

CHAPTER III  
MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND  
THE POSITION OF WOMEN

I  
INTRODUCTION : Marriage

Sociological studies brings out clearly that marriage and family are found in one form or another in every human society, primitive or civilised. Marriage is one of the fundamental institutions of the human society and its study enables one to understand and appreciate the spirit of its culture and civilisation in as much as repercussions and percolations of it are felt on the varied facets of the social organisation.

According to the Hindu view of life, marriage is not a contract but a very important sacrament in the life of the individual. The lofty sentiment that

a daughter is given once in marriage, of course, after proper thinking, and not twice is expressed by the father of Sāvitrī, the ideal of Indian womanhood(208.13).

#### TRACES OF PROMISCUITY :

Scholars like Bachofen, McLenan, Morgan and others expounded the view that "man lived originally in a state of promiscuity"<sup>1</sup>, but Westermarck combated this view and pointed out that, "it is not, of course, impossible that among some peoples, intercourse between the sexes may have been almost promiscuous. But there is no shred of genuine evidence for the notion that promiscuity ever formed a general stage in the history of mankind."<sup>2</sup>

In the opinion of MM. Dr. P.V. Kane, the Vedic works contain no indications about promiscuity.<sup>3</sup> The Mbh tells us the stories of the wanton women of Uttarakuru<sup>4</sup> and of the city of Māhāsmatī<sup>5</sup> notorious for their extraordinary sexual freedom, but this evidence

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1. Westermarck, E.: The History of Human Marriage, p.51.
  2. ibid., p.133.
  3. Kane, P.V.: HDS, Vol.II, p.427; vide also Pandey, R.B.: Hindu Samskāras, p.269.
  4. Mbh, Cr.Ed., 1.113.4-7.
  5. Mbh. Cr.Ed., 2.28.23-24. Svetaketu, the son of Uddālaka, is said to have abolished promiscuity (Mbh. Cr.Ed. 1.113.8-10).

is rebutted by scholars like Drs. Kane and Altekar on the ground of their being either mythical in nature or of the proverbial traveller's tale,<sup>6</sup> yet there are a few epical episodes, e.g. the Śarmisthā-Yayāti episode, which betray an astounding laxity in sexual morality, but most of these passages have a context and are not to be taken at their face-value as Dr. Altekar points out? In the MP also, the Śarmisthā-Yayāti episode occurs.<sup>8</sup> Śarmisthā, who had escorted Devayānī to Yayāti's court as an attendant, was gifted with beauty, nobility and good character. After she has reached puberty, she happened once, to meet Yayāti alone in the Aśoka grove and made advances to him, who mentioning her Śukra's prohibitive injunction, hesitated to fulfil her passionate longing, when she, poignantly, pointed out the non-difference between one's own husband and the friend's husband.<sup>9</sup> It is to be noted that the context clearly shows that many factors were responsible for such a bold statement and action.

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6. Kane, P.V.: *ibid.*, Vol.II, p.428; Altekar, A.S.: *The Position of Women in the Hindu Civilisation*, pp.34-35.

7. Altekar, A.S.: *ibid.*, p.35.

8. MP Chapters 31 and 32.

9. *samāvetak matau rājan patih sakhyās ca yah patih / samam vivāha ityāhuh sakhyā me'si patih yatah //* MP.31.19; cf. MP 32.22; Mbh.Cr.Ed. 1.77.19.

Her sex urges were repressed by her being driven into desperation by the unnatural punishment of eternal maidenhood inflicted upon her. It may be quite possible that Śarmisthā's ideology may reflect the complex of the Rākṣasa culture, which having a different sex morality permitted such liaison,<sup>10</sup> or that probably this may be her psychological reaction resulting into a vehement expression of sexual urge emerging from a desire to wreak vengeance on Devayānī by causing Yayāti to be disloyal to her and that her jealous anguish was aggravated by the fact that Devayānī who was her contemporary had a son by that time (31.8) - a natural cause for jealousy for women. Yayāti's defence on the ground of the sacred duty, chivalry and fear of being stigmatised as a foetus-killer,<sup>11</sup> when admonished by Śukra, appears to be astounding and unconvincing, as he appears to have been enamoured of her ravishing beauty.<sup>12</sup> In the opinion of Dr. Altekar, these traces of promiscuity are to be referred to the pre-Vedic

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10. *cf.* tam evā'suradharmam tvamāsthītā-/ MP. 32.19.

11. MP.31.32-33; *cf.* Mbh. Cr.Ed. 1.78.32.

12. Yayāti seems to reciprocate to her love being infatuated by her ravishing beauty. *cf.* vedmi tvām śīlasampannām daityakanyām aninditām / rūpam te na paśyāmi sūcyagram api ninditam // MP.31.14; *cf.* Mbh.Cr.Ed.1.77.14; *cf.* Altekar, A.S., *op.cit.*, p.36.

times as we find the institution of marriage well-established in the RV.<sup>13</sup>

Another glaring instance retaining the traces of grossest sex-commerce is the one in which the doctrine of Godharma is inculcated by the Surabhīsuta to the sage Dīrghatamas. Once it s~~a~~ transpired that when the sage Dīrghatamas was residing in his younger brother Gautama's<sup>14</sup> hermitage, the son of Surabhī chanced to tread upon the sacrificial grass whereupon he caught the bull with its horn so tightly that it was a sheer impossibility for it to untie the firm grip. Being impressed by his amazing strength, it stooped to implore him for its freedom and to grant him a boon, and yet the sage of enviable strength was recalcitrant to free it when the latter observed, "Sire, to us, this is neither sin nor stealth; we discriminate neither between the edible and non-edible nor between the drinkable and non-drinkable. We bother<sup>not</sup> about the propriety of a thing to be done or not; equally to us, there is no distinction in the matter of mating." <sup>15</sup>

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13. Altekar, A.S.: op.cit., p.36.

14. It may be noted that Dīrghatamas, later on, came to be known as Gautama (MP.48.84); so we have now two Gautamas i.e. to say (1) Gautama who was formerly known as Dīrghatamas, and (2) Gautama, the younger brother of Dīrghatamas. In the opinion of Pargiter, the reading Gautama "seems to be a misreading, as the sequel shows". AIHT, p.158, fn.5.

15. MP. 48.49-50.

Bewildered as he was on hearing this quaint doctrine, he pleased the lord of the bull with food and drink and let it loose. Being tremendously impressed with the stimulating teachings of this Godharma, he approached his younger brother's wife to practise this new cult on her who expostulated him for his bull-like behaviour and set him adrift in the Ganges.<sup>16</sup>

From the above summary, it is clear that the principal tenets, as inculcated in this episode, suggest unbridled sexual freedom. The fact that the sage Dīrghatamas borrowed the doctrine from the bull and that his action was met with opprobrium and persecution suggests that it was alien and unpalatable to the society to which he belonged.

Dr. D.R. Patil seems to suggest speculatively that this custom of Godharma might be akin to the phallus cult (śisnadeva). The term 'śisnadeva' (RV. 7.21.5, 10.99.3) means "one addicted to sexual

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16. MP 48.44 ff.; vide Patil D.R., op.cit., pp.45, 158-159; PI, Vol.II, p.97; Meyer, J.J., *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, p.124. According to Pargiter Dīrghatamas "lived in his paternal cousin's hermitage whom the Purāṇas apparently call Saradvant, but indulged in gross immorality or misbehaved towards the wife of younger Autathya (Aucathya)" AIHT, p.158. He points out in fn. 5 on p.158 that Saradvant is Utathya's son according to the VP 65.101 and the BrP 3.1.106.

gratification, lustful, non-celibate" according to Prof. Vidhushekhara Bhattacharya,<sup>17</sup> and "it could hardly mean, those who worship phallus as god" as pointed by MM. Dr. Kane.<sup>18</sup> Dr. A.D. Pusalkar also concurs with his view.<sup>19</sup> If the term 'Śisnadeva' is taken in the sense "one addicted to sexual gratification, lustful," and the cult of Godharma is linked up with it as suggested speculatively by Dr. Patil, it would suggest the gross sexual commerce in general and in particular it would reflect upon the character of the celebrated sage Dīrghatamas. Moreover, the odium raised and the cruel punishment inflicted upon the purblind sage<sup>20</sup> would suggest, as noted above, the abhorrent character of this cult.

#### PROPINQUITOUS MARRIAGES :

Over and above the references to the sexual laxity, there are also met with in the MP references to incestuous unions.

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17. Vedic Interpretation and Tradition, Proceedings of the Sixth Oriental Conference, pp.500-502; The Phallus Worship in the Veda, IHQ, Vol.IX, p.103.
  18. Kane, P.V.: HDS, Vol.II, p.708.
  19. Pusalkar, A.D.: Śisnadeva in the Rgveda and Phallus Worship in the Indus Valley, Sarūpa Bhāratī, p.51; for the views of other scholars vide ibid, pp.49 ff.
  20. Pargiter remarks that "if a natural explanation may be suggested (about the sage's blindness), it is that he was not totally blind, but purblind or extremely short-sighted when young and that his sight improved in the old age as it often happens in such case". Ancient Genealogies and Chronology, JRAS.1910. n.44.fn.4: vide also ATHH. n.159.fn.2.

Incest on one's daughter or sister is referred to in connection with Vedic gods. Like Sūrya too, Pūṣan is the wooer of his mother and lover of his sister.<sup>21</sup> Prajāpati is said to have committed incest on his daughter.<sup>22</sup> The episode of Prajāpati's incest on his daughter also finds a reference in the MP.<sup>23</sup> The MP version can be divided into two parts. The first part depicts Brahmā's helpless subjection to passion for his own daughter variously known as Śatarūpā, Śāvitṛī, Gāyatrī, Sarasvatī and Brahmāṇī, the female counterpart of his body which was cut in twain when he was engrossed in muttering. The first part also mentions his ultimate marital union with her and also the birth of Manu and other sons.

The second part offers an explanation of this sagotra union that this is a primal divine creation born of rajoguṇa and divine knowledge, supersensuous in nature, shining with divine lustre and that, moreover, Brahmā, the Veda-rāśi, is the presiding deity of the Vedas and Śāvitṛī is the superintending deity etc. and hence there is nothing questionable in Prajāpati's approaching Śāvitṛī.

21. Keith, A.B.: The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads, HOS 31, p.107.

22. SB 1.7.4.1 ff; AB.3.33; vide also Macdonell, A.B., Vedic Mythology, p.119.

23. MP. 3.31 ff; 4.1 ff; vide Muir, J., OST, Vol. I, pp.108 ff.



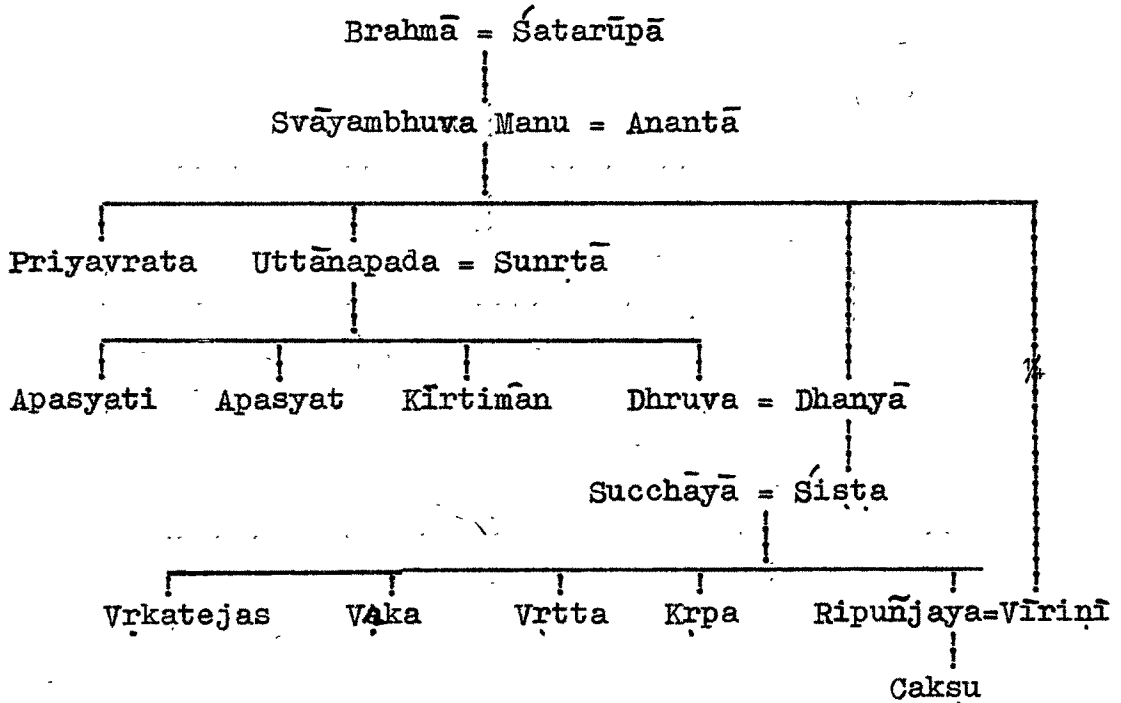
From this it is clear that the first part does not expunge the popular features inherited from the Vedic literature and also that the narrator, finding the story abominable to the taste, offered a symbolic interpretation of this episode to palliate its enormity.<sup>24</sup> No likewise attempt is made in the Brāhmana-versions to extenuate the enormity of the act. The first part of the episode delineates the detestable father-daughter relations.<sup>25</sup> It is to be noted that the context of the episode shows that the creation of Sāvitṛī had its origin rooted in the desire of Prajāpati for the creation of the world (3.30). Generally, in the stories of primal creations such incestuous unions are met with and moreover the symbolical interpretation offered by the MP dwindles the possibility of taking this episode as an instance of father-daughter incest.

