SECTION III

1. From Dharmasastras to Modern Times

2. Resumé
1. **From Dharma-Sastras to Modern Times**

After presenting the data from the Sutra and Sastra or Smrti texts it will be proper to review the presentation. It was not possible to discuss some points while investigating the texts. These are brought out and an attempt is made to relate the discussion to prevailing marriage customs in other countries and in present times.

The first and the most apparent point strikes the observant mind is that the Grhyasutrakaras confine themselves totally to the description of marriage ritual giving all the possible details and finer shades. On the other hand the Sastrakaras including the Dharmasutrakaras concentrate on social practices and usages, prescribing norms of behaviour and prohibiting harmful things. They are not interested in discussing the ritual. They accept the one prescribed by the Grs. but they discuss age of marriage for girls, remarriage, the life of widows, the usage of Niyoga or levirate, inter-caste marriage etc. and express their opinions in an authoritative fashion. Only two Smrtis viz. Laugākṣi and Laghvasvalapyrus discuss the ritual. Hence the discussion will mainly be divided into two parts:

I) **Ritual aspect of marriage**

II) **Social aspect of marriage**.
I) Ritual Aspect of Marriage

The ritual aspect of marriage may be reviewed under the following different heads:

A) The order and importance of various rites
B) The meaning and propriety of the formulae used during the main marriage rite
C) Similarity of these principal rites to those performed by people residing in other countries
D) The passage of rites to posterity.

A) The Order and Importance of Various Marriage Rites

As we have seen earlier, all the rites in marriage ceremony can be divided in three broad groups as i) pre-marriage rites, ii) main or principal marriage rites and iii) post-marriage rites. Out of these, the main marriage rites are fairly common to all the Gṛs. but in the case of pre-marriage rites the Gṛs vary from one another. Different rites are prescribed by different Sutrakaras. A number of practices must have been followed by people staying at different places, belonging to different castes or belonging to different exogamous groups. This is confirmed by the Ṛṣv. Gṛs¹ as it says "Various indeed are the observances of countries

and villages*. However, bathing of bride before marriage, Kanyādāna and Madhuparka are fairly common. All the Sutrākāras prescribe homa and ājya abhutis before the main marriage rite. Out of these the rite of kanyādāna has been discussed by both Śāstrākāras and scholars of modern times.

**Kanyādāna**

Out of the eighteen Gr.Ś. investigated four viz. Gob. Gr.Ś. the Āps. Gr.Ś. the Hir. Gr.Ś and the Āsv. Gr.Ś. do not discuss this rite.

Kat. Gr.Ś. 2.4.1 makes a reference to the payment of bride price indicating Āsura form of marriage. Var. Gr.Ś also speaks of the exchange of gifts; Āgn. Gr.Ś. states that the groom accepts the Stridhāna (i.e. wealth exclusively belonging or gifted to the maiden) along with the proposed bride. The Kau. Gr.Ś. prescribes Maha vyahrtis at the end of kanyādāna. Formula  No. 20-26 (from the Index of Mantras), are prescribed by various Sutrākāras. Out of these only one could not be traced to the Vedas. It has been drawn from the Vaj. Sam. This indicates that kanyādāna has had its origin in the Vedic times.

The word dana i.e. gift, from kanyādāna is important. The Śāstrākāras like Manu, Narada, Vasiṣṭha etc. praise this as the highest type of meritorious acts. Vasiṣṭha equates the gift of a daughter to the

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gift of thousand oxen. This concept or idea of kanyā-
dana itself reduced the status of a daughter. She became
one of the things possessed by her father like slaves and
cattle - a possession which he could donate at his free
will, without taking into consideration her choice or
opinion. The father or the guardian was solely responsible
for the choice of the bridegroom.

The meaning of the word dāna as given by Devala
states, "That which is given to deserving people, always
without any purpose or expectation of a return and with
the sole intention of giving away that gift is known as
meritorious which is given at proper time, and place"
(and to proper person). Only that thing can be given
or offered as gift which is owned by someone. This
meaning of the word dāna indicates exclusive ownership.
Hence father is the possessor and daughter becomes a
thing possessed by him like kine, gold or slaves which
he can donate. Is this meaning implied by the Śāstrakāras
when they used the word dāna or is all the praise of
kanyādana a mere arthavāda?

1. Vasiṣṭha Dh. XXIX.18
2. पाणेस्यो दौरसे विक्कम्पपैक्य प्रमोक्षनम्
   कैवल्य त्यागाक्ष्णम कत्व धनस्य तस्यः

   - तेक्ष्य पुति.
The \textit{Apā-Dhāraṇī} states\(^1\) that there is nothing like sale or gift of a child. Karka, a commentator on \textit{Parā-Gṛha}\(^2\) states that the use of the word 'dātī' (gives) itself is unimportant here or is used metaphorically. When anything is donated one has to give up his right of ownership. But even though a daughter is married, the father says, 'this is my daughter'.

Although the commentator explains away the word \textit{kanyādāna} as above the circumstances then prevalent, which came down to the twentieth century lead one to believe that the word \textit{kanyādāna} is much more significant than suggested by the commentator. Firstly because gift of daughter necessitated previous consent of the father of the maiden. This rite was not performed if the bride was procured without her father's consent as in the Gāndharva, Rākṣasa or Paisāca forms of marriage. Secondly, as we have seen during the period of Śrīnivāsa child marriages became common. A man of twenty four married a girl of ten\(^3\). This bride neither had any say in the

\begin{enumerate}
  \item 'दानं अक्षयमस्यायात्मकं न विभूतं ।
  
  / आयम-धर्मः ॥.6.13.10
  
  \item 'सत्करण्णाग्युरीबं हि परस्परत्वादानं दानम् । न व कन्या कार्यक्षिप्य अस्त्यकन्या करतुं करति ।। नादि परस्य कन्या मातृति, किवागि परस्य 'भगवं कन्या' खितिनिबधानात् अत्र गेषो ददाति ।'
  
  \item Vide Manu. IX.94.
\end{enumerate}
choice of the husband nor could she be expected to have any capacity to do so. So it was the father or the guardian in whom was concentrated all the deciding power regarding his daughter's marriage. It was the father or the guardian who decided when, with whom and where his daughter should be married. Practically the father or the guardian owned his daughter and sometimes he donated her as a gift and some other times he accepted bridal price and gave her to a person who could afford to buy her. Selling, buying or giving away as a gift are perhaps too bitter words to be liked. But the way in which marriages took place and the daughters were given away in marriage does suggest that the father or the guardian of a maiden was her owner in a restricted sense of the term i.e. he could not perhaps treat her as kine, slaves or any other wealth but it is a fact that he owned her. It must be noted that Manu ¹ considers sale of daughter in marriage while discussing sale of other merchandise.

The practice of accepting bride-price became obsolete as days passed by. But the child-marriages and disparity in the age of bride and bridegroom did continue. Further the concept of kanyādana or gift of a maiden gave rise to the notion that it should be accompanied by some daksinā i.e. some gift of gold or...

¹. Vide Manu VIII.205.
other wealth for the groom. For instance if the Brāhmaṇas are regaled with good food they are given a couple of coins by way of daksīṇā or if a cow is donated to a brāhmaṇa along with it also some money or gold is offered by way of daksīṇā. Similarly the grooms were also given daksīṇā perhaps gold¹, at the time of kanyādāna.

