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The Nature and Kinds of Hindu Marriage: A Juridical and Socio-Historical Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Hindu marriage (Vivaha) represents one of the oldest, most philosophically intricate, and legally transformative institutions in personal law jurisprudence. Rooted deeply in the Vedic concept of Samskara (sacrament) and the cosmic order of Dharma, classical Hindu jurisprudence conceived marriage as an indissoluble spiritual union essential for fulfilling the triad of Purusharthas: Dharma (righteous duty), Praja (progeny), and Rati (sensory pleasure). Classical texts, most notably Manusmriti and Yajnavalkya Smriti, classified marriages into eight distinct forms (Ashta Vivaha)—dichotomized into approved (Prashasta: Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya) and unapproved (Aprashasta: Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa, Paisacha) unions. With the passage of the landmark Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, the Indian Parliament engineered a revolutionary jurisprudential shift, injecting contractual elements—such as voluntary mutual consent, statutory grounds for nullity and divorce, strict monogamy, and the abolition of archaic coercive forms—while deliberately retaining sacramental ceremonial bedrock like Saptapadi. This research paper offers an exhaustive critical appraisal of the doctrinal nature of Hindu marriage across epochs, demystifies the eight classical forms and their sociological lineages, examines the statutory and judicial evolution, and evaluates contemporary legal paradigms including mutual consent divorce, irretrievable breakdown under Article 142, and constitutional guarantees of individual autonomy.

1. Introduction and Socio-Philosophical Foundations

In Hindu jurisprudential philosophy, marriage—designated in Sanskrit as 'Vivaha' (derived from the root 'vah' with the prefix 'vi', meaning 'the act of bearing away or supporting')—is not merely an ephemeral socio-legal arrangement or a civil contract. Rather, it occupies an exalted status as the most vital and foundational among the classical Shodasha Samskaras (sixteen sacraments) prescribed in the Grihya Sutras and Dharma Shastras for the spiritual sanctification, moral refinement, and social elevation of human life. Unlike western civil law models where marriage originated predominantly as a bilateral consensual pact, classical Hindu jurisprudence situated marriage within the cosmic framework of 'Rta' (cosmic order) and 'Dharma' (righteous conduct).

The institution of marriage bridges the temporal world of human desire with transcendent spiritual obligations. It serves as the indispensable gateway to the Grihasthashrama (the householder stage), which is universally celebrated in Dharmic literature as the supreme and supporting pillar of all four stages of life (Ashramas: Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, and Sanyasa). As the sage Manu famously declared in the Manusmriti (Chapter VI, Verse 89), just as all rivers and streams ultimately find repose and sustenance in the mighty ocean, so do people of all other Ashramas depend upon the householder for their spiritual and physical sustenance.

> *"A man is only half until he takes a wife; he who has no wife is not complete. With a wife, he becomes complete, and in union with her, he accomplishes all sacred obligations."*
>
> — Shatapatha Brahmana, V.2.1.10

1.1 The Spiritual Complementarity: Ardhangini and Dharmapatni

Classical Hindu philosophy rejects the conceptual isolation of the individual as an autonomous, self-sufficient economic unit. Man and woman are viewed as complementary halves of a divine whole—a philosophy vividly mirrored in the cosmological icon of 'Ardhanarishvara'. The wife is revered not as a chattel or a subordinate, but as the 'Ardhangini' (she who constitutes half of the husband's being) and 'Sahadharmini' or 'Dharmapatni' (she who participates equally in the performance of religious, ethical, and spiritual duties). According to classical canons, no Vedic sacrifice (Yajna), no offering to the ancestors (Pitri Tarpan), and no charitable act (Dana) could bear spiritual fruit if undertaken without the active ritual participation of the lawful wife.

2. The Nature of Hindu Marriage: Sacrament vs. Contract

A foundational question that has engaged legal historians, theological scholars, and colonial and post-colonial judges alike is the exact juridical characterization of Hindu marriage. Is it an immutable, transcendental sacrament, a civil contract founded upon reciprocal consent, or an exquisite sui generis hybrid? To trace this doctrinal evolution, one must juxtapose the classical Shastric paradigm against the statutory revolution inaugurated by the Hindu Marriage Act of 1955.