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24. Vide Muir, J., OST, Vol. I, pp. 112-113.

25. Dr. Iravati Karve postulates the existence of the father-daughter relations in the Vedic society and cites the instance of Prajāpati and his daughter, Kinship Usages and the Family Organisation in Rgveda and Atharvaveda. ABORI, Vol. XX, (1938-39) pp. 214, 216. Dr. K.M. Kapadia is disinclined to accept this view of the existence of the father-daughter relations on the ground of the language being more metaphorical than literal and also the punishment suffered by the guilty person, Hindu Kinship, p. 48. E.W. Hopkins also opines, "the early legends of the gods wedding their daughters and sisters seem to me, however, no proof of such custom in men". JAOS, Vol. XIII, p. 345, cf. also VI, Vol. I, pp. 397, 475, quoted in Kapadia's Hindu Kinship, p. 50, fn. 17.

Another instance of the incestuous union is furnished by the marriage of Dhruva, the grand son of Svāyambhuva Manu, with Dhanyā, the daughter of Svāyambhuva Manu (4.33-38). This is an instance of marital union with the father's sister. Ripuñjaya, the son of Śiṣṭa, is said to have procreated Cakṣu on Vīrinī, the grand daughter of Brahmā (4.39). This is an instance of the relation with a grand mother's sister (<sup>father's</sup> a mother's sister). This will be clear from the following genealogical tree<sup>26</sup>:-



(N.B.: The sign = shows that both are conjugally related).

26. MP. 3.43-45; 4.33-39.

Instances of this type of marriages are solitary. The above instances are mythological allusious and for the reconstruction of social and cultural history, they are to be utilised with great care and caution. Equally vague are the references to the marriages of An̄ga with the Pitr̄kanyā Sunīthā (4.44), of Śukra with Gaṇ̄ (15.15) and of Himavat with Menā (13.7). Acchodā, the mind-born daughter of Agniṣvātapitr̄s, was inflamed with passion at the sight of the handsome pitr̄ Amāvasu, by name, who disdained her love (14.5 ff). Dr. S.C.Sarkar holds the view that the compound "pitr̄kanyā" stands for half-sister in these references,<sup>27</sup> but the compound equally means "the daughter of the pitr̄s, the names or the deified fathers"<sup>28</sup> and this is confirmed by the context viz. that these chapters deal with the account of the pitr̄s and the ritual of the śrāddha.

Instances of cross-cousin marriages are met with in the Sanskrit literature.<sup>29</sup> In the MP, the marriage

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27. Sarkar, S.C.: Some Aspects of Early Social History of India, Section on brother-sister marriage, pp.116-35, as quoted by Dr. Karve Iravati, op.cit., p.46 and by Dr. Kapadia K.M., op.cit., p.49.
28. cf. Karve Iravati, op.cit., p.46; Kapadia K.M., op.cit., p.49.
29. Vide also Kane, P.V., HDS, Vol.II, pp.458 ff; Karve. I, Kinship Organisation in India, pp.47 ff, 87 ff; Kapadia, K.M., ibid., pp. 63 ff.

of Arjuna with Subhadra<sup>30</sup> (50.56) is an instance in point. Arjuna was the son of Kuntī who was Vasudeva's sister and Subhadra<sup>30</sup> was Vasudeva's daughter (46.7 ff, 46.15). Pāṇḍu married Mādri and Mādri's son Sahadeva is said to have married a Mādri (46.10, 50.48 ff). The same cross-cousin marriages are met with in the Mbh. "Thus there was no bar against cross-cousin marriage, but it was certainly not a preferred type of mating" observes Dr. Iravati Karve in connection with the Mbh instances.<sup>30</sup>

#### FORMS OF MARRIAGE :

We now come to the different forms of marriage. Polyandry, polygyny and monogamy are the different forms of marriage in the sense that there is a variation in the number of partners,<sup>31</sup> while in the traditional eight forms of marriage, there is a difference in ritual and mode.

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30. Karve Iravati : Kinship Terms and Family Organisation as found in the Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata, BDCRI, Vol.V, (1943-44), p.142.

31. Malinowski used the phrase "the forms of marriage" in the sense to imply the numeric variation in partners (Marriage, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.14, p.949.) but its connotation is extended here as done above.

### Polyandry :

Scholars are divided in their opinion about the existence of polyandry in the Vedic society. Scholars like MM. Dr. Kane<sup>32</sup> and Dr. Altekar<sup>33</sup> deny the existence of polyandry in the Vedic society, while Dr. R.C. Majumdar maintains that it "probably also existed in early Vedic society".<sup>34</sup>

The most commonly cited and the most controversial instance of the polyandrous union is of Draupadī's marriage with five Pāṇḍava princes as her consorts. According to the MP version (50.51 ff), Draupadī had the following sons through five Pāṇḍava princes viz. Prativindhya by Yudhiṣṭhira, Śrutasena by Bhīma, Śrutakīrti by Arjuna, Śrutakarmā by Sahadeva and Śatānīka by Nakula and all these sons were known by a matronymic 'Draupadeya'. It may be noted that the Pāṇḍava princes had many other wives and sons by them and these were known by a patronymic 'Pāṇḍaveya' (50.53 ff). Thus Pāṇḍavas appear to be both poly<sup>a</sup>ndrists

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32. HDS, Vol.II, p.554.

33. Op.cit., p.132.

34. Majumdar, R.C.: Ideal and Position of Indian Women in Domestic Life, Great Women of India, p.7. In fn.11 on the same he notes that B.S.Upadhyaya in his book "Women in Rig-veda" (p.112) also is of the opinion that polyandry existed, vide also Kapadia, K.M. op.cit., pp.109-110.

as well as polygynists as the present version, likewise the epic-version, goes. The MP is silent about Kuntī's proposal, the storms of protests raised and the mollificatory explanations and justification thereof advanced by different personages of the great epic of India.

Another instance of the polyandrous union in the MP is of Māriṣā, the daughter of Soma, with ten Pracetases, the sons of Prajāpati Prācīnabrah̥m̐ and Savarnā (4.46 ff.)

These two instances are the cases of adelphic or fraternal polyandry which means marriage of a woman with two or more brothers.<sup>35</sup>

There are other instances in which brothers enjoyed sexual intimacy with the elder brother's wife. In the MP this is instanced by the Brhaspati-Mamatā episode<sup>36</sup> which is as follows :

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35. In Tibet and the adjacent countries there exists polyandry of the fraternal type. Among the Nayars and the Toda, a sort of polyandry is practised (B. Malinowski, Marriage, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 14, p. 949). Some primitive tribes of America, Africa, Malay Archipelago, etc. also practise polyandry. (Marck, Polyandry, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 18, p. 178.)

36. MP. 48.32 ff; 49.17 ff; cf. Patil D.R., op.cit., p. 45; PI, Vol. II, p. 634. Mbh. Cr. Ed. 1.98.6 ff.

Once Uśijās<sup>37</sup> younger brother Br̥haspati approached his elder brother's wife Mamatā for sexual intercourse and she beseeched him to avoid her as she was enceinte, he was amogharetas and there was no space left for the second child. In spite of her persuasions, Br̥haspati forced himself on her and had his passion fulfilled. Bharadvāja, their issue, was accepted by Bharata as his son (49.31).

In this episode, Mamatā's words, "asminnevaṃ gate kāle yathā vā many<sup>a</sup>se prabho"<sup>38</sup> suggest that there was nothing repulsive in the sexual intimacy of a younger brother with his elder brother's wife, even when the elder brother was alive. According to Dr. D.R. Patil, the important thing to note is the idea regarding sexual morality and the story assumes more importance when Bharadvāja is adopted by Bharata.<sup>39</sup>

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37. v.l. Utathya, *ria.*, for the discussion of variants, vide AIHT, pp.157 ff.

38. MP.48.36. Mamatā's remark "the Dharma is violated" (49.19) is an additional argument from the moral point of view. In an angry rebuff, Br̥haspati retorts to her that no rules of modesty are to be preached to him (49.20).

39. Patil, D. R.: *op.cit.*, p.159. Pargiter points out that the MP-version is later than the VP-version. AIHT, p.160.

The lamentable fate of the sage Dīrghatamas at the hands of his younger brother's wife for approaching her, who was to him like a daughter-in-law (48-54), to practise the teaching of Godharma, suggests that the senior brother's sexual intimacy with the younger brother's wife was odious and was met with serious consequences.

### Polygyny :

Polygyny is in a way the counterpart of polyandry. "Though monogamy seems to have been the ideal and was probably the rule, the Vedic literature is full of references to polygamy"<sup>40</sup> In the MP some personages are noted to be polygynists while some others are noted to be bigamists.

Satrājit has ten wives who were the ten daughters of Kaikeya.<sup>41</sup> Prācetasas Dakṣa Prajāpati and Vairiṇī had sixty daughters out of which ten were given to Dharma, thirteen to Kaśyapa, twenty-seven to Soma, two to Bhṛgu-putra, two to Kṛśāśva and two to Aṅgiras.<sup>42</sup>

40. Kane, P.V.: op.cit., Vol.II, p.550, for evidence vide ibid., pp.550 f.

41. MP.45.19; cf. VP.96.53.

42. MP.5.12 ff; cf. Patil D.R., op.cit., p.46. The MP 6.1 ff mentions Kaśyapa's thirteen wives viz. Aditi, Diti, Danu, Arisṭā, Surasā, Surabhi, Vinatā, Tāmra, Krodhavaśā, Irā, Viśvā and Muni; cf. Patil D.R. op.cit., p.46.



These are the examples of sororal polygyny which means marriage with two or more sisters. Bhajamāna had two wives viz. Srñjayī and Vāhyakā, the daughters of the king Srñjaya (44.49-50).<sup>43</sup> Yasodevī and Satyā, the daughters of Saibya, were the wives of Brhanmanas (48.105).<sup>44</sup> According to Prof. A.R. Radcliffe Brown, the sororal polygyny can be attributed to the fact that co-wives who are sisters are less likely to quarrel than two who are not related,<sup>45</sup> and thus likely to maintain the peace and solidarity of the family.

The following is the list of polygynists :

<u>Name of the polygynist</u>	<u>Name/Number of the consorts</u>
1. Ajamīdha	1. Nīlinī, Dhūminī and Keśinī of the Kuru family and Bhūminī. <sup>46</sup>

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43. ~~also~~ Patil, D.R., op.cit., p.46.

44. Ibid., p.46.

45. Radcliffe Brown A.R.: Structure and Function in Primitive Society, p.80.

46. MP.49.44,47; MP 49.47 (missing in ~~Ma~~); cf. Patil D.R., op.cit., p.46 and also ibid. fn.91.

<u>Name of the polygynist</u>	<u>Name/Number of the consorts</u>
2. Akrūra	2. Ratnā, the daughter of Śaibya, Ugrasena and Āśvinī (45.28, 31, 32).
3. Kṛṣṇa	3. Sixteen thousand wives out of which the following are mentioned : Rukmiṇī, Satyabhāmā, Satyā, Nāgnajitī, Subhāmā, Śaibya, Gāndhārī, Lakṣmaṇā, Mitravindā, Kāḷindī, Jāmbavatī, Suśīlā, Mādrī, Kauśalyā and Vijayā. <sup>47</sup>
4. Uśīnara	4. Bhṛṣā, Kṛṣā, Navā, Darsā and Drṣadvatī (48.16).
5. Vasudeva	5. Pauravī Rohiṇī (46.11), Devakī (46.13), Tāmrā (46.16), Devarakṣitā (46.16), Upadevī (46.17), Vṛkadevī (46.18), Śraddhādevī (46.20), Sutanu & Ratharājī (46.21) and a Vaiśyā (a woman of the Vaiśya varṇa) (46.20). <sup>48</sup>
47.	MP.47.13-14; cf. VP 96.233 ff; Mbh 16.5.6. Satyabhāmā, Vratiniṃ and Padmāvatī, the daughters of Bhaṅgakāra who was the son of Satrājita were given to Kṛṣṇa who was thus partly a sororal polygynist (45.19 ff.).
48.	The VP 96.159 mentions that Vasudeva had 13 wives of whom seven were the daughters of Devaka. The MP 44.71 ff mentions that Devaka had 7 daughters - Devakī, Srutadevī, Mitradevī (Citradevī - gha), Yaśodharā, Śrīdevī, Satyadevī and Sutāpī and they were given to Vasudeva who was thus partly a sororal polygynist.