Beginnings of this practice are found in the Śūtra-period. If the father was rich he gave varadaksīṇā to suit his status and richness. In the course of time the grooms started demanding whatever they liked from the fathers of their respective brides. On the one hand the Śrautist-śāstras threatened the father that he would acquire sin of killing an embryo if his daughter was not married before she attained puberty; on the other hand, there were Muslim invaders who threatened to carry away their young daughters² if they were unmarried and without proper protection. All these factors increased bargaining power of marriageable boys and this led to the practice of payment of heavy 'deheja' or dowry which has come down to the modern times. Payment of gifts to the daughter and not to the groom or his father was voluntary in the Vedic period. The Śūtras make a reference to the gift

². Devala Śrauti 47 onwards discusses the case of a maiden and married woman carried away by the Muslims.
of gold at the time of kanyādāna. But the post-Smṛti period shows the practice of payment of heavy dowry which even today causes many social problems.

Out of the remaining pre-marriage rites Madhuparka. Homas and āhutis prescribed by different Sutrakāras are detailed out earlier. Only one thing that must be mentioned is that the pre-marriage ritual described by each Sutrakāra differs from that of the other in some respect. Yet ājya āhutis and maha vyāhṛtis are prescribed by all of them.

The main marriage rite

The main marriage rite consists of the following four rites:

(1) Pānigrāhāna or Hastagrābha i.e. grasping of hands

(2) Asmrārāhana i.e. stepping on the stone

(3) Agniparīnahāna i.e. circumambulations round the holy fire.

(4) Lājāhoma i.e. offering of roasted grain

(5) Saptapadi or seven steps

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1. There are some other rites like Anjana, Simanta, Hrdayaśparśana etc. described by few Gṛ.Ś. These are not being discussed here as only those that are common to all the Gṛ.Ś. are being considered.
The Gr.Ś. are not unanimous about the order in which these rites should be performed. Grasping of hands comes first according to all the śutras except the Par. Gr.Ś. and Vai. Gr.Ś. According to the Par. Gr.Ś. the offering of ājās comes first. It is followed by Pañigrahaṇa. Āsāmarohaṇa and Agniparimāṇaṇa and the whole rite is repeated thrice. According to the Vai. Gr.Ś. Āsāmarohaṇa comes first. It is followed by Pañigrahaṇa, ājāhaṇa and agniparīṇayaṇa. Āsāmarohaṇa, agniparīṇayaṇa and ājāhaṇa: is the order recommended by the Gr.Ś of Āgn. Kau, Bhā and Śan. The Maṇ. Gr.Ś prescribe a separate formula for stepping down. According to the Gr.Ś of Āgn. Bau., Cau., Āpa., Maṇ., and Jai. Agniparīṇayaṇa comes first. The Bau. Gr.Ś does not recommend the threefold performance of these rites. All these permutations and combinations show how the ritual had become highly intricate in the times of Sutrakāras.

Agniparīṇayaṇa signifies fire-worship. The fire is supposed to protect the couple that goes around. Āsāmarohaṇa brings firmness in married life. The bride was supposed to be as firm as a rock because of her treading on a stone. This reflects a simple primitive mind. Offering of ājās was performed for securing progeny and long life.

1. For more details vide Section II. part I. II. a.
Saptapadi

Saptapadi or seven steps is one of the very important rites as it marks the final stage in the principal marriage rite. This rite is absolutely vital and crucial; once it is performed the father of the bride cannot break the transaction of marriage. He has the right to revise his decision in case of emergency before the rite of seven steps is performed. In the modern language this rite puts a seal on the transaction. Manu expresses the same view that the wifehood finds its completion in the performance of the rite of Saptapadi. Likhita Sām. also states that the bride breaks away from her gotra and joins the one of her husband when she takes the seventh step. Even the Hindu Law of to-day accepts this dictum. "It is on the completion of the last step that the marriage takes place and till then the transaction is incomplete and can be revoked" remarks N.R. Raghavachariar. He further quotes a few cases in which decision about completion of marriage rested on saptapadi. He remarks in a foot note "a custom that saptapadi is not necessary

1. याषिंश्चिका मन्या निःक्त दार्शिष्यम ।
   तेषां निःक्तु दुः विष्णुया विवृद्धम: सप्तमेव पदे।VIII.227.
2. Cf. also 'सयोगादु ब्रजेन्द्रे नारी विवाहादु सप्तमेव पदे।'
The same words occur in Likhita Sām. 27.
4. Ibid. p.40 Foot Note 39.
to complete the marriage has got to be proved if such
custom is set up”.

All the Gr.Ś. except Gob. and Bau. prescribe
that paniyagaha preceds saptapadi. It is prescribed
that the steps must be taken in the north easterly
direction. The formula prescribed is traced to Tait.Br.
II. 7.7.11-12.

Post-marriage rites

In the post-marriage rites Dhruvadarśana is a
rite common to all the ātratra. Similarly Grhapravesāniya
Homa i.e homa performed on arrival in the husband's home
and Caturthākarma i.e. the rite of consummation performed
on the fourth day, are prescribed by all the ātratra.

Dhruva-darśana

Although the rite is tittled as 'beholding the
constellation of Dhruva', the Āśv. Gr.Ś adds constellation
of 'seven stars'. The Ṛna.Gr.Ś adds 'Jivanti' and
'Arundhāti' and praises all the mountains as firm. The
Āpa.Gr.Ś mentions only Dhruvārundhāti while Pār.Gr.Ś. only
Dhruva. The whole idea is to gain firmness or stability
for married couple.

Since I have described in detail all the post-
marriage rites, in order to avoid repetion they are not
being discussed here. Yet it is necessary to mention that
the rite of caturthākarma or consummation of marriage
clearly indicates that the child-marriage was not common
in the days of the Śṛṇyasūtras but it came into practice in the period of the Sastrakaras.

B) The Meaning and Properity of the Formulae used during Marriage Rite

I have enlisted in the Index of the Mantras, attached to this work, about two hundred and five formulae that are quoted by the authors from various sources. Out of these forty-one could not be traced to either Vedas or other texts, like Mantra-Brahmana, Brahma, Mantrap and Brahmanas. Perhaps the Śrutakaras drew them from some works which are lost to us or they themselves formulated a few verses which they wanted to be used in the marriage rites.

The formulae used at the time of "Bathing of the Bride", praise the waters as carrying Agni as embryo, abode of Varuna, in whom Savitar was born, of golden colour, clean and purifying. They are invoked to bestow wealth, to procreate strength and energy, to make the appearance pleasant and delightful.

The formulae are mainly taken from AV I.33 and RV X.9. In the original both the hymns are addressed to waters. Perhaps these verses are chosen for their poetic beauty and connection with waters.

Formulae 8-10 are to be recited while carrying

1. See Appendix A.
clods of earth. These formulae could not be traced to any of the Śrutis. Only formula No. 8 is similar to Vāj. Saṃ. I.5.5.1. These formulae are perhaps expected to have a magical effect in predicting the future and fortune of the bride and her progeny. The fact that these formulae cannot be traced to any of the Vedas indicates that this usage of carrying the clods of earth is non-Vedic and that most probably it is an innovation of the early Sūtra period. The later Sāstrakāras do not refer to this practice.