2.1 The Classical Shastric View: Pure Sacrament (Samskara)

In classical Hindu law, Vivaha possessed all the hallmarks of an indelible religious sacrament. This sacramental nature rested on three core postulates:

1. **Eternal and Indissoluble Bond:** Once solemnized through Vedic rituals, the matrimonial tie was permanent, indissoluble by any human agency, and transcended physical death. The union was believed to persist across successive incarnations (Janmas). The husband and wife were fused into an inseparable spiritual entity. Even the death of a spouse did not dissolve the spiritual bond, which historically served as the theoretical underpinning for discouraging or prohibiting widow remarriage and making divorce an alien concept.
2. **Transcendental and Holy Union:** The alliance was entered into not primarily for carnal gratification or transient companionship, but for the discharge of cosmic and ancestral debts. It was consummated in the sacred presence of Agni (the Fire God, who acts as the divine witness or Sakshi) and invoked celestial deities through sacred Vedic mantras.
3. **Absence of Bilateral Bargaining:** The sacrament was solemnized through 'Kanyadana'—the sacred gift of the maiden by her father or guardian to the groom. Because it was conceived as a divine gift (Dana) conferred in devotion, the transaction did not depend upon contractual negotiation between the bride and bridegroom, nor was it subject to rescission on grounds of subsequent disagreement.

2.2 The Three Canonical Purposes of Marriage

Ancient jurists and commentators, including Manu, Yajnavalkya, Apastamba, and Brihaspati, unhesitatingly structured the objectives of marriage into a rigid hierarchy:

- **Primary Objective:** Dharma (Performance of Religious Duties): Marriage was celebrated first and foremost so that the householder could perform obligatory daily sacrifices (Pancha Maha-

Yajnas), uphold public righteousness, and preserve cosmic harmony. The wife was an indispensable co-liturgist; without her, a man was ritually incomplete ('Aputra' or 'Apatnika').

- **Secondary Objective:** Praja (Procreation and Continuation of Lineage): The birth of offspring, particularly a son ('Putra'), was deemed essential to liberate the father from the spiritual torment of 'Put' (hell) and to discharge the hereditary debt owed to the ancestors ('Pitri-Rina') through the solemn ritual of Shraddha.
- **Tertiary Objective:** Rati (Sensual Pleasure and Conjugal Love): Carnal pleasure was acknowledged as a legitimate human aspiration ('Kama'), but it was expressly subordinated to Dharma and Praja. Sensory gratification was sanctified only within the perimeter of lawful matrimonial commitment.

2.3 The Modern Legislative Transformation: The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

The enactment of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 (Act No. 25 of 1955) on 18th May 1955 revolutionized the personal law landscape of modern India. Drafted under the visionary guidance of legal reformers and Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the Act dismantled centuries of rigid patriarchal dogmas while preserving the moral dignity of the institution. It injected undeniable contractual and egalitarian characteristics into the institution of Hindu marriage:

1. **Free Consent and Mental Capacity (Section 5(ii) & Section 12(1)(c)):** Under classical law, the consent of the bride was often subsumed under parental authority, and even the marriage of an insane person or an infant was ritually irrevocable once solemnized. Under the modern Act, marriage requires sound mental health and genuine consent. Section 12(1)(c) explicitly provides that if the consent of the petitioner was obtained by force or fraud regarding the nature of the ceremony or any material fact, the marriage is voidable and liable to be annulled by a decree of nullity.
2. **Dissolubility through Judicial Separation and Divorce (Sections 10, 13, and 13B):** The most radical departure from orthodox sacramental dogma was the introduction of statutory divorce. Under Section 13, either party may petition for dissolution of marriage on grounds such as adultery, cruelty, desertion, conversion, incurable unsoundness of mind, or virulent communicable disease. Furthermore, the 1976 Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act inserted Section 13B, enabling divorce by mutual consent—a mechanism purely contractual in substance, predicated upon the bilateral accord of both spouses to terminate their cohabitation.