<u>Name of the polygynist</u>	<u>Name/Number of the consorts</u>
6. Vivasvat	Samjñā, Rājñī and Prabhā (11.2)

The following is the list of bigamists :-

<u>Name of the bigamists</u>	<u>Name of the consorts</u>
1. Antināra	1. Manasvinī and Ilinā (49.7,9)
2. Pāṇḍu	2. Kuntī and Mādrī (46.8,10;50.48)
3. Sagara	3. Prabhā and Bhānumatī. <sup>49</sup>
4. Śantanu	4. Jahnvinī and Kālī, the daughter of a fisherman (50.44-45)
5. Vṛṣṇi	5. Gāndhārī and Mādrī. <sup>50</sup>
6. Yayāti	6. Devayānī and Sarmisthā. <sup>51</sup>

Even in the historic times, several kings were polygynists.<sup>52</sup> Even in modern times, several persons are found to be bigamists and even polygynists.

49. MP 12.38; cf. Patil, D.R., op.cit., p.46.

50. MP 45.1; cf. VP 96.17.

51. The MP 24.52 mentions Devayānī and Sarmisthā as the wives of Yayāti, but in the Yayāti-carita, Sarmisthā is said to have enticed Yayāti who was prohibited by Śukra from having sexual relations with Sarmisthā (31.10 ff.), cf. Patil, D.R., op.cit., p.46.

52. Vide Kane, P.V.: HDS, Vol.II, pp.553 f.

The ideal monogamous unions are exemplified in the MP by Śiva and Pārvatī and Satyavān and Sāvitrī. King Jyāmagha did not remarry even though his wife Caitrā had no issue (44.32-33). Of course, she gave birth to Vidarbha at an advanced age after austere asceticism (44.35,36).

### Eight Forms of Marriage

Now we come to the eight forms of marriage. From the times of the Gr̥hyasūtras, Dharmasūtras and Smṛtis<sup>53</sup> the ancient Indian law recognised the eight forms of marriage which are as follows :-

1. Brāhma : In this the daughter is gifted after decking with valuable vestments and honouring her by present of jewels to a man learned in the Veda and of good conduct whom the father of the girl himself invites.
2. Daiva : In this the daughter decked with ornaments is given to a priest, who duly officiates at the sacrifice during the course of its performance.

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53. Kane P.V.: op.cit., Vol.II, p.516.

3. Ārsa : In this the daughter is given according to the rule, after receiving from the bridegroom for the fulfilment of the sacred law, a cow and a bull or two pairs. In this there is no intention of the sale of the girl.
4. Prājāpatya : In this the daughter is given away to the groom after addressing him with the text, "Sahabham caratām" and after honouring him with madhuparka etc.
5. Āsura : In this the groom has to give as much wealth as he can afford to kinsmen of the bride and the bride herself.
6. Gāndharva : In this the union of the girl and the groom is by mutual consent. It springs from passion of love and has sexual intercourse for its purpose.
7. Rāksasa : This involves the forcible abduction of a maiden from her home while she cries out and weeps, after her kinsmen have been slain and wounded and their houses and fortresses have been broken open.

8. Paisāca : This involves the seduction by stealth of a girl who is sleeping, intoxicated or deranged. This is the basest and the most sinful type of marriage.<sup>54</sup>

There is the consensus of opinion of all the law-givers about the first four forms being the approved ones and almost all are agreed that the last is the worst. However, there is a great divergence of opinion as to which of these are the approved ones for the members of the different varṇas.<sup>55</sup>

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54. MS.3.21, 27-34; vide Kane P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.516 ff; Prabhu P.N., Hindu Social Organisation, pp.153 ff; Pandey R.B., op.cit., pp.271 ff.; Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp. 41 ff. Dr. Ludwik Sternbach opines that there are eleven forms of marriage. In addition to the above eight forms there are two special forms named Svayamvara (i) in which there was the absolute freedom of the bride to choose her husband e.g. Sāvitrī and Damayantī (ii) the bride is won by a feat of prowess as in the case of Sītā and Draupadī (vīryaśulka). The Gāndharva vivāha is to be divided into two forms i.e. Gāndharva vivāha combined with the Rākṣasa vivāha and the Gāndharva vivāha not combined with the Rākṣasa vivāha. From the legal point of view, he categorises the first four as orthodox forms of marriage while the last four as unorthodox ones. He also brings out the sociological aspects of the different forms of marriage from the customs prevalent amongst the primitive tribes and communities. Vide his article, "Forms of Marriage in Ancient India and Their Development", Bhāratīya Vidyā, Vol.XII, 1951, pp.62-138.

55. MS. 3.23 ff. vide Kane P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.521 ff.

In the MP, a reference to the Ārsa form of marriage is met with. It is declared that he who gave a bride, according to his ability, on the confluence of the Ganges and the Yamunā in accordance with the Ārsa form of marriage, would never visit the terrible hell and after repairing to <sup>the</sup> land of Uttarakurus he would rejoice for an infinite period and would get handsome and religious minded sons and wife,<sup>56</sup> This is an enlogy of the Ārsa form of marriage as well as the sanctity of the confluence-area of the Ganges and the Yamunā.

#### Inter-caste Marriages :

The inter-caste marriages have been of absorbing interest in modern times, as they try to cut across the caste-lines and to undermine the caste-rigidity. These inter-caste marriages are not a new thing but are traceable to the Vedic period. This is exemplified in the Vedic literature by the marriage of the descrepit sage Cyvana, a Bhārgava with Sukanyā, the daughter of the king Śaryāta.<sup>57</sup>

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56. MP. 106.8-9.

57. SB 4.1.5; vide Kane P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.447 ff.

That the law-givers like Āpastamba looked with disfavour the inter-caste marriages can be surmised from the right-royal condemnation of such marriages,<sup>58</sup> while liberal law-givers like Manu and others permit the anuloma marriage,<sup>59</sup> but the opinion about the approval of a marriage of a twice-born with a Śūdra woman was divided.<sup>60</sup> The derogatory status assigned to the partners and progeny of the pratiloma marriage suggests that it was looked down upon by the law-givers.<sup>61</sup>

The MP furnishes instances of both the anuloma and pratiloma marriages. The instances of the anuloma marriage are furnished by the marital relations of Vasudeva with a woman of Vaiśya varṇa (46.20) and of the king Śantanu with Kālī, the daughter of a fisherman (50.45). The instance of the pratiloma marriage is purveyed by the famous marriage of Yayāti with Devayānī.<sup>62</sup>

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58. ADS. 2.6.13.1,3,4.

59. MS 3.13; cf. BDS 1.8.2; ViDS 24.1-4 etc.

60. Kane P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.449.

61. For the views of the different law-givers on this, vide Kane P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp. 52 ff.

62. MP 30.35. The conversation between Yayāti and Devayānī and the one between Śukra and the former show Yayāti highly hesitant about such a pratiloma matrimonial alliance involving the dreadful consequential sin of varṇasāṅkaratva (MP.30.18 ff.).



Turvasu was cursed by Yayāti to be a king of the region where pratiloma marriages were practised.<sup>63</sup>

The MP shows a favourable attitude towards anuloma unions or marriages. If a maiden makes advances to a person of high caste, she is to be given to him.<sup>64</sup> That the MP shows a disfavourable attitude to pratiloma unions or marriages can be surmised from the steps taken to nip the very seeds in the bud. It says that if a maiden courts a man of low-caste, she is to be forced to live confined in her house, or if a maiden of high caste makes love to a man of low caste, she is to suffer the corporal punishment likewise a person of low caste making love to a maiden of high caste.<sup>65</sup>

En passant, the marriage of Yayāti with Sarmi-  
sthā may be referred to here, which may, probably,  
suggest an intercultural or inter-communal marriage.  
Now-a-days we do hear the cases of inter-national

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63. MP. 33.13. For other instances from the epigraphic records and Sanskrit literature, vide Kane. P.V., op.cit., pp.449 f; Pandey, R.B., op.cit., pp. 304 ff.

64. MP 227.130, cf. MS 8.365 ab also shows a liberal attitude.

65. MP 227.131. cf. MS 8.365 ed, 366 ab.; MP 227.131 ed = MS 8.366 ab; MP 227.131 ab with the relation gha = MS 8.365 ed; Kane P.V., op.cit., Vol.III, p.401.

marriages. It may be suggested that the marriage of Yayāti with Śarmiṣṭhā and Devayānī may, probably, be an attempt to establish cordial relations between the belligerent Asuras and Aryans. Indian history amply testifies to the fact that matrimonial alliances were formed from the political point of view.

#### Limitations of Marriages:

Another vital problem connected with the institution of marriage is that of marital regulations. Despite the storming strength of the sexual instinct and its disturbing influence, human societies have evolved rules and regulations for its proper working by various devices such as exogamy and endogamy.<sup>66</sup> The exogamy of the Hindus has the following aspects :-  
(i) Gotra exogamy (ii) Pravara exogamy (iii) Sapinda exogamy.

The gotra exogamy bars the marriage between the members of the same gotra and the pravara exogamy proscribes the marriage of persons of the same pravara.

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66. Different theories are expounded to explain the rise of exogamy. For a summary of these various theories, vide Pandey, R.B., op.cit., pp.296 ff.

As MM. Dr. Kane remarks, "prohibition as to sameness of gotra in marriage had its origin long before the period of the sūtras in the times of the Brāhmaṇa works (if not earlier).<sup>67</sup> The term gotra has passed through various semantic vicissitudes, from its meaning viz. a cow-pen or a herd of cows, to a family-name.<sup>68</sup> The concept of pravara is closely interwoven with that of gotra from very early times. Literally it means 'choosing' or 'invoking' and finally it came to connote one or more illustrious rsis, ancestors of a sacrificer. The term akin to 'pravara' is the term 'ārṣeya' or 'ārṣa'. The term 'ārṣeya' occurs in the RV and MM. Dr. Kane holds that the system of pravara goes back almost to the R̥gveda.<sup>69</sup> Much has been written and discussed on this vexed problem of 'gotra and pravara' by several indologists,

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67. HDS, Vol.II, p.481.

68. Vide Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.479 ff.; Karandikar, S.V., Hindu Exogamy, pp.34 ff.; Kapadia, K.M. op.cit., pp.55 ff.

69. Op.cit., Vol.II, pp.486 f.

anthropologists and sociologists.<sup>70</sup> The MP enumerates the various gotras and pravaras<sup>71</sup> and also states the incidence of this system on the institution of marriage viz. that the persons of a particular gotra and pravara are mutually ineligible for marriage.<sup>72</sup> An exception to this general rule of exogamy is the marriage of Ahalyā with Saradvat (50.8). Ahalyā was the great grand-daughter of Mudgala who is said to belong to the Angiras group (50.5) and the MP 145.103-104 states

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70. Kane, P.V., HDS, Vol.II, pp.478 ff.; Gotra and Pravara in Vedic Literature, Proceedings and Transactions of the Seventh All India Oriental Conference, Baroda, 1933 (1935), pp.317 ff.; Karandikar, S.V., Hindu Exogamy, Chs. 1-8; Kapadia, K.M., Hindu Kinship, pp.54 ff; Brough John, The Early Brahmanical System of Gotra and Pravara, pp. 1-55; Karve Iravati, op.cit., pp.58 ff; Kosambi, D.D., On the Origin of Brahmin Gotras, JBBRAS, 26, 1950, pp.21 ff., 27, 1951, pp.1-30; 180-213; Brahmin clans, JAOS, Vol.73, No.4, Oct.-Dec., 1953 pp.202 ff. This article reviews Dr. Brough's views and methodology; ERE, Vol.VI, pp.353 ff., Vaidya C.V., Gotra and Pravara, Proceedings and Transactions of the First Oriental Conference, Poona, 1919 (1922), Vol.II, pp.34 ff. etc.

h adopted in the  
above mentioned  
book; Fick R, Gotra,

71. Vide MP. Chs.195-203; MP 145.90 ff. mentions the mantrakṛt ṛsis whose names also occur in the Gotra lists.

72. cf. पश्यन्मन्त्रैकान्ता नृसंघः परिकीर्तितः।  
MP.195.32, 195.36, 54 etc. Prof. K. Rangachari remarks that the tradition concerning gotra and pravara as found in the MP differs from that of the Mbh and these two from the very widely prevalent tradition and the practice of the present day. Vide Gotra and Pravara and Their Incidence on Marriage, Proceedings and Transactions of the Third Oriental Conference, Madras, 1924 (1925), p.651. Dr. John Brough's comments on the text-critical problem of the pravara lists of the MP are already noted in the Introductory Chapter.

that Mudgala and Śaraḍvat belonged to the Angiras group,<sup>73</sup> thus this is a matrimonial alliance of the two Angirases.