The formulae No. 11-13 are recited at the time of playing musical instruments. These also could not be traced to any of the Vedic texts. The AV and the RV do have verses referring to playing on dundubhi but the context is different viz. that of war. Dundubhi was produced by digging a whole in the earth and covering it with a piece of leather. The musical instruments were played for bestowing on the bride, auspiciousness, progeny, beauty and pleasantness. Several goddesses like Viśā. Indraṇī, Agneyī, Aśvinī etc. are invoked to bestow good marital fortune on the bride.

RV X.85.23 and X.32.1 are recited while sending the wooers to the house of the proposed bride. The first one expresses the best wishes for the journey without any accidents on the road. The second one is from a hymn addressed to Indra. This is taken out of context only
because of the reference to speeding horses. If the groom saw the bride personally he had to recite Āpa. Mantrap. I.I.3-6 which in turn are taken up from AV XIV.1 and XIV.2 i.e. Vivāhaprakarana. These are recited to direct all the inauspiciousness, harm and bad luck away from the bride. Only the last one i.e. formula No. 19 appears to be out of place as it refers to the wailings of the bride and her kinsmen. The formula also mentions Fathers present at the sacrifice and the joy of husbands on embracing their wives.

The formulae prescribed by various sutraś to be recited at the time of kanyādāna are drawn from different sources like the RV, the Mait. Saṇ. the Vāj. Saṇ. and the Āpa. Mantrap. Out of these AV III.29.7 praises the importance of love in married life by saying that love is giver and acceptor. Anuvāka starting with ‘śemāna va’ reiterates the importance of unanimity in married life. The unanimity is religious, mental and social. Another formula recommended is RV II.85.46. It is from the marriage hymn, blessing the bride to be the sovereign of her husband’s household, ruling all her in-laws. This mantra appears slightly improper at the time of kanyādāna. Vāj. Saṇ. VII.47 is recited to ensure that the receiver gets happiness from the gift. This formula is used since daughter is being donated as a gift to the proposed groom.

1. Cf. Formulae Nos. 20-26 from the Index.
RV x.91.7, RV x.32.1 and Āpa. Mantrap. I.I.3 refer to travel or journey and it is not clear why they are recommended at the time of kanyādana. The first one of the above three is also prescribed at the time of bridal journey and the following two at the time of sending away the wooers.

In the rite of madhuparka i.e. reception of the bridegroom, three verses starting with the word "Madhu" are used. These are RV I.90.6-8. Here the word 'Madhu' does not necessarily mean 'honey' but 'sweetness'. RV I.90 is a hymn addressed to Viśvedevas. The verses praise and cherish sweetness of wind, rivers, medicines etc. Out of other formulae used some are taken from Āpa. Mantrap., Vai. Sam. and Man. Sr. S. "Thou art seat of ambrosia' is a high eulogy of the seat offered. On the other hand 'by the command of God Savitṛ, by the arms of Asvins and the hand of Puṣan, I accept thee" is like a mere tall talk or arthavāda. Same is the case with the formulae No. 34-38 which could not be traced to any other source but the Āsv. Gr. S. itself.

The ātratas recommend various rites to be performed before the actual marriage rite. A number of formulae picked up from various sources are used. They are not being discussed here as they differ from ātra to ātra. Only the rites, that are common to majority of the ātratas are discussed.
The main formula used at the time of 'Grasping of hands' or p\=nigr\=ah\=a is RV X.85.36. This is also repeated by Man. Br. I.2.10 and Āpa. Mantrap. I.3.3. This formula has two aspects; one is that the two should live together till old age and the second is that the gods have given bride for performing householder's duties. The usual craving for male progeny is surprisingly not present in this formula. But the formulae No. 102-104 do emphasize this aspect about male progeny. It is not clear why RV X.121, 3-8 are recommended as mantras at the time of Hastagrabha. All these verses end in the phrase, 'kasm\=ai dev\=aya havise \=v\=idh\=ema'. They have nothing to do with marriage rite since they only praise and eulogize the grand and wonderful aspect of the universe and state that God is responsible for this grandeur. The Āpa. Gr. 8 uses the formulae from Āpa. Mantrap. Out of these formulae No. 110 makes a reference to forefathers while the one following it praises Sarasvati. AV XIV.1.46 and XIV. 2.71 are also used as mantras during this rite. The total number of mantras prescribed by different Gr. S for this rite is as high as seventeen. This show how various Śutrakāras used different mantras to maintain their originality and speciality.

The formula used at the time of āśmarohana is similar to AV II.13.4. The original topic of the hymn is clothing the child with a dress for the first time.
The baby is asked to climb on the stone and then it is draped with a new dress. It is prayed that it gets firmness of the stone in its life. The formula has been chosen as the firmness in married life is desired by the couple. One more formula used i.e. No. 110 from the Index is again an eulogy of Sarasvati for protection. The *Man Gr. S* uses a formula for stepping down the stone in which the bride and the bridegroom are compared to Indra and Indrani.

One of the formulae used at the time of *agniparinayana* i.e. circumambulations is *RV* II.7.3. It says "So through thy favour may we chase all our enemies away, as it were through streaming water floods. "Originally the hymn is addressed to Agni. Agni is requested here to clear the path off from the enemies and so the verse is essentially concerned with war. It appears out-of-place at the time of *agniparinayana*. Other formulae employed praise Agni as one being carried at the fore-front of the bridal procession of Surya and invoke Agni, the resplendent one, for long life and progeny.

Out of several formulae employed by the *sutras* for the rite of *lajahoma*, a majority could not be traced to the Vedas. As mentioned in formula No. 127, the mantra 'iyam nari upadante .... etc' is similar to *AV* XIV.2.63. The difference is that the *AV* mentions the scattering of pulya grains while *sutras* recommend oblations of roasted grain. This source suggests that the idea about *lajahoma*
was suggested by 'scattering of pulya grains' in the Atharvanic period. Yet all the technicalities were detailed out and the rite obtained its complete form only in the time of the śutra period. All other formulae invoke Agni, Bhaga and Pūṣan to bless the groom with long life, progeny and prosperity. These are desired for the relatives of the bride also.

After this comes the rite of saptapadi. The formula 'ekam _Iṣe ... etc.' (Mantra No. 135 from the Index) is originally used for a cow for whom Soma was purchased. Does this suggest a comparison of cow and the bride who is getting married? This leads one to conclude that a wife like a cow, was also considered one of the objects that formed the wealth of a man. This does indicate the secondary position of the bride.

All the mantras used for the rite of Dhruvadarsana have their origin in the śutras themselves. In these formulae Dhruva is praised as a celebrity of firmness and is invoked to grant it to the married couple. Dhruva is invoked to grant permanency to their progeny, cattle and wealth.

The mantras prescribed for the caturthikarma are RV X. 85.21-22. In these Visvavasu is requested to leave the maiden and to find another one because this one because this one has found her husband. It is stated that these should be recited while putting the jāice of the adhyānga
plant in the nostrils of the bride. Actually this rite takes place after the arrival of the bride in her husband's house. She is already married and it is difficult to understand why these particular verses are chosen. Another mantra i.e. आपा मन्त्रप. II.4.6 (No. 212 of Mantra Index) is recited to bless the couple with the intelligence of the Apsaras and success of the Gandharvas. In RV X.121.10 (formula No. 209 from Mantra Index) Prajapati is invoked to grant the couple hearts desire and stores of riches. All other formulae that follow (i.e. No. 213-216 of the Index) are a contribution of the Grs. They profess unanimity of mind and body and poetically express the rejoicing experience of consummation of marriage.