3. **Mandatory Strict Monogamy (Section 5(i) & Section 11):** Classical law tolerated polygyny for men while strictly demanding unwavering fidelity from women. Section 5(i) of the Act enforces strict monogamy across all Hindu society, rendering any subsequent marriage during the lifetime of a living spouse absolutely void ab initio under Section 11, and penalizing bigamy under Sections 494 and 495 of the Indian Penal Code (now corresponding to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023).
4. **Prescribed Age of Marriage (Section 5(iii)):** The statute sets statutory age thresholds (twenty-one years for the bridegroom and eighteen years for the bride), eradicating the medieval phenomenon of child marriages.

2.4 Doctrinal Synthesis: Is Modern Hindu Marriage a Sacrament or a Contract?

In contemporary Indian jurisprudence, Hindu marriage cannot be categorized under a simplistic binary. While the statute has stripped the institution of its archaic indissolubility and introduced extensive contractual safeguards, the institution remains fundamentally grounded in sacramental consciousness. Section 7 of the Act mandates that a Hindu marriage must be solemnized in accordance with the customary rites and ceremonies of either party, including the Saptapadi (seven steps before the sacred fire). A purely secular registration or signing of papers without customary solemnization does not confer the status of a valid Hindu marriage. Therefore, judicial consensus holds that modern Hindu marriage is a unique 'sui generis' institution: a magnificent synthesis wherein the sacramental soul is encased within a modern, contractual, and rights-based protective shell.

3. Classical Taxonomy: The Eight Kinds of Hindu Marriage (Ashta Vivaha)

The classical Hindu legal treatises (Dharma Shastras), notably the Manusmriti (Chapter III, Verses 20–34) and Yajnavalkya Smriti, present an exhaustive taxonomy of matrimonial unions known as the 'Ashta Vivaha' (Eight Forms of Marriage). This classification is a remarkable testament to the empirical acumen of ancient Hindu jurists, who recognized every prevailing societal mode of forming conjugal unions—from the highest spiritual ideal to the most primitive, coercive, or degraded practices—and subjected them to moral and legal regulation.

The eight forms are divided into two distinct overarching categories:

A. **1. Prashasta (Approved or Commendable Forms):** Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, and Prajapatya. These forms are grounded in selflessness, virtue, scriptural propriety, and parental guardianship.

B. 2. Aprashasta (Unapproved or Condemned Forms): Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa, and Paisacha. These unions are tainted by commercial bargaining, uncontrolled physical passion, armed abduction, or heinous deceit.

3.1 The Four Approved Forms (Prashasta Vivaha)

1. ***Brahma Vivaha (The Highest and Most Meritorious Form)***

The Brahma form is universally celebrated as the purest, most elevated, and spiritually meritorious form of marriage in Hindu law. According to Manu (III.27): 'The gift of a daughter, after decking her with costly garments and honoring her with jewels, to a man learned in the Vedas and of noble character, whom the father himself invites, is called the Brahma rite.' In this union, there is an absolute absence of any financial demand, commercial negotiation, bride-price, or dowry pressure. The father or legal guardian exercises pure spiritual agency, seeking out a bridegroom distinguished by Vedic scholarship, moral integrity, and exemplary conduct. The merit generated by this union was believed to purify ten generations of ancestors and ten generations of descendants.

2. ***Daiva Vivaha (Marriage Associated with Sacrificial Officiation)***

In the Daiva form, the maiden is conferred as an honorarium or gift upon an officiating priest (Ritvik) during the formal performance of an elaborate Vedic sacrifice (Yajna). Manu states (III.28): 'The gift of a daughter, adorned with ornaments, to an officiating priest who duly performs a Vedic sacrifice, is designated as the Daiva rite.' This form was historically prevalent during the Vedic and Brahmana periods when elaborate public sacrifices required days or weeks of sacerdotal service. However, because the maiden was bestowed as an adjunct to a religious ceremony rather than after an independent and deliberate search for an ideal husband, the Daiva form was ranked slightly lower than the Brahma form, and it fell into complete disuse with the decline of grand Vedic sacrifices.

3. ***Arsha Vivaha (The Union with Symbolic Cattle)***

In the Arsha form, the prospective bridegroom delivers a ceremonial pair of cattle—a cow and a bull (or two pairs)—to the father of the bride. Manu explains (III.29): 'When the father gives away his daughter according to the rule, after receiving from the bridegroom a cow and a bull, or two pairs, for spiritual and ritual purposes (not as a commercial price), it is called the Arsha rite.' Ancient commentators like Medhatithi and Vijnaneshwara take great pains to clarify that this exchange did not constitute 'Shulka' (bride-price) or sale of the daughter. The cattle were accepted strictly for the fulfillment of agricultural and domestic sacrificial rites. Nonetheless, because a tangible material

transfer took place from the groom to the bride's father, many orthodox authorities regarded it with slight suspicion, ranking it below Brahma and Daiva.