Another rule regulating the consanguineous marriages is known as Śapinda exogamy which bars marriages of persons within certain generations on the father's side as well as the mother's side.<sup>74</sup> The MP says nothing about the Śapinda exogamy.

Even in modern times there are exogamous and endogamous circles for marriage purposes.

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73. Vide also AIHT, p.116.

74. Vide for details, Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.452 ff; Karandikar, S.V., op.cit., Chs.9-10; Kapadia, K.M., op.cit., pp.61 ff; Karve Iravati, op.cit., pp. 55 ff. It may be noted, en passant, that the term 'sapinda' is interpreted differently by the founder of the Mitāksarā School and the Dāyabhāga School. Viṣṇāneśvara, the founder of the Mitāksarā School of Bombay interprets it as "one who has the same pinda i.e. body ( or particles of body) while according to Jīmūtavāhana, the founder of the Dāyabhāga School of Bengal, it is taken to mean 'the ball of rice' that is offered in śrāddhas to the deceased ancestors etc., thus the term 'sapinda' means 'one who is connected with another through oblations of food'. Kane, P.V., op.cit., p.472.

Marriageable Age :

The marriageable age has varied from time to time. In the Vedic period, the girls were married at a fairly mature age while some led the life of spinners.<sup>75</sup> During the period of the Dharmasūtras (i.e. C. 400 B.C. to C. 100 A.D.), the marriageable age was gradually lowered and the girls were married just before the time of puberty or immediately after it.<sup>76</sup> The several Grhyasūtras lay down that the bride must be a nagnikā, a term which has been a subject of diametrical opposite interpretations. Some commentators interpret it to connote a girl fit for intercourse while others interpret it to connote a girl who had not even experienced impulses and emotions of sex and who moved nude even without an iota of abashment. Thus this is a term which changed its colour like a chameleon.<sup>77</sup> But about 200 A.D., the popular feeling leaned towards the pre-puberty marriages by which is

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75. Vide Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp.58 ff.; Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.439 f.; Pandey, R.B., op.cit., pp.315 ff.

76. Vide Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp.60 ff.; Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.440 ff.; Pandey, R.B., op.cit., pp. 322 ff.

77. Vide Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p.61; Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.440, 444; Patkar, M.M., A Note on the Word 'Nagnikā' and Its Bearing on the Marriageable Age of Girls in Ancient India, Vāk, No.3, December, 1953, pp.37 ff.

implied the marriage of girls designated by terms gaurī, nagnikā and rohinī.<sup>78</sup> From about the 6th or 7th century, the marriages of Brahmin girls between 8 and 10 were general and this continued down to modern times.<sup>79</sup>

In an ancient gāthā, the MP extols the marriage of a gaurī girl as highly meritorious and pleasing to the pitṛs.<sup>80</sup> According to the Vaikhānasa Smārtasūtra (6.12), a gaurī is a maiden who is between ten and twelve and has not had menstruation while according to Parāśara (7.6-9), a girl of eight is designated as a gaurī and according to some, she is a maiden of seven.<sup>81</sup>

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78. Vide Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p.67; Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.443.

79. Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.445.

80. MP. 207.40; cf. the VP 83.44 eulogises the marriage of a gaurī by remarking that her son purifies 21 ancestors on his father's side and 6 male ancestors on his mother's side.

81. brāhmaṇo brāhmaṇīm nagnikām gaurīm vā kanyām var̥yet / astavar̥ṣād ā daśmān nagnikā / rajasyaprāpte daśavar̥ṣād ā dvādaśād gaurītyāmananti / Vaikhānasa-smārtasūtra 6.12.; cf. also 'aprāptā rajaso gaurī prāpte rajaso rohinī' / Grhya-saṅgraha quoted by the commentator on the Gōbhila-grhyasūtra 3.4.6, as quoted by P.V. Kane, op.cit., Vol.II, pp.440 fn. 1047, p.444, fn.1055. According to Kasyapa as quoted in the Grhastha-ratnākara (p.46) of Candēśvara, a girl of seven is gaurī (Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.445). The Bhaviṣya Purāṇa as quoted in the Saṃskāraprakāśa (p.768), a part of Vīramitrodaya of Mitrāmīśra, states 'saptavar̥ṣā bhaved gaurī...' (Kane, P.V., ibid., p.445. fn. 1057); For details vide, Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp. 440 ff.

In short, this refers to a marriage of a prepubescent girl. It may be noted, incidentally, that when Ram Pratap Tripathi<sup>82</sup> interprets the term 'gaurī' as 'a girl of eight', he appears to follow Parāśara, while the interpretation of JA<sup>83</sup> as a girl of ten years appears to follow the Vaikhānasasmārtasūtra.

That the MP 227.127-128 also permits a post-puberty marriage at the bride's initiative can be inferred from the statement that a maiden deserved not an amercement, when she, after three menstrual periods at her father's place, chose a mate of her own accord and choice. This view of the MP is in consonance with that of Gautama who also permits a maiden, after three monthly periods, to unite herself with a blameless person of her own will and enjoins to give up the ornaments received from her father or her family.<sup>84</sup> This also suggests that the narrator of the MP like Gautama was not horrified if the girls got themselves married sometime after puberty. The former passage exlogising the prepuberty marriage may be assigned to

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82. Op.cit., p.580.

83. MP. Vol. III, p.828.

84. trīn rtūn atītya svayam yujyetāninditenōtsrājya  
pitryānalankārān / GDS.18.20.; Kautilya Artha-  
śāstra, 4.12 (Tr. p.259).



200 A.D. to 600 A.D. from its thought-content, when the prepuberty marriages were recommended and had come in vogue, while the latter passage may be assigned to the contemporaneous period of Gautama (600 B.C. to 300 B.C.).

Qualifications of the  
Bride and the Groom :

The Dharmasāstra literature has laid down detailed requisite qualifications of a bride and a groom. The MP 154.415 says that one should invite a handsome, young, strong and prosperous person of a good family and noble birth and give one's daughter to him.<sup>85</sup>

Beauty can also win the fair sex.<sup>86</sup> Urvaśī,

85. cf. Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.429 ff.; Pandey, R.B., op.cit., pp.330 ff.

86. cf. subhago rūpasampannaḥ strīṇāṃ bhavati vallabhaḥ / MP. 191.80. The liaison of the wives of gods with Soma shows how beauty can attract easily the fair sex. Once after the lustration at the conclusion of the Rājasūya sacrifice, the nine goddesses - Lakṣmī, Sīnīvālī, Dyutī, Tuṣṭī, Prabhā, Kūhū, Kīrti, Vasu and Dhṛti - went to see Soma of excellent charm and being inflamed with the passion of love at the exquisite form, they made advances to him, leaving aside their respective husbands - Nārāyaṇa, Kardama, Vibhāvasu, Dhātā, Prabhākara, Haṃśmat, Jāyanta, Mārīca, Kaśyapa and Nandi and Soma also wooed them as if they were his own. (23.23 ff.) The interpretation of JA of this objectionable act as it was due as if out of motherly love for a son (MP. Vol.I, p.167 and fn. on pp.167-169) is not warranted by the text which explicitly uses the phrases viz. 'kāṃabānābhītaptāṅgyah' (23.23), 'svakīyā iva kāmayāmāsa' (23.26) and also the employment of sāpa, śastra etc. against Soma, rules out the possibility of this interpretation of JA.

the renowned celestial nymph, was enamoured of Purūravas on account of his peerless beauty and became his wife.<sup>87</sup>

Incidentally, it may be noted that fraud, treachery etc. in the settling of marriage were severely met with, e.g. a giver of a maiden without declaring her blemishes was fined 96 paṇas; a person who could not show the blemishes of a maiden by declaring her to be a non-maiden was fined a hundred paṇas. If a person substituted in marriage another maiden for the one shown before, he was punished with the highest amercement. If a groom married a maiden without declaring the blemishes, the marriage was null and void and the groom was fined two hundred paṇas. If a person gave a girl in marriage to another after having given her to another was punished with the highest amercement. One who demanded more money than agreed upon was fined twice the amount.<sup>88</sup>

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87. MP. 24.12,29. Dr. D.R. Patil lists this Urvaśī-Purūravas episode under promiscuity (op.cit., pp. 44,157). This is a case of love at first sight between a mortal king and a celestial hetaera.

88. MP. 227.14 ff; cf. Kauṭilya, Arthaśāstra 4.12; Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.540,541.

Marriage-Procession etc.:

The description of the preliminary preparations for marriage, procession, etc. of Śiva is graphic and lively and shows that the occasion of marriage was one of joy and festivity, din and bustle, hurry-scurry as it is even to-day. The friends and relatives of both the bride and groom moved in gusto, pomp and pleasure. The gods brought various things for Śiva whose different limbs with the same were decked. The ladies, as usual, are shown playing an active and enthusiastic role in this. The residential city of Himavat, the father-in-law of Śiva, was pompously and variegatedly decorated. Umā, like any other bride, awaited anxiously the fateful moment on that gala day. When the celestial grand procession moved majestically on the Himalayan regions, the celestial attendants shouted, as it happens even in modern royal processions, for the clearance of passage. Śiva rode on the bull in gaiety with his retinue and honourable guests. The celestial ladies came out to see the much coveted life-mate of Umā and some peeped at him through the lattice windows and passed interesting comments. This peeping through the lattice-window is a feature of the Gupta art.<sup>89</sup>

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89. Vide Agrawala, V.S.: *Harsacarita - Eka Samskrtika Adhyayana*, pp.85-86 and also plate 13, picture 50; *Harsacarita*, Part II, p.18.

The honourable guests and attendants of Śiva felt themselves blessed at the pompous and well decorated mansion of Himavat. The marriage ceremony proper was performed with due rites at the appointed time in the presence of Agni when Brahmā recited the mantras. The programme of dance and music was given by the nymphs, kinnaras, Gandharvas and R̥tus. After one night's stay there, Śiva with his consort, departed to his Mandarācala and went for honeymoon to beautiful and solitary gardens and wood-lands.

Though the description is in the mythological setting, the human touches are easily discernible. In the course of the description, there is no reference to the various items and rituals of the marriage-ceremony which are very important from the sociological point of view and thus its silence offers no scope for comparison and contrast between the present and the then ritual.<sup>90</sup>

#### Niyoga :

Before we pass on to the family-life, interpersonal relations of the different members of the family etc. mention must be made of the institution

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90. MP. 154.425 ff.

of niyoga. The levirate was quite common in ancient times in several civilisations, and is also found in some tribes.<sup>91</sup> There is no consensus of opinion about the origin and purpose of this institution.<sup>92</sup> Law-givers like Gautama permit this practice while those like Āpastamba condemn and forbid it.<sup>93</sup>

The invitation of the widow to the brother-in-law referred to in the RV.10.40.2 is nebulous to suggest a practice of niyoga or a system of remarriage of a widow. The Mbh is replete with instances of niyoga e.g. Bhīṣma's services were solicited by Satyawatī to procreate children on the wives of Vicitravīrya but he flatly declined and Vyāsa, the son of Satyawatī in her maidenhood, was successfully requested.<sup>94</sup> In the Mbh, Brahmins appear as proper agents of procreation.<sup>95</sup>

The conditions necessary for niyoga may be summarised as follows :

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- 91. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp.168-169; Meyer, J.J., op.cit., pp. 173 ff.
  - 92. For different views, vide Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.606-607.
  - 93. Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.602.
  - 94. Kane, P.V., ibid., p.603; Meyer, J.J., op.cit., pp. 165 ff.
  - 95. Kapadia, K.M., op.cit., p.105.

1. The husband living or dead must have no son.
2. The gurus in the family have to decide as to who is to be appointed to the widow.
3. The persons competent are the husband's brother, a sapinda, or a sagotra, a sapravara or a person of the same caste.
4. A sense of duty and not lust should be the motive force.
5. The person appointed should be annointed with ghee or oil, must not kiss, speak or dally with the woman.
6. The durability of this relationship was the birth of one son or two according to some.
7. The widow must be comparatively young and healthy.
8. After the birth, they had to regard each other as father-in-law and a daughter-in-law.<sup>96</sup>

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96. Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.601; Vide also Kapadia, K.M., op.cit., pp.101 ff.