C) Similarity of the Principal Rite to those Performed by People Residing in other Countries

The rite of पाणिग्रहणा or grasping of hands finds place in the marriage ceremonies of several countries. Westermarck in his History of Human Marriage\(^1\) points out that this rite can be found in some form or other among the Wabondies of Africa, Abyssinians, Queenslanders of Australia, Nafors of New Guinea, Benuas of Malacca and others. In many parts of Germany the priest joins the hands of the couple. Here also\(^2\) the bride comes under

\[\text{Vol. II. p.439.}\]
\[\text{Vide 'Marriage Roman' by Fowler W.W., E.E.R. Vol. VIII. p.465.}\]
the hands of the husband just as in ancient Rome the bride by dextrarum junction. In this the bride placed her in the right hand of the groom. Even in the Christian marriage we hear of hand fastening in the sense of betrothall. According to the Norse Laws, it was essential for the legal force of the stipulations made of the betrothall, that the groom should take the hand of the bride and thereby, affirm the contract. Even Iranians of olden days concluded their betrothall by joining the hands of the boy and girl.

The rite of "going round the fire" also can be found amongst some other countries than India. In ancient Rome joining of hands was followed by a sacrifice and the groom and the bride walked round the sacrificial altar from left to right. In Russia the priest joined the hands of the couple beneath his stole and, followed by them still hand in hand walked slowly round the 'naloy' three times. In many parts of Germany the custom of leading the bride three times round the fire of the hearth is

1. Vide 'Forms of Marriage in Ancient India, by Heramba Chatterjee Śāstrī, Vol. I.
4. Russian-English Dictionary published by 'Soviet Encyclopaedia Publishing House' Mosco; 1965, gives the meaning of 'naloy' as 'analoy' which means 'łęktaran' i.e. desk in church used for singing or reading.
observed and 'where' the custom of walking round the fire is no longer practised as in some parts of Westphalia, the bride is still led to the hearth and the tongs are put into her hand to make up fire. Exactly the same custom exists in Scotland". Among the Croats, the Merina in Madagaskar and the Koryaks, Westermarck records that the bridesman leads the bride round the hearth in which fire is burning. Among some southern Slavs the bride is taken thrice round the church and the same is the case with Isle of Man, Perthshire and Wärend in Sweden. In Greece, in present times, the bride and bridegroom are led three times round the fire. These ceremonies of going round the hearth, altar or church, are survivals of the older custom of going round the fire.

Thus agniparānapavāna is not a speciality of Hindu marriage but this rite is Indo-Germanic in character and is prescribed in marriage ceremonies of many other countries.

Dr Winternitz argues that the rite of saptapadi

1. Vide Transactions of International Folk-lore Congress, (1891) p. 284. (It has not been possible so far to get this reference).


is essentially Indian in character and cannot be classed as Indo-Germanic as proved by Weber¹. Referring to the word 'sakhāya', Weber maintains that originally the rite was performed to mark friendship of two persons. According to Dr Winternitz seven steps are not limited to the marriage ritual. When Buddha was born he took seven steps in the northern direction and at the seventh step he exclaimed "I am the Highest in the World". A culprit was expected to take seven steps while carrying a piece of hot iron. "All this seems rather to point to a peculiar Indian origin of the seven steps". Thus saptapadī is a peculiar Hindu custom.

Some of the remaining marriage rites are, however, Indo-Germanic in character. Partaking² of food together by husband and wife is an extremely frequent and wide spread marriage rite. The Grihs prescribed it after the offering of athālipaka. Tribes in America and Morocco, Sakalavas and other natives of Madagascar, the Negrites of Zambales and the Gonds of Korkus have this custom. In ancient Greece they partook of a sesame cake. In ancient Rome they shared a cake made from old Italian grain called far. Yet in spite of its

occurrence among so many peoples of the Indo-European race we cannot be certain that it was a primitive Indo-European custom. As Winternitz points out it is possible that it originated among different branches of that race independently. "It would be different if we found exactly the same kind of dish — say the wedding cake — used among all the different Indo-European peoples, or if the ceremony had its fixed place in the marriage ritual, like the joining of hands and some other ritual".

Further Westermarck also proves that the custom of seating the bridal pair or the bride alone on the bull's hide and throwing of some kind of cereals or fruit on the bride can be traced to the primitive Indo-European customs.

Thus some customs concerning Hindu Marriage Rite are proved to be Indo-European in character.

D) Passage of Rites to Posterity

It is interesting to note that some of these marriage rites are still performed in the present days. The rites of pāṇigrahana is still performed throughout India in some form or other\(^3\). Thurston in his book

1. Vide Transactions of International Folk-lore
   Congress, (1891) p.281.
'Caste and Tribes of Southern India' records the custom of *panigrahana* among the Arshinas¹, Badagas², Badhoyis³, Bants⁴ and Bavuris⁵. Among the Bondaris this is called *hastagonthi*⁶. This custom is also followed by Billavas and Coda-puse. Among the Bhots the ends of the covering or wearing garments of the bride and bridegroom are tied. Grasping of hands is noticed among Biyaris. Among the Bundelas it is an indication that the groom promises to support his bride as long as he lives. In Punjab, the father of the bride gives his daughter's hand to the bridesman three times. *Riley* in his 'Caste and Tribes of Bengal' records this custom amongst Bengalis. In Maharashtra also this rite is still observed.

"The custom of going round the fire is still retained in society almost throughout India"⁷. Heramba Chhaterejee Sastri⁸ has also arrived at the same conclusion.

2. Ibid. p. 107.
4. Ibid. p. 165.
6. Ibid. p. 234.
His arguments can be summarized as follows: "Crooke records that the Bhuta subsequent to the rite of tying clothes, observe the rite of circumambulation of the fire. The same is noticed with the Bundelas and Bagis. Thurston records it among Bavarias who go round the sacrificial altar seven times. In the Punjab groom and bride walk round the nuptial fire, the wife holding the hem of her husband's garments calling to witness the effulgent light which pervades every quarter of the globe, that neither in thought, deed or word will either swerve from the path of duty".

Even the rite of saptapadi is performed to-day almost throughout India. The fact that modern Hindu law records and recognizes it, is in itself a proof that even to-day it forms an essential part of modern Hindu marriage.

Thus it can be safely concluded that, from the main marriage rites, the rite of panigrahana, agniparinayanana and saptapadi have come down to modern times. Many other customs like kanyadana, madhuparka, bath of the bride or partaking of food together, are still observed; but it may not be necessary to go into these details.

To conclude: From the above discussion it is clear that the ritual in the age of the Sastrakaras and

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Sūtrakāras attained an intricate form with number of rites and formulae to accompany them. Out of these rites pānigrahaṇa and agniparipāvāna are Indo-Germanic in character. These two rites along with the rite of saptapadi have come down to modern times.

II) Social Aspect of Marriage

From the social aspects of marriage discussed by the Smṛtikāras the following need a special consideration as they have affected then Indian society.

A) The status of the bride
B) The status of a widow
C) Remarriage and Divorce
D) Inter-caste marriage.