4. ***Prajapatya Vivaha (Joint Pursuit of Dharma)***

The Prajapatya form is distinguished by a specific solemn matrimonial covenant or injunction delivered by the father of the bride to the couple. Manu (III.30) defines it thus: 'The gift of a daughter by her father after blessing the couple with the solemn injunction: "May both of you perform your civic and religious duties (Dharma) together," and having rendered honor to the bridegroom, is termed the Prajapatya rite.' In this form, the father neither seeks a learned Vedic scholar from afar (as in Brahma), nor offers her to an officiating priest (as in Daiva), nor receives symbolic cattle (as in Arsha). The essence of the Prajapatya union is the solemn pledge of lifelong partnership in religious, social, and moral duties. This form is of profound legal significance because it explicitly elevated the mutual status of the husband and wife as joint partners in righteousness.

3.2 The Four Unapproved Forms (Aprashasta Vivaha)

5. ***Asura Vivaha (Marriage by Bride-Price / Commercial Sale)***

The Asura form occurs when the bridegroom obtains the maiden by paying wealth or bride-price ('Shulka') to her father, kinsmen, and to the maiden herself, according to his pecuniary ability. Manu severely castigated this form (III.31 & III.51), asserting: 'No father who knows the law should ever take even the smallest gratuity for his daughter; for a man who, through avarice, takes a gratuity sells his offspring.' The Asura form was characterized by the commercial commodification of the bride. Despite the scriptural condemnation, it survived tenaciously among various lower-caste and tribal communities under customary law and was repeatedly litigated in Anglo-Hindu courts to determine rules of Stridhan inheritance.

6. ***Gandharva Vivaha (Union by Mutual Passion / Consensual Alliance)***

The Gandharva form is the voluntary union of a maiden and her lover arising from mutual desire and emotional or erotic attraction, consummated without parental mediation or ceremonial intervention. Manu describes it (III.32) as: 'The reciprocal union of a youth and a maiden springing from mutual desire, which has union for its purpose and lust for its origin, is called the Gandharva rite.' Classical mythology contains celebrated examples of this form, most notably the romance of King Dushyanta and Shakuntala in the Mahabharata. While ancient jurists permitted it primarily for the Kshatriya (warrior) class, orthodox Dharmashastras viewed it with ambivalence because it bypassed parental

supervision and pre-matrimonial spiritual vows. In modern sociological terms, Gandharva Vivaha is the historical precursor to modern love marriages.

7. ***Rakshasa Vivaha (Marriage by Capture, Forcible Abduction, and War)***

The Rakshasa form consists of the forcible abduction of a maiden from her home by violence, combat, and bloodshed, over the cries and resistance of herself and her family. Manu defines it (III.33): 'The forcible seizure and abduction of a weeping and screaming maiden from her home, after slaying, wounding, and cleaving open the heads of her kinsmen, is called the Rakshasa rite.' Permissible only to the warrior class in times of active warfare or conquest (as in the abduction of Subhadra by Arjuna, or Amba, Ambika, and Ambalika by Bhishma), this form was utterly condemned in civilized civic life and constitutes serious criminal offenses under modern penal law.

8. ***Paisacha Vivaha (Ravishment of the Incapacitated / The Most Abhorrent Form)***

The Paisacha form is unanimously recognized as the lowest, most degraded, and utterly reprehensible mode of union. According to Manu (III.34): 'When a man secretly ravishes a maiden who is asleep, intoxicated, mentally disordered, unconscious, or otherwise incapacitated, it is called the Paisacha rite; it is the eighth, lowest, and most sinful of all rites.' Ancient legislators included Paisacha within the catalogue of marriages solely to protect the victimized woman: by formally recognizing the resulting cohabitation as a 'marriage', the woman was spared absolute social ostracism, and any child born of the outrage was conferred legitimacy and maintenance. In contemporary jurisprudence, this act constitutes aggravated rape.