In the MP, there are the following instances of niyoga :-

1. The wife of Vicitravīrya had Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidura through the agency of Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana.<sup>97</sup>
2. Bali<sup>98</sup> offered an asylum to the celebrated sage Dīrghatamas in his seraglio and pleased him with all kinds of enjoyments and sought his services for the procreation of sons on his queen Sudeśnā, who finding him blind and old, sent her Śūdra maid as a substitute to him who procreated Kākṣīvat and others, whom Bali claimed as his own sons, but Dīrghatamas divulged the truth that they were the sons born of the Śūdra maid. Bali reprimanded his queen and sent her well-decked to him who asked her to lick his naked frame from top to toe annointed with curds, salt and honey

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97. MP. 50.46-47; cf. VP 99.235 ff; Patil, D.R., op. cit., p.46.

98. The MP 48.58 calls Bali as Vairocāni Bali. He is described as 'dānavarṣabha' in 48.60 and as 'dānava' in 48.67. The patronymic epithet 'vairocāni' as applied to Bali is difficult to explain as his father is Sutapas and not Virocana. He is a distant descendant of Anu, the son of Yayāti, (48.10ff). According to the VP-version Bali is a descendant of Turvasu, the son of Yayāti (Patil, D.R. op. cit., p.46); so there appears to be some confusion in the text.

without any disgust and told that she would have sons as desired by her; she did accordingly, leaving the anus and the sage said that she would have a son without an anus and so, she, then, successfully implored him to mend the matters and the curse was shifted on to the grand-son and she was blessed to have five handsome sons and thus she had the five ksetraja sons viz. Aṅga, Kalinga, Puṇḍra, Suhma and Vāṅga.<sup>99</sup>

3. Pāṇḍu had five sons through the grace of gods. Kuntī procured Yudhiṣṭhira from Dharma, Bhīma from Māruta, Arjuna from Indra, while Mādrī procured Nakula and Sahadeva from Aśvins (50. 49-50; 46.8 ff). These sons are described as 'devadattāḥ' which expression suggests that they were not the aurasa sons, possibly the ksetraja kind of sons. This surmise is clearly confirmed by the reading of ga'pāṇḍoḥ ksetre<sup>2</sup> bhijajñire'.<sup>100</sup> This suggests that this is a

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99. MP. 48.25,57 ff.; cf. Patil D.R., op.cit., pp. 45-46, 159-160.

100. The ASS reading is 'pāṇḍorathe' bhijajñire' which also suggests the same thing. MP.50.49.



case of niyoga, but may it not be that the genitor's name is suppressed and a divine hallow is created around this royal levitation ?

Now some observation may be made on the above episodes. In the above instances, the main motive is to have a son or sons for the continuation of the family. This is clear from Bali's statement that the appointment of Dīrghatamas was beseeched for santānārtha (48.60). In two cases the husbands are alive, while in one the husband is dead. With regard to the appointment of the sage Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, we know from the Mbh, it was made when the family was threatened with extinction as Vicitravīrya died issueless and Satyawatī had to solicit the services of Vyāsa for the continuation of the family.<sup>101</sup> In the episode of Bali, it is the king Bali who decides about the appointment of the competent person. The persons appointed in the first two instances are neither agnates nor cognates, nor a caste-fellow, but a celebrated Brahmin sage. In the Mbh, the celebrated Brahmins are known to have been appointed for this purpose. In the third instance, the divine

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101. Vide note above No. 94.

grace is said to be responsible. Lust does not seem to be the motivating force, but the desire for the continuation of the family. In the second instance, Dīrghatamas is annointed with curd, salt and honey, while the Dharmasāstras prescribe ghee or oil as noted above. The exact significance, medical or otherwise of the application of curd, salt and honey is difficult to make out.<sup>102</sup>

The sons born of niyoga are said to belong to the Bāleyakṣetra (48.25) and are called kṣetraja sons. Gautama says that a child begotten at the request of a living husband on his wife belongs to the husband,<sup>103</sup> and that such a son is called kṣetraja.<sup>104</sup>

This institution of niyoga belonged to the ancient past when men possessed tapas and knowledge and could strictly carry out the rules while in the Dvāpara and Kali ages, there is great deterioration of power and so men of these times cannot practise niyoga which is forbidden by Brhaspati in the Kalā age.<sup>105</sup>

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102. The VP prescribes only curd mixed with salt for application. Patil, D.R., op.cit., p.160.

103. GDS. 18.11.

104. GDS 28.32.

105. Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.606 and p.603 fn. 1418.

The antiquity of these instances is to be judged in the light of these remarks.<sup>106</sup>

This leads us to the question of several kinds of sons. The ancient Indian law recognised thirteen kinds of sonship<sup>107</sup> out of which two viz. aurasa and ksetraja are referred to here.

Vicitravīrya and Citrāṅgada are said to be the ksetraja sons of Acchodā, known as Satyavatī on this earth, through Śantanu (14.18-19). Bali had five ksetraja sons as noted above (48.24,78). Bharadvāja is described as an aurasa son of Brhaspati (49.30). Sāvitrī also asked for hundred aurasa sons from Yama (212.29). The MP is silent about the social and legal status and position of the different kinds of sons. All the law-givers have unanimously assigned the first place to the aurasa son while a second or a third place to the ksetraja sons. The status and position of other secondary sons are found highly

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106. Dr. Patil, D.R., also holds a similar view., op.cit., p.160.

107. These are (1) aurasa, (2) putrikāputra, (3) datta, (4) ksetraja, (5) kṛtrima, (6) guḍho-tpanna, (7) apavidha, (8) kāmīna, (9) sahodha, (10) kṛita, (11) paunarbhava, (12) svayamdatta (13) śaudra. For details vide Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.III, pp.643 ff; Kapadia, K.M., op.cit., pp. 110 ff., Jolly J., op.cit., pp.156 ff. Jolly mentions 12 kinds of sonship.

fluctuating. The preference of an aurasa is suggested by the place assigned to him and in the MP by the emphasis of Sāvitṛī for having aurasa sons for which the restoration of Satyavān's life was highly indispensable.

We also come across two theories of sonship. (1) the biological theory, and (2) the sociological theory. According to the MP, the biological theory is that in which the mother is conceived merely as an incubator or a wallet where the father is the real genitor of the child. The son is the father's. The son is really his by whom he is begotten. He leads the deceased impregnator from the abode of Yama (to liberation).<sup>108</sup> Tārā's declaration that the bastard child Budha was Soma's suggests that the child belonged to the biological father and not the social father (24.5 ff). According to the sociological theory, "fatherhood is defined as a social convention in terms of property rights. The progeny of a married woman belonged to her husband. A man was the father of all children born to his wife and so even after the death

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108. MP. 49.11,12, cf. BhP 9.20.21; Mbh. Cr.Ed., 1.69.29; Wilson, H.H., Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Vol. IV, p.133; Meyer, J.J., op.cit., p.201.

of man, a man could get children born to him (who claimed his parentage) through his widow provided she remained his widow. During his life-time, if a man was incapable of procreating children he could command his wife to get children for him from somebody".<sup>109</sup> The sons born of niyoga in the MP illustrate the sociological theory of sonship.

P. T. o

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109. Karve, Iravati, Kinship Terms and the Family Organisation as found in the critical Edition of the Mahābhārata, BDCRI, Vol.V, (1943-44), p. 131.

## I I F a m i l y

### Introductory :

We now come to the epic of the household. The interpersonal relations of the different members of the family and their behavioural pattern with each other i.e. the inter-play of the relations of the husband, wife, the son, the daughter, the parents and the relatives-in-law with each other will be examined in this section.

Family is one of the most important institutions of the social organisation and its study is of vital importance to any student of society. There is a vast literature on family, and researches are being conducted still with regard to the various problems connected with it.

Whether the family be elementary, compound or joint,<sup>110</sup> plays a vital role in the psycho-drama of an individual. Its functions are varied. It affords not only economic security, sex-security, but also the religious security through the institution of Śrāddha. It is the family, the home, where one can look to for personal psychological peace and security after day's labour in the din and bustle of life - and in this the role of the better-half is none the less insignificant.

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110. Elementary Family : An elementary family consists of a man and his wife and their children whether they are living together or not. A childless married couple does not constitute a family in this sense. Children may be acquired and thus made members of an elementary family by adoption or by birth.

Compound Family : In a polygamous family, there is only one husband with two or more wives and their respective children. Another form of compound family is produced in monogamous societies by a second marriage, giving rise to step-relations and such relations as half-brothers. Compound families can be regarded as constituted of families with a common member. Radcliffe Brown, A.R., op.cit., p. 51.

Joint Family : It is constituted of more than one elementary families (consisting of its own man and his wife with their child or children) living under one roof.

THE WIFE AND THE HUSBAND :

Since the Rgvedic times, the wife has enjoyed a respectable status and position and has been a friend, philosopher and guide to her husband.<sup>111</sup>

The MP gives a fine pen-picture of a happy and harmonious life producing melodious times in their interpersonal relations with various members of the family; of course, the discordant notes are not unheard of. The ladies of the city of Tripura are said to be devoted to their husbands, and the sons to their parents. They are said to lead a very affectionate life free from quarrels. The description of the enjoyments of the sweet pleasures of life by the Asuras and their beloveds in the lotus-lakes on the moonlit nights or in the orchards with mango-trees or in the penance groves<sup>112</sup> suggests the romantic tie of love betwixt the Asuras and their better-halves.

The wife's all engrossing love for her husband and her Herculean efforts for his life<sup>and</sup> welfare are seen in the famous Sāvitrī episode<sup>113</sup> which illustrates the ideal of unflinching love after marriage. She

111. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp. 106-107, 114; Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.428, 574 ff. cf. also 'sakhā ha jāyā.' AB 7.13.

112. MP. 131.7 ff.

113. MP. Chs. 208-214.



observed a vow for three nights for the welfare of her husband Satyavān, accompanied him in the forest with the kind permission of her father-in-law and when confronted with the God of Death, she argued out her case modestly, impressively and convincingly and successfully regained the life of her husband even at the risk of treading upon the untrodden path by following the stern God of Death.

The happy marital relations between the king Puṣpavāhana and his consort Lāvanyavatī are suggested by a proverbial simile of the ideal love between Pārvatī and Śiva.<sup>114</sup>

Lakṣmī, Sāvitrī and Arundhatī are described as enjoying the ever-abiding love (lit. residing in the body) of their consorts - Viṣṇu, Brahmā and Vasiṣṭha respectively (187.45).

The pivot of a happy conjugal life is a good husband. The securing of a good husband is said to be conducive to happiness here and in the world hereafter. Without meritorious deeds, it is difficult

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114. MP. 106.6. Gha and Ca read Līlāvatī for Lāvanyavatī.

to obtain even a husband without virtues, indeed then it is very difficult to secure a good husband (154.163-164).

The ideal concept of a husband resulted in his apotheosis. To the wife, the husband is the highest divinity even though he be penniless, ugly, foolish and devoid of qualities.<sup>115</sup> In another place in the MP, it is declared, "To the wife, the husband is the divinity and he is the supreme resort. It is the prime duty of the chaste wife to follow him. He is, verily, the lord of the life and the wealth."<sup>116</sup> The concept of apotheosis of the husband is also found in Christianity.<sup>117</sup> This thesis of apotheosis of a husband suggests the complete tutelage of a wife to a husband and an act against his will was, then, sacrilegious. This deification was further

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115. nirdhano durbhago mūrkhah sarvalakṣaṇavarjitah /  
daivatam paramam nāryāḥ patir uktah śadaiva hi //

MP. 154.166.

116. patir hi daivatam strīṇām patir eva parāyaṇam /  
anugamyah striyā sādhyā patih prānadhaneśvaraḥ //

MP. 210.17. cf. Mbh 13.146.55; Kāmasūtra 4.1.1

devavat patim ānukūlyena varteta / etc.  
Vide Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.562.

117. Vide Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.562,  
fn. 1308.

enhanced by enlogistically singing that the father, the brother and the son are givers of things limited, while the husband is the giver of unlimited things and hence she deserves the highest adoration.<sup>118</sup> Even the demon female-folk of Tripura are said to look upon their husbands as divinities (187.17).

Her whole happiness is said to lie in her husband (154.165). She enjoyed no economic independence as she was placed on a par with a son and a slave, for whatever they earned, belonged to the master.<sup>119</sup>

If a wife, proud of the strength of her relatives, violates the duty which she owes to her husband, the king shall cause her to be devoured by dogs in a place frequented by many.<sup>120</sup>

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118. MP. 210.18; cf. Rām. 2.39.30; Mbh. Cr.Ed. 12.144.6.