During the discussion and presentation of the data from the Smṛti texts I have already discussed these topics. The special aspect that will be described here is the everlasting effect of the thought of the Smṛtikāras on the society. As we have observed during the Vedic Age the social circumstances were quite different. A maiden could marry a person of her own choice. In the Sūtra period also a girl who had attained puberty was given in marriage and the consummation of marriage could be performed on the fourth day of marriage. But to the Smṛtikāras eight-year-old girl is an ideal bride. This crucial change had a far-reaching repercussion on the Indian life. Even in this twentieth century, a woman
stands affected by it. Hence the following is an attempt to throw a light on the above aspect of Indian social conditions.

A) The Status of the Bride

As we have seen earlier the bride was but a kid of eight or ten during the Age of the Smrtikāras. Further there was difference of about fifteen years between the age of the bride and of the groom. These two factors together led to the exclusive domination of the husband and the in-laws. The married girl was taken out of the loving care of her parents while she was only a child. Consequently she was deprived of any education which would make her socially or economically independant. Her existence, social status, financial position, even mental and physical health, depended upon her husband. She was not any more an independant personality like Gargi of the Vedic Age but she became a mere shadow of her husband in whom all the power and authority were concentrated. It was her father who chose her life-partner without taking her in confidence. In fact she was not mentally equipped or mature to choose her husband. Moreover at that young age she did not at all understand the full implication of marriage and partnership for life. Thus she was totally deprived of her freedom and became

1. Vide Manu - IX.94.
a life-long dependent. In the childhood her father ruled over her, after marriage her husband and in the old age her own sons. Whether this is expressed in a flowery language or sugar-quoted words the fact remains that she lost all her freedom. This state of affairs became a semipermanent aspect of Indian society and even today a large number of women suffers because of the secondary or dominated position. This was the result of the dictum led down by the Śrāvīkāras.

B) The Status of a Widow

The deterioration in the status of a married woman itself predicts the status of a widow. Whether a sonless widow could remarry or should have a son through levirate, or should live an ascetic life, or should end her life by self immolation, are all controversial matters. As we have seen earlier though Manu and other Śrāvīkāras succeeding him condemn niyoga there must have been some cases of niyoga as 'kṣetraja' and niyuktajā sons are accepted. Even MBh. XIII.45.13 and XIII.49 make a reference to the practice. Actually sons of the king Vicitravīrya himself are niyogaśa. Although MBh is not history it does indicate that some such practice existed. The society had started disliking the custom during the Age of Śāstrakāras. Later on niyoga totally disappeared and sonless widow died sonless, living an ascetic life. The Śāstrakāras did not recommend niyoga.
although they make a mention about it in their texts.

The next problem is tonsure of widows. The early Smrtikaras prescribed that a widow should emaciate her body by living ascetic life but there is no reference to tonsure of widows except by Veda Vyasa¹. The word 'tyaktakesa' can be interpreted to mean a lady who has stopped dressing and adorning her hair as a sign of ascetic life. This is particularly so because no other Sastrakara makes a mention of tonsure of women. Thus Smrtikaras prescribed ascetic life for widow but not tonsure. Further a Hindu ascetic who lived a simple life by abandoning pleasures of the senses wore matted hair. In fact, neither did he cut his hair nor did he shave his beard. In fact it is Buddhist monks and Jain sadhus who had their heads tonsured. Even Buddhist and Jain women who take a vow of samyasinī have to shave their heads. Perhaps this practice of shaving the heads of widow may have come through the influence of Buddhist and Jain religion of ascetics.

About the problem of Sati or self immolation by widow the Smrtikaras in general are silent. Only two

¹. भूत महाशास्त्राय श्राहस्यं तह्विनिमाणित: ।।
जीवन्ती चेते त्वप्तकृत्वा तथ्या श्राहस्येदं वा: ॥
— Vedavyasa Sm. II.53
vis. Veda Vȳasa and Viṣṇu¹ say, "On her husband's death a widow should observe celibacy or should ascend the funeral pyre after him". The MBh gives many instances of Sati. Mādri, the favourite wife of Pāṇḍu, burnt herself with her husband's body². In the Vīraṭaparvan Sairandhri is ordered to be burnt with Kīcaka. The Mauṣala Parvan (7.16) says that the four wives of Vasudeva burnt themselves with him. Further Rukminī and other wives of Kṛṣṇa burnt themselves along with his body and Satyabhāma went to forest to live an ascetic life. All these references suggest that the practice was prevalent amongst the Kṣatriyas but later on it spread amongst Brāhmaṇas as well, until Sati was prohibited by law in British India in 1829.

The tonsure of widows, practice of Sati and prescription of ascetic life rendered Hindu widow's life grim, full of darkness, hopeless and worthless. The widow was considered inauspicious and unholy. She with her ugly shaven head was not allowed to attend any festival. All these factors enhanced the importance of a living husband whether he was worthy or not, and worsened the lot of women in India. Until recently widows remained a neglected and unwanted section of society. Although the

1. Vide Veda Vȳasa II, 53 above and
   मृते मन्त्रि क्रह्मवर्त शदन्वावरैक्षण वा।
   - Viṣṇu Dh. 25.14 quoted by Mit. on Yājñavalkya,
   I.86.

2. Adiparva. 95.65.
Sastrakāras do not prescribe either tonsure of widows or the practice of Sātī yet their dictum blackened the fate of widows.

C) Remarriage and Divorce

Although the Sastrakāras accept paunarbhava son, i.e. a son of a woman married twice it is more than clear that they disapproved of the practice of remarriage of widows or divorces. They wanted that widows should emaciate themselves by leading ascetic life. Many vows were prescribed for the widows. They were not expected to sleep on a cot or to eat good food. Similarly the Sastrakāras did not like the women to seek divorce except in rare cases where the man was impotent or he suffered from dreadful disease like leprosy. Thus the remarriage either of widows or divorced women was not approved by the Surtikāras.

D) Inter-Caste Marriage

Although the Sastrakāras accept the intercaste marriage of anuloma type, certainly they did not approve of it. To them such marriages led to intermixture of Varnas which could lead to social chaos. They do accept the sub-castes like Magadha, Suta, Čāndala etc. but in their opinion Brāhmaṇa should marry a Brāhmaṇī and Kṣatriya a Kṣatriyī. As later history shows this endogamous restrictions became rigid. Until today such intercaste marriages are disliked by the Hindu Society.
To conclude, the works of Śaṅkara made a
landmark in the social history of India.
In this last section of the work I propose to review all the data presented so far and the conclusion drawn from the same data. It will be my endeavour to compare the present-day conditions to those found in the texts starting from the RV to Śāstra works.

**The marriage ceremonial**

**Vedic Age**

The preceding pages clearly show how the marriage ritual has evolved through the ages. In the earlier Vedic period one finds a simple marriage ritual comprising of two main rites viz. 'Grasping the hand' and 'Bridal procession'. The Rgvedic wedding hymn also mentions the practice of sending the wooers and of oral betrothal. In the RV one does not come across any evidence recording evolution of the concept of marriage through human agency. The celestial marriage of Soma and Sūryā provided a mythological background to human marriage. As gods embraced their wives and enjoyed themselves, the men also embraced their wives. The human matrimonial relations needed some background which was supplied by the mythical marriage of Sūryā. Although the Rgvedic ritual is simple, yet it proves that marriage was a sacrament according to the earlier Vedic people and
that it was not treated merely as a contract. The story of Pururavas contains an example of contractual marriage but Pururavas had not many followers.

