytical investigation of all the evidence about marriage. Evolutionary aspect of ritual and social conditions is another special feature of this work. At every stage the marriage ritual and prevailing social conditions are detailed out.

In the second section Sutra and Sastra texts concerning the sacrament of marriage are critically examined. The Grhya Sutras mainly deal with the ritual of marriage. It has been found that they prescribe a fully sophisticated ritual with all the details and niceties. On the other hand, the Dharmasastras deal primarily with the social aspect of marriage like polygamy, age of the bride and groom, widow-remarriage, levirate etc. In this section also the conclusions derived are noted at the end of the textual study.

The third section is divided into two parts. In the first one an attempt has been made to discover the impact of the
injunctions of the law-givers on the life of the people in the twelfth century. The social position of women of present day has been viewed from this point of view. Further the Indian marriage ritual is compared with marriage ritual of various other countries. The Indo-Germanic character of some rites like Hastagraha i.e. grasping of hands or Agniparinsayana i.e. circumambulations, has also been discussed. The significance of various marriage rites and the influence of black magic and superstitions is also considered. The last part of this section is a Resume. In this part, a pen-picture of marriage ritual and social conditions starting from Vedic period upto Dharma Sastra is given. This clearly shows how the ritual evolved and the social conditions changed from time to time. In the end, a plan of marriage ritual is suggested considering modern conditions as well as the historical character of various rites.

I have also attached two appendices to this work. The first one gives text, source and translations of all the mantras used in marriage rite of the Grhya Sutras. This I humbly claim as an original work. In the second appendix I have given a glossary of technical, ritualistic words used during the course of the discussion.
The textual study, as is shown in the following pages, reveals that the ritual prescribed by the Vedas is simple and straightforward, while the one prescribed by the sutra-texts is rather elaborate, clumsy and tiresome. In the Vedic times the Aryan-life was not settled and peaceful. The people moved from place to place in search of new territory conquering original inhabitants of India. So a simple ritual suited them best. Similarly the present-day life is very fast. On quite a few occasions bride and groom are from two distant places. The complicated marriage ritual is becoming unmanageable and inconvenient. Hence a changed ritual is suggested. Further it has been discovered that child-marriage was not existant in Vedic period. In the Sutra-period also girls were married after attainment of puberty. But the Sastrakaras voted in favour of child-marriage. The investigations show that this phenomenon of child-marriage had an ever-lasting effect on Indian society. The progress of Indian woman in all the spheres except the household was stopped. Further the views of the Sastrakaras about niyoga or levirate, widow-remarriage, divorce and inter-caste marriage also effected a great social change. The period of the law-givers reflects a picture of society undergoing a great social change. The law-givers did not approve
either of the widow-remarriage, or of inter-caste marriage or levirate. So they strictly tabooed these practices. The dicta of Sastrakaras like 'na stri svatantryam arhati' even to-day affect the life of a Hindu woman.

To conclude, this is an attempt to study the socio-religious aspect of marriage through critical and analytical study of Sanskrit-texts pertaining to the sacrament of marriage.