119. MP. 31.32; cf. MS 8.416; Mbh. Cr.Ed. 5.33.57.

120. MP. 227.132. cf. MS. 8.371. For MP 227.132<sup>b</sup> i.e. 'jñātibaladarpitā,' MS. 8.371<sup>b</sup> reads 'jñātī-guṇadarpitā.' For MP.227.132<sup>c</sup> i.e. 'tām ca niṣkāsayed,' MS.8.371<sup>c</sup> reads 'tām śvabhīḥ khādayet,' which is also the reading of ga and na which appears to be preferable in the light of the MS. cf. Mbh. Cr.Ed. 12.159.59<sup>c</sup> . cf. also GDS. 23.14; VDS. 21.1-5., Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.575.

The husband also had a right of physical correction over his guilty wife with a rope or a split bamboo-stick, but he was not to strike the head and the back; if he beats otherwise he incurred the sin of theft.<sup>121</sup>

Over and above the happy picture of the relations between the husband and the wife, we get a glimpse into the love-quarrels which are also the features of the normal life even in modern times.

Once when the king Brahmadatta was strolling in the company of his queen Sannati in the pleasure-grove, he being sarvasattvarutajña, came to hear and follow a funny love-quarrel of an ant-couple which caused a smile on his face.<sup>122</sup> This sudden smile led the queen to enquire about its cause which she could not account for by herself. The king, therefore, narrated the love-quarrel of the passionate ant-couple

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121. MP. 227.152-153; cf. MS.8.299-300. The son, the slave, the pupil also were meted out the same punishment under the same circumstances (MP.227.152-153, cf. MS.8.299-300).

122. MP. 20.38. Incidentally, it may be said that there were some persons like the king Brahmadatta in the society who could even understand the speech of various creatures. Of course, in the case of Brahmadatta, this knowledge was the gracious gift of Viṣṇu (MP. 21.15).

but being not convinced of it and taking it to be a huge joke, she declared that she would abandon her life. Being alarmed at this grave situation, the king meditated upon Viṣṇu who informed in the dream that an aged Brahmin would visit his court and his recitation of a stanza (21.28) would remind him of his previous birth. It transpired accordingly and the king remembering his former birth, abdicated the throne, retired to the forest and attained the highest place. Thus, though the love-quarrel was perilous in the beginning, it turned out to be emancipatory in the end. (20.25 ff; 21.17 ff).

Another instance of the love-quarrel is that of Pārvatī and Śiva who, once during the amorous sports, bantered that the former's dark beauty in company with his white one resembled a black female cobra entwining a sandal tree or her presence was sullyng his eye-sight like a dark night in the moonlight (155.1-2). This vituperative remark pierced the inner sanctuary of her heart and she, thereupon, decided to practise severe asceticism for the transformation of her dark frame into a white one in order to please her self-chosen consort and nobly

she achieved her purport resulting into a happy reunion of the two.<sup>123</sup>

One more instance of a love-quarrel of ant-couple from the creature-kingdom (referred to above) is as follows :-

A love-smitten male ant tried to reconcile and woo its disdainful inamorata who had taken ill at the former's offering of pulverised sweet-balls to another female ant. It implored it to pardon its crime which was committed through mistake due to its semblance and prostrated itself promising it never to commit such a disloyal act and lo! thereupon it was entirely won over (20.19 ff.)

This gives us a peep into throbbing relations of the couples in different moods.

#### THE FATHER AND THE SON :

Since the Vedic times, the father like in all patriarchal societies, has been patriapotestas and

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123. MP. 158.21 ff.; 158.21-28 missing in na.

the de facto head of the family.<sup>124</sup> He also bore the burden of the maintenance etc. of the family.<sup>125</sup>

In the MP, there is a picture of the cordial relations between the father and the sons. In the city of Tripura, the sons are said to wait upon their fathers and obediently carry out their orders (131.12). Obedient sons like Kaca would willingly agree to proceed to the abode of the chief-priest of the arch-enemies to learn the secret lore for the welfare of his party, even though it entailed the possibility of their own death (25.14 ff.) Dutiful and loving sons like Satyavān would accompany ungrudgingly their blind exiled father to the woodland, would maintain them by leading a hard life, even though unhabituated and unbecoming to them (208.16 ff). Affectionate grand sons like Aṣṭaka would be ready to forfeit their merits in favour of their grand-fathers in order to check their earthward fall from heaven, but the sensible grand-fathers like Yayāti would decline to such magnanimous offerings,

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124. VI, Vol.I, pp.526 ff.

125. udvahate sajjam kulam kulvaho yathā / MP.136.59.

if they did not deserve (41.10 ff). Pūru, the son of Yayāti, is known to have accepted his father's proposal willingly for the exchange of youth for old age.<sup>126</sup> In the story of the four sons who managed for the maintenance of their father by leaving instructions of reciting a stanza before the king Brahmadatta we have the considerate sons. This direction was counted to bring a rich fortune to the poor father (21.2 ff).

We also meet with some refractory sons who would be hesitant to acquiesce in their father's ardent requests for which they would pay a severe penalty and would suffer for their whole life. Yayāti who suffered from decrepitude as a consequence of Śukra's curse for having sex-relations with Śarmiṣṭhā and thereby giving an umbrage to Devayānī, requested his sons Yadu, Turvasu, Druhyu and Anu for an exchange of youth, so that he could enjoy the pleasures of life to his heart's content, but they all flatly declined to accede to his request under one pretext or another and consequently they were cursed to

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126. Vide fn. 123.



different effects by Yayāti for their gross disobedience.<sup>127</sup> Being utterly dismayed at this dismal situation, lastly, he approached Pūru who, as mentioned above, obediently and willingly acceded to his request. After a stipulated period, he transferred over the borrowed youth to Pūru and took back his old age. Being pleased with Pūru, he nominated him as the successor to the throne and disinherited the others setting aside the claim of primogeniture.<sup>128</sup>

Moreover, if a son disobeyed the wishes or commands of a father, the son was driven out of the house. This is noticeable from the instance of Pūrṇabhadra who banished his son Harikēśa from his house for not following their traditional pattern of behaviour despite his exhorting him for the same (180.5 ff.).

From the above episodes it may be observed that a father had all rights over his sons and

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127. MP. 24.57 ff. (missing in na and ca); 33.2 ff. cf. also BhP. 9.18.37; PI, Vol.III, p.18.

128. MP.24.65 ff. (missing in na and ca); 33.23 ff; 34.1 ff. cf. BhP 9.18.42 ff; PI, Vol.III,p.18; Patil, D.R., op.cit., pp.49-50,168.

absolute obedience was expected from them, the breach of which was punishable even to the perilous extent according to the whim of the father who could even disinherit them from their rightful claims or expel them from the home while the goddess of fortune would smile on him who implicitly would obey him. In short, the attitude of the father towards the sons as depicted in the MP is in no way much different from that of the Vedic father.

It also appears that a father could not even welcome his sons of his other wife or a concubine in the presence of his other wife and the sons would have to go weeping to their own mother with their fond hopes shattered to pieces. This is noticeable from Yayāti's cold treatment accorded to Śarmisthā's sons in the presence of Devayānī and their disappointedly going weeping to their mother (32.17). The unwelcoming demeanour of the king Uttānapāda to Dhruva in the presence of the step-mother is a parallel case.<sup>129</sup> Such a cold and insulting attitude under similar circumstances is even of a feature of

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129. Bhp. 4.8.7 ff.

treatment in modern times which the ravages of time have not been able to eradicate from the human heart.

STATUS AND POSITION of  
THE SON :

Let us now look to the status and position of a son. The yearning for the son is as old as the RV. Therein prayers for the birth of valiant sons are met with. With the passage of time the motive behind prayers changed, but the desire has persisted down to modern times. In the MP, the yearnings for the sons are also heard of. The sons are said to be saviours from the hell.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, the water and the balls of rice offered by him to his father and his other deceased ascendants are supposed to proffer peace to the departed souls. The desire for having many sons is expressed with a view that one of them may go to Gayā.<sup>131</sup> On account of these such several benefits, the birth of a son was an event of joy and welcome in glaring contradiction to that of a daughter which was an event of sorrow and misery. A son is

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130. MP. 154.155; cf. for a similar idea, 'pumnāmo narakād yasmāt trāyate pitaram sutah /' MS. 9.138; Mbh. Cr.Ed. 1.147.5; ViDS 15.14; Nirukta 2.11.

131. MP. 207.39; cf. Mbh. {Cr.Ed.} 3.82.85; ViDS. 85.70; for MP 207.40<sup>c</sup>, the ViDS 85.70<sup>c</sup> and the Mbh. {Cr. Ed.} 3.82.85<sup>c</sup> read "yajeta vā'svamedhena".

equated to ten lakes (154.512). The heavenly region is attainable <sup>by</sup> having a son and a grand-son.<sup>132</sup>

For getting a son of one's own choice, vows were observed and penance was performed e.g. Anagha Vaibhṛāja, the king of the Pāñcālas, observed august vows in honour of Nārāyaṇa to get a son proficient in all śāstras, religious in nature, foremost amongst the yogins and the knower of the speech of the creature-kingdom (21.11 ff.). Vajrāṅga decided to practise terrible asceticism to obtain a son capable enough to carve out victory over the gods (147.15) or to put it in the words of Varāṅgī, a saviour from the great ocean of sorrow and misery (147.2). Ūrva was requested by the sages to procreate a son for the continuation of the lineage (vaṃśa) when it was threatened with extinction (175.30). For getting a son Bharata performed many sacrifices and also the Marut-Soma sacrifice at which Maruts, being pleased, brought to him Bharadvāja as a son (49.27). All this shows that sons were highly coveted.

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132. MP.154.509; ~~cf. MS~~ cf. MS 9.137.

STATUS AND POSITION  
OF THE FATHER :

The position of the father appears to be elevated to the zenith when he is apotheosized; he is said to be an image of Prajāpati, while a teacher is said to be an image of Brahmā and a mother that of the Earth (211.21).<sup>133</sup> He is also said to be the Gārhapatya Fire while a mother is said to be a Dakṣiṇa Fire and the teacher the Āhavanīya Fire (211.26).<sup>134</sup> It is enjoined that a father as well as a mother, a teacher and an elder brother must never be disrespected especially by a Brahmin (211.20).<sup>135</sup> The worship of a father is extolled by saying that it is conducive to the achievement of the middle world (210.11).<sup>136</sup> The keen interest of the state is noticeable by its legislation that one's father, mother, wife, etc. even though they might be fallen were not to be abandoned and a person guilty of abandoning them had to pay a punishment of 600 gold coins (227.14a). Thus it was not an easy job for even ungrateful sons to illtreat their parents.

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133. cf. MS.2.226.

134. cf. MS. 2.231.

135. cf. MS. 2.225.

136. cf. MS. 2.233.

THE MORES OF RELATION OF THE  
DAUGHTER-IN-LAW, PARENTS-  
IN-LAW AND THE OTHER  
RELATIVES-IN-LAW :

Good daughters-in-law like Sāvitrī had very cordial relations with her parents-in-law and tried their best for their betterment. Sāvitrī had great respect for parents-in-law and when Yama was pleased with her to grant boons, she asked for the restoration of the lost eye-sight and the lost kingdom of her father-in-law, before she asked for the resuscitation of her consort's life (210.23)

The strained relations of the daughter-in-law with the mother-in-law and the sister-in-law are proverbial.<sup>137</sup> Anaupamyā, the wife of Bāṇa had discordant relations with her mother-in-law Vindhya-vatī who was never satisfied with her. Kumbhīnasī, the sister-in-law, is described as an evil doer and is said even to twist her fingers. The father-in-law is said to connive at this. When once Nārada visited their place, she requested Nārada to tell

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137. cf. Madayantikā appears in the right royal nanāṇḍa manner when she starts on the mission of setting sister-in-law Mālatī's (Makaranda in impersonation) mind in proper order by rebuking her. Mālatīmādhava, Act VIIṇ pp. 143 ff.

her a religious vow which would mitigate their strained relations and would bring about peace and harmony. Nārada, therefore, narrated to her a religious vow (187.27 ff) efficacious enough to subduing the husband and tongue-tying the parents-in-law (187.39 ff) and thus this enabled her to establish her domineering position in the house. The supreme status and position craved by Anaupamyā recalls the Vedic benediction bestowed on the newly married bride.<sup>138</sup>

#### DAUGHTER AND PARENTS :

In the MP, we have the instances of both the loving, sagacious, as well as the spoiled and dominating daughters. The spoiled daughters would dominate over their fathers who would be compelled to fulfil their desires. Of course, in this they may not be wrongly dominating over their father or mother. Their stand might have been taken from a very high

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138. cf. samrājñī s'vasurā bhava samrājñī adhi devṛṣu / RV.10.85.46; evā tvam samrājñyedhi patyur astam paretya ca / AV. 14.1.43.