The AV has made many contributions to the simple marriage ritual. In the pre-marriage rite it was required that the bride was ceremonially bathed. The water was supposed to purify her and to enhance her beauty. This bath had also magical significance. It was believed that it would safeguard her from external evil influences.

Another rite was tying the bride to the right and left pole of the yoke of a cart. A piece of gold was tied to the forehead of the bride. This was supposed to bring wealth, long life and progeny to the couple. Both these rites found a place in the viyaha-samakara of the sūtras. The next rite innovated by the Atharvanic people is Asmarchana or standing on a stone. A smooth but firm stone was placed and the bride was asked to stand on it in order that she attained firmness and stability in married life. This rite is also recognised by the Sutra-kāras and is considered as a part of the main marriage rite. Further the AV describes homa on arrival in the groom's house and consummation of marriage. The bride was seated on a hide of red-bull. Before being seated she paid her homage to Sarasvatī and fathers. Later on this rite came to be titled as grhapravesāniya homa. This was followed by consummation of marriage. The next morning
the bride woke up from her nuptial bed like Indrāṇī. She changed her garment. The old one was given away to a brāhmaṇa who knew Sūrya-sūkta. Then she scattered pulya grains. This scattering of grains indicates a fertility rite. Perhaps this is also the beginning of the later rite of lajahoma as it uses the same mantra from the AV. This post-marriage rite came to be known as Čaturthikarma in the Sutra period. With the child marriages coming into practice this rite lost its significance. Thus the AV also, like RV provides the background for a considerable number of marriage-rites of the Sutra-period.

Coming to XV one observes that there is no particular section or kanda devoted to the description of marriage ceremonial. Yet there are two important points which cannot be ignored. First is the description of circumambulation or Agniparipāyana. The priest asks the couple to stoop to the fire and requests fire not to harm them. This is the beginning of the main marriage rite including saaptapadi, performed in the vicinity of Fire.

Next important point is oath to be taken by the couple at the marriage ceremony. Here the bride herself utters the oath saying that she had tied a bond of love around the groom. Then she would enter that bond. Having done this none of the two should deceive the other person.
The oath is a mutual binding. This is the predecessor of the oath of later times worded as 'dharme ca. arthe ca. kāme ca. nāticarami'. Even today the bride-groom is required to take this vow of threefold loyalty. This is a vital contribution of the Brāhmaṇas to the marriage ceremonial.

In the texts of the Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads, there is no text describing marriage-ritual. Hence it can be concluded that the above-described Vedic ritual was accepted by society in the period of the Brāhmaṇas and Upanishads.

Thus the ritual at the end of the Vedic period can be outlined as follows:

1. Sending the wooers
2. Oral acceptance from the bride’s father
3. Bathing the bride
4. Tying the bride to both the sides of a yoke
5. Hastagrahaṇa
6. Asmaṛaḥaṇa
7. Circumambulations
8. Oath
9. Vahana
10. Homa in the house of the groom
11. Consummation of marriage
12. Scattering of ṣulīya grains by the bride.
Usages and beliefs connected with the ritual

Before proceeding to the Sutra-period, it is necessary to make a reference to the usages and beliefs as reflected in the marriage ritual of the Vedic Age.

a) People of the Vedic Age believed that there existed a friend called Kṛtyā who haunted the person that touched the malina vastra of the bride. So after the consummation of marriage the dirtied garment was given away to a brahmana who could recite the wedding hymn. The brahmana in his turn nailed it to a pole. By doing this he, as it were, nailed Kṛtyā and other evil spirits to the pole so that they could no more harm the newly wedded couple. People ceased to believe in ill-influence of Kṛtyā as time advanced. Hence there is no reference to this practice in the sutra and sāstra texts.

b) Another important concept in the Vedic period is Gandharva Viśvāvasu. Viśvāvasu was supposed to hold control over all the unmarried women. Because of him, it was supposed that the maidens kept good composure and deportment. At the time of consummation of marriage the groom requests him to leave the maiden and find out another one from amongst the crowd. Later on this belief got translated in a peculiar practice. The couple was required to observe the vow of abstinence for at least one day immediately following the marriage ceremony. This period could be extended to one year. During this a wooden
staff was placed between bride and groom as they shared their bed. At the time of consummation this staff was removed thinking that it represented Visvāvasu, the Gandharva. In the Śutra-period also reference is made to Visvāvasu during consummation rite. But there is no trace of this belief in modern times.

c) It was believed that Soma was the first husband, Gandharva was the second, Agni was the third and man was the fourth husband of the bride. This is a metaphorical expression, as Soma gave her fluid of secretion, Gandharva maturity and Agni animated her for the act of procreation. This belief does not indicate polyandry.

d) Certain rites were included to keep away evil spirits. The bride was ceremonially bathed before marriage to guard her from evil spirits. It was believed that earth was haunted. Hence the AV prescribed that the bride should be seated on the hide of red bull spread by the side of fire. Lastly, Fire plays an important role in keeping away bad influences and evil spirits. Hence it was prescribed that the marriage rites should take place by the side of sacrificial fires. Further it was prayed that the diseases that accompanied the guests should not catch hold of the newly married couple.

e) The Vedic people profoundly believed that the act of intercourse was a holy act undertaken to procreate male progeny. The bride was blessed to give birth to ten
male issues. Sex was not a mere act of enjoyment but it had the well expressed motive of generating children.

f) The permanency of the marriage bond was incorporated in the Rigvedic marriage mantras. While taking the hand of the bride the groom expressed the desire to live as husband and wife till their old age. The YV emphasizes cooperation of husband and wife.

g) There is no mention of a priest conducting the marriage or uttering formulae for the bride and groom. Hence the marriage rite was, in a way, a personal matter. This personal aspect was one of the reasons for the simplicity of the marriage rite. In later ages brahmanas who were specialists in ritual introduced many technicalities and formulae.

h) The Brāhma, Daiva, Āsura and Rākṣasa forms of marriage are suggested by the Vedic texts.

As we have seen earlier, the ritual attained a highly complicated form during the Sutra period. No doubt most of the rites detailed out by the Sutrakāras have their origin in the Vedic period. Yet the ritual could not possibly have attained this form in a short period of time. This indicates a considerable time that must have elapsed between the two periods. The people during the age of Bra. and Upa. accepted the simple Vedic ritual. The texts containing the material showing this development are lost to us. As for instance the Vedic
text 'Śūryāṃ yat patye, śamsatīṁ maṇasā, savītā adadat' only suggests kanyādanā. While majority of the śūtras prescribe a fully developed rite. All the details like places of the bride, her father, groom and priest are specified. Mantras are prescribed and ritual described. This surely indicates that number of years must have elapsed in between. Some rites like Dhruvadarsana, Anjana and different śhūtis and homas are totally a new addition. All this proves that number of works are lost to us from the intermediary period of the Vedic Age and the Age of the Dharmāśāstrakāras.

