BLOGS

Notes on the Concept and Forms of Hindu Marriage

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Introduction

Marriage is a sacred union in Hinduism that signifies the coming together of two individuals to lead a fulfilling life. The concept of marriage in Hinduism is rooted in the belief that it is a sacred duty to fulfill the four aims of life – Dharma, Artha, Kama, and Moksha.

Forms of Hindu Marriage

In Hinduism, there are eight different forms of marriage, which are considered to be sacred and binding. They are as follows:

1. Brahma Vivah: This is the most superior form of Hindu marriage, in which the groom's family invites a suitable bride and her family to perform the wedding ceremony. The bride is chosen based on her virtues, character, and family background.
2. Daiva Vivah: This form of marriage is arranged by the bride's family, in which the groom is selected through a religious ceremony. This type of marriage is considered to be divine, as the groom is believed to be a gift from the Gods.
3. Arsha Vivah: In this form of marriage, the groom offers a cow and some wealth to the bride's father, as a token of respect and gratitude. This type of marriage is based on mutual trust and respect.
4. Prajapatya Vivah: This form of marriage is performed without any rituals or formalities. The bride and groom exchange vows in the presence of a sacred fire, and pledge to be faithful to each other for life.

5. Gandharva Vivah: This form of marriage is based on mutual love and attraction, without any formal arrangements. The bride and groom come together voluntarily, without the consent of their families.
6. Asura Vivah: This form of marriage involves the groom offering wealth and gifts to the bride's family, in exchange for her hand in marriage. This type of marriage is based on materialistic values and is not considered to be ideal.
7. Rakshasa Vivah: In this form of marriage, the groom abducts the bride against her will, and the wedding is performed in the presence of a sacred fire. This type of marriage is considered to be barbaric and is not practiced in modern times.
8. Paishacha Vivah: This form of marriage is performed without the consent of the bride, who is either drugged or seduced by the groom. This type of marriage is considered to be immoral and is not recognized by Hindu law.

Essential Features of Hindu Marriage

Hindu Marriage is an institution that is considered sacred in Hinduism. It is a union of two individuals who come together to form a lifelong partnership. The concept of marriage in Hinduism is based on the belief that marriage is a divine bond between two individuals, and it is essential for the continuation of the human race.

1. Sacrament: Hindu marriage is considered a sacrament, a sacred institution in Hinduism. The ritual of marriage is performed in the presence of a sacred fire, and it is believed that the divine blessings of the Gods are invoked during the ceremony.
2. Monogamy: Hindu marriage is monogamous, meaning it is a union between two individuals. Polygamy is not allowed under Hindu marriage laws, and a person cannot marry more than one person at the same time.
3. Consent: The consent of both individuals is essential for a Hindu marriage. The bride and groom must both agree to the marriage, and they must be of legal age. The legal age for marriage is 18 years for the bride and 21 years for the groom.
4. Ceremony: Hindu marriage is a ceremonial affair, and it involves several rituals and customs that are performed before, during, and after the marriage. These rituals are performed to sanctify the union and seek the blessings of the Gods.

5. Duty: Hindu marriage is not just a union of two individuals; it is also a union of two families. It is believed that the duty of the husband is to provide for the family, while the duty of the wife is to maintain the household and take care of the family.

Applicability of Hindu Marriage Act

The Hindu Marriage Act was passed by the Indian Parliament in 1955, and it governs Hindu marriages in India. The Act applies to all Hindus, including Buddhists, Sikhs, and Jains, and it provides guidelines for the registration and solemnization of Hindu marriages.

Under the Hindu Marriage Act, a Hindu marriage is legally valid if the following conditions are met:

1. Both parties should be Hindus – This means that both the bride and the groom should be Hindus. In addition to this, the parties should not have converted to any other religion at the time of marriage.
2. Monogamy – The Hindu Marriage Act prohibits polygamy, which means that a Hindu man cannot have more than one wife at the same time.
3. Age – The bridegroom must be at least 21 years of age, and the bride must be at least 18 years of age at the time of marriage. Any marriage performed before this age is considered illegal.
4. Consent – Both parties should give their free and informed consent to the marriage. If either party is forced into the marriage or is unable to give consent due to mental illness or incapacity, the marriage is considered invalid.
5. Prohibited relationships – Hindu law prohibits marriages between certain close relatives, such as between siblings, parents and children, and uncles and nieces.
6. Ceremony – The marriage must be performed according to Hindu customs and ceremonies. The ceremony should be witnessed by at least two people who are not close relatives of either party.

If all of these conditions are met, the Hindu marriage is considered legally valid.