In the Buddhist literature, we come across instances of daughters-in-law seeking refuge in nunneries to escape the tyranny of their mother-in-law as well as the instances of mother-in-law donning the monastic robes in order to escape the ill-treatment of the daughters-in-law. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p.107.

sense of self-respect when they would have been insulted with deprecating words. Devayānī was addressed by Śarmisthā as the daughter of a beggar and an emlogiser (27.10) and she took these words so seriously that she instigated her father to such an extent that he threatened Vṛṣaparvan, the father of Śarmisthā, that he (Śukra) would abandon him which meant ruin to him who at this fix succumbed to please and keep the honour of Devayānī by fulfilling her desire.<sup>139</sup> In Śarmisthā, we have the good, obedient and sagacious daughter. Being informed of the impending disastrous situation, she sagaciously accepted without demur the servitude of Devayānī and averted the disaster of her parents and agnatic relatives and brought the happy solution of the tangled situation.<sup>140</sup> Her "strength of character", her power of self-control, her spirit of self-sacrifice and her implicit obedience to her father have elevated her to the position of an ideal woman who is still remembered with reverence by all Hindus.<sup>141</sup>

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139. MP.29.6,10,16; cf. also Meyer,J.J.,op.cit., pp.11 ff.

140. MP.29.18 ff; cf. also Meyer,J.J.,op.cit., pp.21 ff.

141. Hazra, R.C., Great Women in the Purāṇas, Great Women of India, p.237.



Jayantī, the daughter of Indra, waited upon Śukra at the instance of her father, who had appointed her on this mission under a strategic and diplomatic plan, when Śukra practised austere ascetism and ultimately she married him (47.114 ff).

The married daughters absconding from their husband's place without their knowledge were not given shelter by their fathers and were advised to go back as it also happens in modern times. Sañjñā who could not bear the powerful lustre of her husband Vivasvat went away without informing Vivasvat to the place of her father Tvastā who asked her to return and did not give the shelter. Later on coming to know of this, Vivasvat went to enquire about her at Tvastā's place. Tvastā mediated to re-establish the happy relations between the two.<sup>142</sup> This is, of course, a mythological story, but the human element and behaviour in it are easily seen.

That the father would be highly depressed if he came to know about the unhappy future of his daughter is seen from the sentiments expressed by

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142. MP.11.22 ff.; cf. VP.84.44-48.

Himālaya on hearing the prognostication about Umā's future by Nārada (154.146 ff). By the very feminine nature, the mother is anxious to see her daughter settled (154.143). The father felt extremely happy when he came to know about the possibility of securing a suitable match for his daughter. The over-flowing joy of Himālaya when he heard from Nārada that Śiva would be the consort of his daughter (154.195 ff) is noteworthy. Parents were grieved when they sent their daughter to her home, as it even now happens, Himālaya also experienced the same feeling. Indeed every father of a daughter experiences a feeling of sorrow and unhappiness at the departure of their beloved daughters to their home.<sup>143</sup>

#### OTHER RELATIVES :

The behavioural pattern of the other different relatives with each other is not depicted in the MP, but it is clear that it was expected that no sex-relations were to be kept with the following persons, as it can be seen from the amercements laid down for the infringement of this rule. The prohibited

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143. MP. 154.497; cf. Śākuntala 4.6.

persons are :- the father's sister, the mother-in-law, maternal uncle's wife, mother (step and blood), maternal uncle's wife, paternal uncle's daughter, sister and brother's wife. The violator of this rule was punished according to his caste viz. a Śūdra was fined two hundred, a Vaiśya four hundred, a Kṣatriya six hundred and a Brahmin eight hundred (panas).<sup>144</sup> Moreover a person guilty of incest on his sister's daughter was punished with the excision of the genital organ and was meted out the capital punishment.<sup>145</sup>

This shows that the marital relations with the near relatives were not tolerated and were penalised. In view of these punishments, and the context of the situations, the antiquity of the propinquitous marriages may be inferred.

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144. MP.227.139. The MP prescribes the observance of the Cāndrāyanavrata for approaching the paternal uncle's daughters, sister, mother, brother's wife and they are considered ineligible for marriage (227.50-51).

145. MP.227.140, missing in *kha* and *ga*.

## I I I

## The position of Women

INTRODUCTORY :

We now come to the position and status of woman and her role in the eternal drama of life in her diverse capacities.

Indian tradition has respected womanhood. Her status and position have been vitally affected by innumerable factors through the vicissitudes of life. Her status and honour varied as she passed through the various portals of life.

SENTIMENTS AT THE  
DAUGHTER'S BIRTH :

In ancient times in all patriarchal societies, the birth of a girl was an unwelcome event. India, too, was not an exception to this. The birth of a son was craved and was preferred to that of a girl. The AB expresses a sentiment that a daughter is a veritable source of misery and the son is the light in the highest heaven and this suggests the feeling of consternation at her birth caused in the family.<sup>146</sup>

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146. sakhā ha jāyā / kṛpaṇam hi duhitā / jyotir ha  
putrah parame vyoman / AB.33.1.

The MP also expresses a similar sentiment when it says that a daughter is a veritable source of misery and anguish and the aggravator of the affliction and unhappiness.<sup>147</sup> The reason for such an unwelcome attitude to the birth of a daughter was not so much the hatred of her sex as the paramount anxiety to see her well-placed in life. This is clear from the remarks of Menā, the mother of Pārvatī viz. that it is due to the heart-rending worry and the strenuous difficulties involved in searching out a worthy mate that the daughters are unwelcome even though they are calculated to bring great rewards.<sup>148</sup> Such factors were responsible for such a lamentable attitude shown towards girls; otherwise they are depicted in a favourable light. The MP expresses a noble sentiment that a daughter of sound character and conduct was as good as ten sons.<sup>149</sup>

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147. MP.154.158; cf. MS.4.185; Mbh.(Cr.Ed.) 1.147.11.

148. MP.154.414; cf. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p.7., Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.511.

149. MP.154.157; for passages expressive of noble sentiments and love for her, vide Kane, P.V., op.cit., pp.510-511.

EDUCATION AND  
YOGIC PRACTICES :

Despite the unhappy and unwelcome attitude shown at the birth of a daughter, the spirit of Indian culture and civilisation does not deny to the individual woman the opportunity for spiritual as well as intellectual development and eminence.

In the early ages, women were not barred from the Vedic studies, but later on, the situation reversed. Down to the beginning of the Christian era, the upanayana, with which began the Vedic studies, was common for both boys and girls.<sup>150</sup> Lopāmudrā, Viśvavārā, Siktā and others are the renowned Vedic poetesses.<sup>151</sup> In the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad (4.1.1-15), we have the famous lady philosopher Gārgī who could discuss metaphysical problems with the celebrated philosopher Yājñavalkya.

Lady students were classified into two categories viz. (1) Brahmvādinīs who were the life-long students of theology and philosophy, and (2) Sadyo<sup>a</sup>vāhās who

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150. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p.11.

151. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p.12; Ideal and Position of Indian Women in Social Life, p.26. <sup>Great Women of India,</sup>

prosecuted their studies till marriage.<sup>152</sup> In the MP, Sannati, the wife of Brahmadata, is said to be a brahmavādinī (20.27).

With the practice of early marriages coming in vogue, there was a cut on the facility for studies. They were decried, aligned with Śūdras and were regarded ineligible for Vedic studies.<sup>153</sup> In the MP, Brahmā is said to have declared that women are incapable of the Vedic studies (154.156). This declaration of Brahmā smacks of the prohibitive attitude towards the women in connection with the Vedic studies.

Some women in the MP like those in the VP,<sup>154</sup> are seen practising penance to get a husband or a son of their own choice. Diti is said to have practised austere asceticism on the banks of Sarasvatī in the Syamantapañcakakṣetra (7.3). Elsewhere again, she is said to have practised hard penance for a period of ten thousand <sup>years</sup> to have a son capable of killing Indra (146.25 ff). Pīvarī, a Yoginī, pleased

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152. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp.13,237., vide Education in Ancient India, p.222, for details, ibid, Ch.7., pp.220 ff.

153. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp. 239 ff.

154. Patil, D.R., op.cit., p.42.

Harī by her penance and asked for a handsome husband who possessed yogic powers and could control his senses (15.6 ff). Pārvatī also practised very severe penance on the peak of the Himalayas to secure Śiva as her husband (154.289 ff). Satī is said to have burnt herself by the lustre emitting from the body by resorting to yoga (13.16).

BRIDE'S PART IN THE  
CHOICE OF THE MATE :

In early times, maidens seem to have had more or less effective voice in the choice of the mate.<sup>155</sup> Bold and forward girls would take initiative in courtship and the selection of the mate and their voice would prevail on that of the father. In the MP, there is the celebrated instance of Devayānī's initiative in courtship to Kaca who repudiated the former when she expressly made a proposal for marriage.<sup>156</sup> She again took a very bold initiative when she proposed herself for marriage to Yayāti.<sup>157</sup> Yayāti's

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155. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp. 77 ff.

156. MP. 25.33 ff., 26.1 ff. Note 26.5 for Devayānī's expressive initiative in the proposal for marriage to Kaca.

157. MP. 30.17. In the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa, we come across stories of Kalāvatī, Tulasī, Tilotamā and others offering their love to the persons of their choice. Vide. B. Kakati, Female Initiative in Courtship, Prin. Karmarkar, Commemoration Volume, p.71.



hesitancy on several grounds may also suggest the necessity of the approval of the father.

The recommendation that a girl could select her own partner in life of her own accord after three menstrual periods and the approval of the state thereof, also tend to suggest the maiden's role in the selection of her companion. (227.127-128)

The situation reversed and worsened as noted before, when the pre-puberty marriages became the order of the day and this naturally deprived them of their effective voice in the choice of the mate.

#### MARRIED LIFE :

The pattern of her behaviour with her husband and her affinal relatives is already discussed in the previous section.

#### WOMAN AS MOTHER :

Marriage without motherhood is incomplete. Motherhood has ever been the cherished ideal of every Hindu woman. In the MP, the ardent desire for the motherhood is illustrated by the instances of Quarters who bore the emitting optic lustre of Atri out of Suteccā (23.8), Vīraka's recognition as a

son of Pārvatī (154.546-547). Even Śarmisthā's enticing activity with reference to Yayāti was impressed by this innate desire (31.7 ff). In all societies, the woman as mother has claimed the highest honour. The birth of a son brought about an elevation of the status of the wife. The desire and the order of the mother were respected and executed and fulfilled by the son even though it entailed a great risk. In the MP Vajrāṅga brought Indra ~~to~~ a captive bound in a noose at the imperative order of his mother who was anxious to see Indra vanquished by her son to avenge the killing of her sons by Indra (146.147). Brahmā, his grand sire, and Kasyapa, his father, interceded for the freedom of Indra and he freed Indra from the captivity remarking that this captivity was done at the instance of his mother and the freedom of Indra was due<sup>k</sup> in honour of the words of Brahmā as he was the lord of Suras and Asuras and was also the grand sire (146.52 ff.) In contrast to Vajrāṅga's speech and action may be compared the speech and action of Ghaṭotkaca who said to Bhīma that even though the order for freeing be issued from the father, it would not be executed, for he, the Brahmin-lad, was

captured at the instance of the mother.<sup>158</sup> This action of Vṛājāṅga shows that when the duty towards the father conflicted with that towards the mother, the word of the father prevailed.<sup>159</sup>

This does not necessarily mean that a mother did not command respect. Manu declares her a thousand times superior to the father in worth.<sup>160</sup> The MP declares that the mother is superior to the father and the teacher as she bears the child in the womb and nourishes it and under no circumstances, even though she be fallen, she is to be abandoned (227.149-150). This view of the MP is in consonance with that of the different Dharmaśāstra writers.<sup>161</sup>

Not only that the mother was considered superior to the father and the teacher, but she was apotheosised and commanded the highest respect. This trend of the deification is noticeable in the MP. She is said to be the Dakṣiṇa Fire as well as the image of the Earth.<sup>162</sup>

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158. Madhyamavyāyoga 36

159. For other instances from the epic, vide Meyer, J.J., op.cit., pp.201 ff.

160. MS.2.145; cf. VDS.13.48.

161. Vide Kane, P.V., HDS, Vol.II, p.580.

162. MP.211.21,26.; cf. 'mātā kila manuṣyānām devatānām ca daivatam /' Madhyamavyāyoga 37; vide also Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp.118 ff.