The Age of Śūtrakāras and Śāstrakāras

As we have seen earlier, it is the Śūtrakāras that mainly deal with the ritual part of marriage. Vivāha is one of the most important sāmkāras of them. The description of rite in different Śūtras and Śāstras can be summarised as follows:

i) pre-marriage rites,
ii) principal marriage rites and
iii) post-marriage rites.

i) Pre-marriage rites

The first of the whole session is 'Sending the Woosers' to the bride's father. Learned brahmaṇas were sent to the bride's place. They announced the name and gotra of the proposed groom and sought consent of the bride's father. On hearing his consent the two parties
touched a pot filled with water, ḍkasāt and sometimes gold. When the groom came to know about the acceptance he performed sacrifice, offering ṣhutis in the fire. Then he started for the bride's house along with married women whose husbands were living. Sometimes he was accompanied by his sister who carried a weapon to protect him.

The marriageable boy tried to guess about the future of the bride with clods of earth collected from various places like cemetery, altar, fields, quadrangle where four roads met etc. The clods were covered and the maiden was asked to choose. Her choice foretold the nature and character of her offsprings. Before actual fixation of marriage the groom made detailed enquiries about gotra, pravara and family of the bride. Śutrakāras and Sāstrakāras recommend many norms, like proportionate limbs, sweet voice, good parentage, existence of bride's brothers etc. as kānyālakṣānas. About the groom also there are many recommendations about his education, good parentage, intelligence, wealth, good-looks etc. But father was advised to get his daughter married before she attained maturity even though he could not find a good match.

After the settlement of marriage was officially accepted the event of bathing the bride took place. Water was meant to protect, to purify and to beautify the bride. The beginnings of this custom are traced to the ĀV. An
offering of sthālīpkā was offered at this time. After
the bath the bride played the instruments like nādi,
nandī and dundubhī. Indrāṇī karma, Pravṛddana karma
and Varuna are also similar rites. After her bath the
bride was given a new garment to wear.

All the sūtras prescribe that marriage must
take place on an auspicious day during that half of the
month when moon is waxing. The marriage performed on
an unsuspicious day is sure to become a failure. It is
also prescribed that this auspicious day must be during
the northern course of the moon. As marriage is a very
important event in human life it is necessary that it
must be performed on an auspicious day.

Kanyādāna is the next important pre-marriage
rite. The Śāstrakāras say that the right of giving away
a daughter in marriage belonged to father, grandfather,
maternal uncle or any other relative from the same family
in succession. If mother was absent any one of the
same caste should give away the daughter. The father who
is giving away the bride sits facing the east, the groom
who accepts the bride sits facing the west, the daughter
also sits facing the west. The fire is already enkindled
in the middle by the preceptor. The father of the bride
says 'dadāmi' "I give" and the groom says 'pratigrññāmi'
"I accept". The father of the bride requests the groom
to take the vow of three-fold honesty. vis. 'dharme ca,
arthe ca, kam ca na aticarami'. Further the groom also accepts 'stridhana' along with the bride. If he is supposed to pay bride-price it is paid at this time only.

The Sastrakaras prescribe that the bridegroom performs puja with offering of betal leaf, flowers, arec.ca nut, and miranjana i.e. holy lamp. The bride was also required to observe kanyavrata before marriage which included praying Gauri for long life of the husband. The bride is given a necklace of black beads at the time of kanyadana.

Usually kanyadana is followed by Madhuparka wherein the groom is offered a seat and he is given water to wash his feet, and to sip. He is then offered the honey-mixture. This is a special reception accorded to the groom.

**Homa before Marriage**

The bridegroom accompanied by the bride is required to offer a few shutis in the homa before main marriage rite. The bride is given a new garment while a mantra is being recited 'soma adadat gandharvaya'. Then she spreads a rush mat to the west of the fire. Both of them sit on the mat. The preceptor guides them to perform the pakayajnas, ajya shutis and mahā vyāhṛtis as prescribed by the sutras. The groom gives the bride koṣa, mirror and some other gifts which are usually articles of daily use.
ii) **Principal Marriage rites**

After the performance of the prescribed Homas in the properly established fire the preceptor guides the groom to hold the hand of the bride. "I hold thy hand for the sake of good fortune, with me as thy husband live till old age. Bhaga, Aryama Savitha and Purandhi these gods have given thee to me to perform householder’s duties". These mantras express the wish for long married life with conjugal love. The Av adds male progeny for increasing the clan and family legacy to this formulae uttered at the time of ‘Grasping hands’.

The rite of 'grasping hands' is followed by the three rites viz. Āśāsrohaṇa, Āgniparipāvana and Āśāhoma. These three rites are performed in succession and repeated three times. A number of formulae are recited while these are performed. This is followed by the rite of Saptapadi which marks the end of the main marriage rite. The groom led the bride to take seven steps, starting with right foot followed by the left one. On every step the groom utters the part of the formula which runs like this, "Let Lord Viṣṇu lead you to sap, to juice, to prosperity, to vow, to cattle, to comfort and lastly to union and devotion". After they take the steps water is sprinkled on their heads. This is a beautiful rite which indicates many objects of achievement in life. The last but not the least of which is friendship and union. After Saptapadi
the marriage becomes irrevocable.

Suryadarśana, yoktrabandhana, anjana, hrdayasparsa, śimanta are the rites interspersed in between these rites. But they are not unanimously recommended by the Sutrakaras.

After Saptapadi, the bride is taken to a new home in a ceremonious procession. She has a brāhmaṇa standing in front of the carriage, at the back and to both the sides. The householder’s fire is accompanying the procession. Further, the bridal gifts are exhibited in front. The carriage is beautifully decorated and made comfortable with cushions. She has to be carried to her new home with special care especially through forests, while passing by cemetery, by river etc. The procession should reach the house before sunset. A brāhmaṇa has spread soft grass for the bride to walk on. As she enters the house she pays her homage to Sarasvati and fathers. Then she is seated on a mat spread by the side of the fire. The husband joins her for post-marriage ritual.

iii) Post-marriage rites

To announce the arrival of the bride, burnt oblation is offered in the fire. The groom accompanied by his wife offers maha vyahritis. He beautifies her eyes with aṅyā collyrium and pours the remaining aṅyā on her head. Here some place a boy from good family in her lap with fruit in his joined hands. They enter the interior
of the house while the last verses of \textit{suryasukta} are being recited.

The newly-wed couple is asked to observe silence till the stars appear in the sky. The groom shows Polar star to the bride. Polar star personifies stability and firmness. It is prayed that the polar star would grant similar stability to the couple. Constellation of Seven Stars, Arundhati and Jivanti are also shown to the bride according to some. This is a poetic rite added by the Sutrakaras. The bride and the bridegroom are allowed to talk after this rite. Until then they have to observe silence.

It is advised that the couple should observe abstinence for at least three days. They should not eat salty or astringent food. On the fourth day late in the evening the rite of consummation of marriage takes place. The bride cleaned the grains for \textit{sthaliipaka} or an offering of hotchpotch. This was offered in the householder's fire accompanied by mantras. The remaining food was partaken of or shared by the couple. Then the actual consumption followed to the accompaniment of the formulae by the side of the fire. Before this juice of \textit{\'adhyanda} plant was put in the right nostril of the bride to ensure the conception of a male offspring. If the bride was only a child, this rite was postponed till the first appearance of menstruation.
Thus this rite of consummation of marriage was touched with religious aroma and was performed as a divine and sacred act with a purpose of generating male progeny. Gratification of sexual instinct is turned into a holy act. That is wherein the sacrament of marriage differs from the contract of marriage. Legally and socially Saptapadi finalises Hindu marriage and lends it a kind of permanency. But religiously and psychologically this rite of consummation achieves the same objective. More than the rite, this perspective of sex-relations is important and it makes permanent the normal Hindu marriage.

