



# A Comparative Study of Changing Patterns of Indian Marriages During Post Vedic Period

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## 1. Introduction

Vedic period was determined with the inclusion of Study of Veda and its implementation in one's life. The Vedic culture influenced many factors of society like education, social status of man and women, rituals, lifestyle, clothing, language, and many more. In the early phase of Vedic period, it was influenced by the work of Aryans, the use of Sanskrit language and study of Veda was introduced by them. In other words, the Vedic Period got its name after the 4 Veda's i.e.

1. Rig Veda,
2. Yajur Veda,
3. Sam Veda,
4. Atharv Veda.

Vedic practices were followed under the methods described in the Veda's. It was understood that following the methods and knowledge learnt from Veda's would help determine the right way of living one's life. Considering this fact, the importance of life Marriage also plays an important part of the society and in Veda's marriage has its own value and place. It is described as an institution which helps in the development and upliftment of society. By a constitution of marriage two individuals bind themselves in the oath of eternity. It was understood that marriage plays a vital role in the development of the individual's self.

## 2. Marriage and its types

Marriage in Vedic period was of utmost importance; it was a symbol of devotion, loyalty, sacrifice, love, prosperity. In Vedic period marriage was distributed in 8 types:

1. **Brahma:** Arrange marriage in which girls' parents approach the groom who has acquired knowledge of Veda
2. **Prajapatya:** Arrange marriage in which the groom's parents approach the family of the girl with equal / same education qualification as boys.
3. **Gandharva:** Form of love marriage in which two individuals with mutual consent marry each other with Vedic rituals. (This might not involve the consent of family)
4. **Deva:** Form of marriage in which the groom marries the daughter of the person who officiates the sacrifice.
5. **Arsha:** Form of marriage in which Bride price "Shulka" is paid for the marriage from the bridegroom (in case the bride and groom are not compatible) it is likely to be condemned in some sculptures.
6. **Asura:** In this form of marriage the groom pays money to the bride's family.
7. **Pisacha:** In this form of marriage the bride is seduced by the individual(groom) in undefined condition to get her married.
8. **Rakshasa:** Form of marriage in which the bride is taken forcibly for the marriage after her family members are hurt.

From the above defined types of marriage some are still practised and some are condemned as they do not fulfil the righteous form in Vedic culture. The purpose behind conducting marriage is **duty, progeny, sensual pleasure, companionship**. Marriage was considered a divine ritual which was not a temporary contract rather it was a bond between two individuals till they apart (die). The factors associated to the hindu marriage that were under consideration were:

1. Having children
2. Selection of bride and groom
3. Age of marriage
4. Shulka/ Dowry
5. Divorce
6. Pologamy and polyandry
7. Remarriage

Other factors that were practised were Niyog, Sati pratha. the reference for the above can be seen from the verse in the Vedic literature.

### **3. Status of marriage during late Vedic period**

As the time has passed the format of marriage has changed vividly. The perspective of getting married has acquired a desirable change due to the factors that have been practised in recent years since Vedic period. As the time has passed, the factors associated with the marriage like marriage age, sati pratha, pardha pratha, selection process of bride and groom are being administered in self-proclaimed form i.e as suitable to the individual.

As termed marriage is a social institution and representation of a social status of men and women respectively in the society to safely and respectfully relish the benefits provided by the society. The Vedic period determines some perspective associated with the functioning of the marriage.

**1. Selection of the bride and groom:** During the Vedic period it was observed that the bride and groom were selected on the basis of their educational qualification, and their social status. Mena and women were considered equal in every aspect and treated as one. As we move forward to the late Vedic period the criteria of the selection of bride and groom changed. It was considered that the marriages should be conducted according to the hierarchy of the caste i.e. Brahmins, the Kshatriyas or Rajanyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. Love marriages were socially condemned in the later phase, and inter-caste marriages were not considered appropriate, Resulting in the change of methods of selection of the bride and groom.

Women education and age also became a matter of concern during the later period. Women were not considered equal in various aspects and freedom of choice was taken from the women of society.

**2. Having Children:** children have always been a centric point of society. Bearing children is always considered an important part of women's social status. Having children is also an important reason for selecting a bride for marriage. The concept is to bear the child (son) who would take forward the family heritage (Kula). According to the Manava Dharma-Sutra, motherhood is ten lakh times more important than that of a teacher, a lakh times more important than that of a preceptor, and a thousand times more important than that of a father. (It is evident that in later Vedic period the deterioration the status of women)

**3. Age of marriage:** During the time of Vedic era the marriageable age was lowered in consideration of the reason when the girl attains her puberty. It was considered that it becomes easy for the girl to adjust at this age when she is not fully developed. (In later period it was used as a tool of exploitation and as a result the cases of child marriage at more lower age were evident.)

**4. Dowry:** During Vedic Kala "Streedhan" came along with the newly wed bride as a symbol of her saving or equal rights she has on her father's assets. It was considered holy and taken in positive account by the groom as well, but as time passed in the post Vedic period the concepts changed it was stated that it is compulsory for a bride to bring streedhan along with her as her husband is going to take care of her for the rest of her life (Shulka). Later when the ideologies of the individuals were corrupted, they started demanding the shulka (now termed as Dowry).

**5. Polygamy, Polyandry and Monogamy:** Monogamy is practiced by the Hindu Brahmins throughout Indian history and is also quoted as a righteous form of marriage in the Vedic culture. Polygamy has also set a pace during the early Vedic period where a king can marry two or more wives and there is no evidence for the functionality of polyandry (one wife marrying more than one husband except one example of Rani "Draupadi" who married 5 Pandavas) polygamy was evident in the late Vedic period, practiced among the kings.

**6. Widow Remarriage:** In the early Vedic period the widow remarriage was permitted (by the will of the women) it was practiced silently. Later in the post Vedic era it was prohibited and it was said the widow would marry the husband's brother.

**7. Sati Pratha:** There is no reference of sati pratha in the Vedic literature. It's not considered an ideal practice whereas in later stages it was made a form of ritual (in this the wife would burn with the corpse of the dead husband to make sure that he attains everything that he had in this life to the other life as well).

**8. Parda Pratha:** Vedic literature shows no evidence on parda pratha or any forms of clothing boundaries. It was later made a status symbol to protect the women from any kind of social interaction. It was also used as a tool to dominate societal thoughts and make it a man-dominated society. As in the early Vedic period women and men practiced equal status, equal standards, they were considered equal in every aspect like education, politics, weaponry, and many more it was considered valuable to marry knowledgeable women. But as in the later Vedic period the caste system emerged and prosperity of the family was connected with the efficiency of men; deterioration in the status of marriage was observed.

The above factors had seen evident change during the post Vedic period in comparison to the early Vedic period. The early Vedic period aimed towards the development of society as well as the individual living in it whereas when the time changed its core the society moulded the functionality of the marriage (institution) according to their convenience and understanding. This in due course affected the status of women, child development, study and understanding of literature and Upanishads, economic stability, companionship.

#### 4. Conclusion

Marriage is a divine institution established for attaining the wellbeing of individuals; it provides a sense of stability, companionship, and happiness. Studies show a drastic change in the establishment of the structured format for marriage. What the Vedic literature explained and demonstrated about the methods of marriage was gradually changed according to the social desirability and status of the individual in the society. History shows evidence that in later periods after the post Vedic period the influence of the change in marriage practices declined and hence gave birth to some of the acts which were then prohibited in the Vedic literature. Due to lack of knowledge of Vedic and lack of understanding of Upanishads the society's social value and status declined in past years.

## References

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