Table 1: Comprehensive Comparative Taxonomy of Ashta Vivaha (Eight Forms of Marriage)

Form of Marriage	Classification	Primary Defining Feature	Parental / Ritual Role	Modern Legal Status
Brahma	Prashasta (Approved)	Gift of daughter to a learned, virtuous scholar without consideration	High ritual solemnity; Kanyadana by father	Valid under HMA if customary rites observed
Daiva	Prashasta (Approved)	Gift of daughter to an officiating priest during a Vedic Yajna	Ritual context; father confers daughter	Obsolete in practice; non-existent today

Arsha	Prashasta (Approved)	Father accepts a ceremonial pair of cattle for ritual purposes	Parental gift with symbolic agricultural exchange	Obsolete; prohibited if cattle construed as bride-price
Prajapatya	Prashasta (Approved)	Explicit covenant: 'Perform your sacred duties jointly'	Parental blessing and moral injunction	Valid under HMA with requisite ceremonies
Asura	Aprashasta (Unapproved)	Purchase of the bride through monetary bride-price (Shulka)	Commercial transaction; father receives price	Void; penal under Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
Gandharva	Aprashasta (Unapproved)	Union inspired by mutual love, physical desire, and mutual consent	No parental mediation; voluntary personal accord	Valid today provided customary rites/Saptapadi are done
Rakshasa	Aprashasta (Unapproved)	Marriage by capture, combat, and forcible abduction	Defiance/destruction of girl's family by force	Void ab initio; punishable as kidnapping/abduction
Paisacha	Aprashasta (Unapproved)	Ravishment of a woman sleeping, drugged, or incapacitated	Total absence of consent; vile, criminal assault	Void ab initio; aggravated rape under BNS/IPC

4. Evolution and Statutory Rationalization under Modern Hindu Law

The codification of Hindu law in 1955 dramatically streamlined this classical taxonomy. In pre-independence British Indian courts, it was settled law that out of the eight classical forms, only two had widely survived into active customary practice: the Brahma form (representing all non-commercial, gift-based marriages) and the Asura form (representing marriages involving bride-price or shulka). The distinction between these two surviving forms was critically important for judicial determination of the succession to a woman's Stridhana (separate property): under Mitakshara law, if a woman died childless,

her Stridhana devolved upon her husband and his heirs if married in the Brahma form, but reverted to her father and mother if married in the Asura form (as affirmed in Tikait Hargobind Prasad v. Phaldan Kuer, AIR 1952 SC 262).

4.1 Ceremonies and Solemnization: Section 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act

The modern statute decisively abandoned the moralistic eightfold division of marriages in favor of a unified ceremonial framework. Section 7 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 reads as follows:

> *"Section 7. Ceremonies for a Hindu marriage: (1) A Hindu marriage may be solemnized in accordance with the customary rites and ceremonies of either party thereto. (2) Where such rites and ceremonies include the Saptapadi (that is, the taking of seven steps by the bridegroom and the bride jointly before the sacred fire), the marriage becomes complete and binding when the seventh step is taken."*
>
> — The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955

The Indian judiciary has repeatedly affirmed that solemnization under Section 7 is not a mere formal recommendation, but an indispensable condition precedent for the legal validity of a Hindu marriage. In the landmark case of Bhaurao Shankar Lokhande v. State of Maharashtra (AIR 1965 SC 1564), the Supreme Court held that in the absence of evidence demonstrating the performance of either essential Shastric rites (such as Kanyadana, Homa, and Saptapadi) or established customary ceremonies, the marriage cannot be regarded as legally 'solemnized' in the eyes of law. Consequently, a second marriage attempted without strict ceremonial compliance cannot sustain a conviction for bigamy under Section 494 of the Indian Penal Code.

Similarly, in S. Nagalingam v. Sivagami (2001) 7 SCC 487, the Supreme Court clarified the scope of customary exemptions, validating the 'Suyammaryathai' (Self-Respect) marriages recognized in Tamil Nadu under Section 7-A of the state-amended Act. The Court confirmed that while Saptapadi remains the default Shastric rite, valid customary variations that omit priestcraft or fire rituals are fully legitimate when recognized by community usage or state legislative amendments.