Modern Marriage Rite

As we have seen, earlier marriage ritual had reached an intricate form in the Sutra and Sastra period. Yet as the years went by some changes occurred in the structure of marriage ritual. Yet even today kanyadana, Madhuparka, Vastrantarkaraṇa, Hastaagrahaṇa, Agniparinaṇayana, Lajahoma, and Saptapadi are the constituents of Hindu marriage almost all over India. Yet as it will be discussed in the following pages some practices and customs associated with the ritual have sprung up which are not warranted or supported by the Vedic or Smṛti texts. So instead of going into all the details of the present-day marriage ceremonies, it would be more convenient to point out the changes and discuss if they are socially healthy.

Before comparing the marriage ceremonies of
these two periods, I propose to give a social background of the twentieth century. In the first quarter of the twentieth century, broadly considering, child-marriages, or the marriages of girls who had just attained puberty were the order of the day. The fair sex was not academically educated, although women were experts in household duties. They were neither supposed to be nor were eligible for being economically self-supporting. Ladies were not allowed any freedom either in their childhood, youth or old-age. They were kept satisfied and happy with the gifts or ornaments, sarees or other costly articles. But they were really kept in-doors like goddesses. House was the only field they could move about but there also the word of the patriarch of the joint household had to be obeyed. Thus the ladies were still affected by the dictums of the Śastrakāra like 'na stri svātrāt paśu arhati'.

But after 1940 a change came over the society to the advantage of women-folk with the efforts of people like Dhondo Keshava Karve. Women's universities and colleges sprang up in north and south India. An emancipation of Indian woman came in-sight mainly due to the influence of the western culture. The dominating position of the man was challenged. And even in India one started coming accross lady doctors, teachers, economists, engineers etc. Woman is now well-equipped to become either economically self-supporting or to help her family financially.
In the changed social conditions, humiliation and subordination of bride's family, the demand for dowry even by educated parents of marriageable boys cannot be justified.

It is customary these days, particularly in northern India, that the friends and relatives of the bridegroom accompany him when he goes for marriage to the bride's house. This is known as 'varagoḍo' amongst Gujaratis and 'Barāta' in Hindi-speaking areas. The bride's father is supposed to pay for the expenses of the journey. If the groom's party comes from a far-away place the father has to pay the travelling expenses. On their arrival they are accorded a special welcome; not only the groom but all the members of his party. Costly gifts are given to many of the relatives particularly parents, brothers, sisters, uncles and aunts of the groom. Among Maharāstrians this Madhuparka includes washing of feet of all the honourable guests by bride's parents. All this is not supported by the śāstric Madhuparka which was a simpler ceremony referring only to the groom.

At the time of kanyādāna the father of the bride is forced to give, ornaments to his daughter as demanded by the groom's party. He has no choice. Otherwise the groom may refuse to accept the bride. Further he is also required to give Varadaksīnī (and a special dress to the groom.) as demanded by the groom or his parents. Often hard cash, sometimes as much as ten to twenty thousands of
rupees are demanded. Otherwise the marriage itself is likely to be cancelled. Such kanyādāna has no longer remained the best of dānas for bride's father. On the other hand it can become a nightmare. No wonder that many families are financially ruined if there are two or three daughters in the family. Again this is not warranted by śastraic concept and rite of kanyādāna. When in the Brahma and Prājapatya form of marriage, father offered his daughter, adorned properly, there was no compulsion on him about the amount of wealth to be given. Further he gave the ornaments and gifts to her personally, and not to the groom. To the groom he gave his daughter only after he took the threefold vow of honesty. Whatever he gave to his daughter or proposed son-in-law, was strictly according to his own sweet will. The origin of this was mainly child marriages, prescribed by the Śastrakāras and supported by social conditions. The bride's father has to submit to the exorbitant demands of the groom and his parents.

When in the present society a number of women are earning handsome income and are capable of supporting the family financially all these demands for dowry are unjustified. Young maidens and boys are trying to oppose it but their number is infinitesimally small. The enlightened sections of society must take up this matter. When it comes on personal level many people fall short of their ideals and demand dowry for their sons. The
government and perhaps the religious heads themselves should take up this matter since it is not supported by the Śastraṅkaras. Social, legal and religious pressures would be able to minimize the effects of this dreadful practice. Actually as Jagadguru Shri Jayendra Sarasvatī has suggested \(^1\) "Giving of mangalasutra at the time of marriage is all that is prescribed". No gold chain is necessary for this mangalasutra. Only a yellow thread bedecked with turmeric and vermillion and perhaps black beads can serve the purpose. The marriage ceremony is for the happiness of both the parties. If one goes to the simpler ceremony of the past, the kanyādana would again attain its pleasant and solemn character.

The ritual prescribed by the Śutrakāras is very lengthy and clumsy for the fast-moving modern life. The preceptors have to rush the parties concerned through the details. And a short cut has become an urgent necessity. The bride and groom are often from distant cities and both the parties can hardly stay together for a day or so. In these circumstances if the marriage ceremony is simpler it will be more convenient. Proper justice can be done to the necessary rites. Further the modern people believe more in reasoning than in ritual. If only those rites that appeal to an enlightened mind are prescribed then

\(^{1}\). Cf. 'Some Thoughts on Marriage', Kāmakoti Vāni

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the ritual will cease to be just a formality to be gone through hurriedly. Moreover, if the couple appreciates the meaning of the rites then the sanctity of the marriage rite which they have to undergo will be properly understood by them. The whole rite should not take more than one hour. Short and simple marriage rite should be able to convey the permanency and sanctity of the marriage relation.

The ritual of the Vedic period is simple and short as compared to that of the śūtras. The life of Vedic people was not as peaceful as that of the later ages. There was always friction and war. The instability of life could not afford a lengthy marriage ceremony. Yet the Vedic marriage rite has all the sanctity and sincerity which is expected of a marriage rite. Hence it would be better to perform the marriage ritual following the Vedic lines. So the following marriage rite can be suggested.

After both the parties agree about the marriage transaction let them fix a suitable date of marriage. After the groom’s party arrives let the groom be received by bride’s father. Then let them start with the marriage ritual as follows:

(1) Oath-taking to mark the final agreement to marry
(2) Hastagrahaṇa
(3) Agni pariṇayana
(4) Saptapadi
(5) A feast may be given to all attending marriage ceremony

(6) Vahana either in the evening or on the following day

(7) Puja to be performed on arrival in the husband's house

(8) Consummation of marriage after paying homage to gods and elders to get blessings from them.

Vastrantarakarana has socially became the main marriage rite to-day. But this rite is explained only by one or two Sutrakaras. A piece of cloth is held between the bride and the groom and mantras are recited. At the end of each mantra husked grain of rice tinted with red 'kumkuma' is thrown on the couple, by each individual. To reduce the wastage of grains it can be suggested that these should be thrown only at the end of all the mantras or if possible this practice should be stopped. This rite is not performed all over India.

If the marriage rite is shortened in this way it would not anymore be clumsy and tiresome. It would give the desired sanctity to the sacrament of marriage and would suit the present social conditions.