4.2 Elimination of Coercive and Commercial Forms

Modern legislation has unequivocally extirpated the unapproved classical forms:

- **1. Asura Form:** Suppressed through both Section 5 of the HMA and the stringent provisions of the Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, which criminalizes the giving, taking, or demanding of any valuable security or consideration.
- **2. Rakshasa and Paisacha Forms:** Relegated to the category of serious non-bailable felonies. Under Section 12(1)(c) of the HMA, consent obtained by force or fraud vitiates the matrimonial contract, rendering it voidable at the option of the aggrieved party, entirely apart from prosecutorial action under criminal law.
- **3. Gandharva Form**: Reborn in modern society as love marriages and consensual unions, but shorn of its historical informality. Under modern law, mutual love alone does not constitute marriage: a couple inspired by Gandharva principles must either solemnize their union under Section 7 of the HMA or register under the secular Special Marriage Act, 1954.

5. Critical Contemporary Jurisprudence and Emerging Horizons

As Hindu society navigates the twenty-first century, the interface between classical sacramental philosophy and constitutional morality has generated pivotal legal debates in Indian courts.

5.1 Irretrievable Breakdown of Marriage: Supreme Court's Constitutional Intervention

For decades, the fault-theory of divorce under Section 13 forced estranged couples to engage in prolonged, acrimonious litigation to prove specific matrimonial offenses. In a historic constitutional judgment delivered by a Constitution Bench in Shilpa Sailesh v. Varun Sreenivasan (2023 SCC OnLine SC 544), the Supreme Court ruled that under Article 142(1) of the Constitution of India, the apex court has the plenary power to dissolve a marriage on the ground of 'irretrievable breakdown', dispensing with the mandatory statutory waiting period of six months under Section 13B. The Court observed that when a marriage is dead both emotionally and practically, refusing to grant a decree of dissolution under the facade of preserving sacramental sanctity constitutes cruelty to both parties.

5.2 Marriage Registration and Gender Justice

In Seema v. Ashwani Kumar (AIR 2006 SC 1158), the Supreme Court directed all States and Union Territories to make registration of marriages compulsory, irrespective of religion. While Section 8 of the HMA originally left registration optional at the discretion of state governments, judicial oversight has treated registration as an essential procedural safeguard to protect women against desertion, deny fraudulent claims of bigamy, and secure rights of maintenance and custody.

5.3 Same-Sex Unions and the Concept of Samskara: The Supriyo Verdict

The doctrinal nature of marriage stood at the heart of the landmark Supreme Court decision in Supriyo @ Supriya Chakraborty v. Union of India (2023 INSC 920). The petitioners sought legal recognition of queer marriages under the Special Marriage Act and personal laws. The Constitution Bench, while affirming the equal dignity and freedom of LGBTQIA+ individuals from discrimination, declined to judicially rewrite statutory marriage definitions, declaring that the creation of a legal status for non-heteronormative marriage falls exclusively within the legislative domain of Parliament. The discourse highlighted the persistent conceptual divergence between marriage as a biologically complementary, procreative sacrament in personal laws and marriage as a civil institution anchored in constitutional equality.

6. Conclusion

The trajectory of Hindu marriage from the Vedic era to the modern statutory era represents one of the most remarkable evolutions in comparative family law. Classical Hindu jurisprudence conceived Vivaha as an indissoluble, eternal Samskara directed toward cosmic righteousness (Dharma), ancestral continuity (Praja), and sanctified companionship (Rati). The ancient taxonomy of Ashta Vivaha demonstrated an extraordinary legal pragmatism, classifying all forms of sexual and marital associations and guiding society toward higher moral ideals while ensuring legal and social protection for women and their progeny.

The enactment of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, followed by successive amendments and progressive judicial interpretations, has transformed the institution into a harmonious doctrinal hybrid. While modern law has discarded archaic inequities—abolishing polygyny, recognizing individual autonomy, punishing commercialization, and providing mechanisms for divorce—it has deliberately preserved the sacramental dignity symbolized by customary solemnization. As Indian family law continues to evolve toward gender justice, personal autonomy, and constitutional morality, the institution of Hindu marriage stands as a resilient testament to the capacity of Dharmic traditions to synthesize ancient spiritual values with the imperatives of modern human rights.

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