It is also noticed that the curse of the mother could not be averted. The instance of Yama in the MP testifies to this view. Once Yama, the son of Tvāṣṭṛī alias Sañjñā and Vivasvat, enraged at the discriminative treatment of Chāyā, the substitute mother for his real mother Sañjñā, raised his right leg to strike her in righteous indignation; but alas ! for such an ignoble act he was cursed by Chāyā to the effect that his leg would ever be in sepsis etc. Reduced to this awful condition, he went to his father for remedy for which he pleaded his inability, but to palliate its enormity, he gave him a cock that was to devour the pus, germs etc.<sup>163</sup> Of course, Yama, by practising austere penance at Gokarnatīrtha pleased Śiva who granted him the guardianship and the headship in the Pitṛloka (11.18 ff). One significant point to be noted in this episode is Yama's sentiment that mostly Chāyā was not his real mother as she cursed him (11.15), and thereby possibly suggesting that the real mother would never curse

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163. MP.11.4 ff. This reminds one of the epic idea. 'sarvesāmeva śāpānāṃ pratighāto hi vidyate / nā tu mātṛābhiśaptānāṃ mokṣaḥ kvacana vidhyate //' Mbh. (Cr.Ed.), 1.33.4.

her child as her heart is full of unlimited magnanimity.<sup>164</sup>  
 Her bosom would flow with milk at the sight of her  
 child.<sup>165</sup> At the sight of Vīraka Umā's bosom over-  
 flowed with streams of sweet milk (154.553).

POSITION OF  
THE WIDOW :

We have a very sad or unhappy picture of a  
 widow (abhartrākā). She gave up all her ornaments.  
 Her face was dejected and her hair were not adorned  
 (154.18; 210.21). This description reminds us of a  
 widow as depicted by the law-givers.<sup>166</sup> It was the  
 duty of the state to look after the welfare and  
 maintenance of the widows.<sup>167</sup>

WOMEN AND RELIGION :

Women participated in sacrifices jointly with  
 their husbands from the Vedic period<sup>†</sup> C.300 B.C.<sup>168</sup>

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164. cf. a similar sentiment "kuputro jāyeta  
 kvacidapi kumātā na bhawati", Devyaparādha-  
 kṣamāpanastotra, 2,3,4.  
 165. cf. Meyer, J.J., op.cit., p.211. fn.1.  
 166. Vide Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.584 ff.  
 167. MP.215.62; Kautilya Arthasāstra 2.23; Kane, P.V.,  
 op.cit., Vol.II, p.146.  
 168. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp.229-236.

As the Vedic sacrifices became very complicated and as the Vedic studies declined in the women-circle owing to the practice of the early marriages coming in vogue and also as the society was not prepared to tolerate the dilettante Vedic studies, naturally female Vedic scholars began to become rarer and rarer and the unhealthy attitude of the law-givers to women's role in the participation of the Vedic sacrifices resulted in the prohibition of their part in the Vedic sacrifices, but this did not produce a long standing hardship. This religious disenfranchisement had created a vacuum to be filled by the Bhakti-Paurāṇika religion.<sup>169</sup> As early as the 3rd century B.C. women are seen performing a number of vratas.<sup>170</sup>

In the MP, there is ample evidence to show that women were not disenfranchised from the participation in religious matters. The observance of various vratas promised them redemption from this world and pleasures of the celestial religions e.g. a woman who observed the Rohinīcandraśayana vrata

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169. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp. 239 ff.

170. ibid., p.244.

was promised the freedom from re-birth (57.27), a lady observant of the Śivacaturdaśī vrata attained the highest place of Śiva (95.38); a lady observant - whether unmarried, married or a widow - of the Rāsakalyāṇinī vrata secured the fruit of a thousand Agniṣṭoma sacrifices, as a male observant would, and enjoyed the pleasures in the Gaurīloka (63.27-28). Of course, in the observance of vratas, the permission of a husband or an elderly member or a son was required (95.38). A woman, be she chaste, unchaste or a voluptuary, attained the highest state if she died in Avimukta (184.35-36); thus in the opinion of the MP women appear to enjoy equal freedom in the matters of religious observances and transmundane pleasures.

#### SECLUSION OF WOMEN :

The Vedic literature furnishes no evidence about the seclusion of women. The purdah was quite unknown down to about the beginning of the Christian era, but soon after this, a sector of a society began to advocate a greater seclusion of women.<sup>171</sup>

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171. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p.200; for details vide ibid, Ch.VI; Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp.596-598.

In the MP, Śarmisthā says to Yayāti that neither Soma nor Indra, nor Vāyu nor Yama nor Varuṇa can see women in his palace (31.12). Is there a veiled reference to the Purdasystem here? In the Rāmāyaṇa, it is stated that Sītā was not seen by the spirits of the sky before she set out for the forest with her husband.<sup>172</sup>

There are mythological allusions which refer to the free movement of the ladies. On one occasion of a sacrificial session the wives and mothers of the gods were present when Brahmā happened to lose his self-control at their sight.<sup>173</sup> The abduction of Tārā by Brhaspati,<sup>174</sup> the tortures caused by Indra to Varāṅgī, the wife of Vajrāṅga (146.63 ff; 147.1,13) suggests that women could move freely in the society, but at times it was not a safe movement. In MP 188.47 the description of women as 'grāhapañjarakokilāḥ', suggests their restricted movement as well as their subordinate position.

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172. Rāmāyaṇa, 2.33.8., cf. 'yā nāpaśyaṃ candramasam na sūryaṃ rāmāḥ kadācid api sa tasmīn narendre / mahāvanam gacchati, kauravendre sokenārtā rājamārgaṃ prapeduḥ // Mbh. 15.15.13.

173. MP.195.6-7, cf. VP 65.29-31.

174. MP.23.29 ff; 24.1ff; cf. Patil, D.R., op.cit., pp.42,44. Dr. Patil lists this episode once under the heading "Seclusion of Women" (p.42) and at another time under "Promiscuity" (p.44). In this case there is nothing of promiscuity, but this appears to be an instance of abduction.



It is mentioned that in the city of Tripura, from the Kanyāpuras, which surpassed the heaven, came the sweet tinkling notes of anklets.<sup>(130.24)</sup> This separate mention of the apartments of ladies may, probably, suggest their separate residential places. If it be so, it would refer in particular, to the feature of the Asura culture as it is in the context of the city of Tripura. To conclude or to speculate either way is to tread upon a very flimsy and slippery ground.

ATTITUDE TOWARDS AND  
TREATMENT OF WOMEN CAPTIVES :

One of the means to know the attitude of the society towards women is to have a glance at the view about women overtaken by misfortune of falling in the hands of ruffians or the enemies. The early writers showed a catholic spirit in the treatment of such unfortunate ladies and kept an avenue of readmission open to them and if they had conceived, they were readmitted to the original fold of the society after they had delivered. Atri and Devala also hold a similar view.<sup>175</sup> \*With a broad-mindedness that is

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175. Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.575.

admirable, a number of Smṛtis and Purāṇas declare that women who had the misfortune of being made prisoners or of being assaulted criminally, should be treated with sympathy and not with contempt and be accepted back by their families after they had performed certain purificatory ritual".<sup>176</sup> From about the 13th century, the society began to reverse its attitude towards these unfortunate women and denied their readmission and consequently the female captives preferred to adjust themselves to the new situation to any attempt to return.<sup>177</sup>

The MP points out that it would be absurd to condemn a woman, because she is over-powered and ravished, in such a case the assaulter is guilty and ought to be punished with death or fine (227.124 ff).

Jyāmagha brought a girl as a captive in a victorious campaign and presented her, through fear, to his queen and said that she would be the daughter-in-law. It is to be remembered that Jyāmagha had no son at that time and later on a son was born to his

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176. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., Vol.II, p.369.

177. Ibid., pp. 371 ff.

wife.<sup>178</sup> Here is a case where the captor assimilated the captive girl into the family with humane treatment and assigned an honourable position. This proposal for marriage reminds us of the marriages of Shakespeare and Milton whose better-halves were far senior in age to them.

WOMEN NOT TO BE KILLED :

We saw above the attitude of the society towards women in abnormal times. Now let us see its attitude towards them in normal times. During the brighter ages of the Indian culture and civilisation, the society showed its concern in diverse ways. The spirit of chivalry granted several privileges and concessions to the fair sex. Since the Vedic times, it is enjoined that a woman ought not to be killed.<sup>179</sup> The MS 9.232 lays down that a person guilty of killing a woman or a Brahmin or an infant was to be meted out a capital punishment. The MP also prescribes the same punishment for those guilty of the same crime.<sup>180</sup> The

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178. MP. 44.33 ff; cf. VP 99.33-35.

179. Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p.380.

180. MP.227.160, nearly same as MS 9.232. The MS reads 'vadhyād dvitṣevinah' which is also the reading of ka and kha for the ASS reading 'tatsevinah.'

MP 47.106 declares that a woman ought not to be killed, even the wives of the enemies are not to be killed (188.49); but if a woman was found guilty of giving poison, of igniting, killing her husband, gurus and her own children, she was to be offered to the bulls after chopping off her ears, nose and lips (227.200). As noted before, if a woman violated the duty she owed to her husband, the king was to cause her to be devoured by the dogs in a place frequented by many.<sup>181</sup>

The strīvadha is prognosticated to be very common in the Kali age.<sup>182</sup>

That a woman is avadhyā<sup>183</sup> and a gross punishment awaits a person guilty of this crime is illustrated by a story which states that Viṣṇu had to incarnate himself seven times on this earth for having beheaded the mother of Bhṛgu. The killing of a woman is deemed to be a very heinous crime. The reason for the Asuras seeking the refuge of Bhṛgu's mother appears to be the avadhyatā of a woman.<sup>184</sup>

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181. vide ante fn. 140.

182. MP 144.43; vide Patil, D.R., op.cit., p.42.

183. 'avadhyā strī,' MP. 47.106.

184. MP.47.92 ff; cf. Patil, D.R., op.cit., pp.41-42.

WOMEN AS OBJECTS  
OF ENJOYMENT :

In the MP, a view is expressed that she is an object of amusement and pleasure. Druhyu, the son of Yayāti, recalls that a decrepit enjoys not a woman, a kingdom, a chariot and a horse.<sup>185</sup> Yayāti himself, later on, expressed a similar sentiment when he mentioned women along with food, gold and cattle to show as if they were the objects of enjoyment.<sup>186</sup>

The pleasures promised with the celestial nymphs to the observants of the different vows<sup>187</sup> reflects also a similar sentiment.

VIEWS ABOUT WOMEN'S NATURE ETC.:

By nature they are said to be jealous. A lady would not tolerate another lady and would look upon another lady with an eye of suspicion.<sup>188</sup> The MP bears an eloquent testimony to this view. Pārvatī appointed Vīraka to keep a vigilant watch over Śiva as she considered him to be a "strīlampāṭa-devah",

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185. MP.33.18; cf. VP 93.48.

186. MP.34.11; cf. VP 93.95-98.

187. Vide e.g. MP.77.17; 78.10; 80.11; 91.10; cf. Patil, D.R., op.cit., p.40.

188. cf. 'na hi nāryo vinērsṣṣyaṭ'

when she went to practise penance (155.31). Kusumāmodinī was also appointed on the same mission by Pārvatī (156.5) Devayānī's indignation and her going away to her father on coming to know about Yayāti's relations with Sarmisthā<sup>(32-33-24)</sup> also testifies to this general maxim.

It is also said that women are by nature narrow-minded, peevish and speak pitiable things (154.156). They are said to boast in the absence of men. This indirectly also suggests, they had no voice in the presence of men (178.25).

This blackening of their character and nature and the deterioration of their position were the outcome of the rise of the Renunciation School, early marriages and the consequent deterance from the Vedic studies. Varāhamihira was the champion of their lamentable cause and boldly attempted to crusade against this blackening tendency.<sup>189</sup>

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189. Brhatsamhitā Ch.74; vide Kane, P.V., op.cit., p.579; Altekar, A.S., op.cit., pp.386 ff.

POWER OF A PATIVRATĀ :

In the Mbh and the Purāṇas, hyperbolical descriptions of the power of the pativrata occurs frequently.<sup>190</sup> In the MP, the story of Sāvitṛī illustrates the power of a pativrata who wrung back even from Yama, the stern God of Death, the life of her beloved husband.<sup>191</sup> The city of Tripura is said to move about by the power of ladies who look upon their husbands as gods (bhartr̥devatāḥ)(187.17). Chaste ladies are said to deserve honour and respect like gods and by their power three worlds are said to be supported (214.21-22). The names of pativrata ladies are said to be kīrtanīyā (208.2). Even the God of Death cannot act against their will (208.3). Such is the wonderful and extraordinary strength of the pativrata ladies.

This survey gives us a caleidoscopic glimpse into the status of woman at the different stages of life and in different capacities and also the multi-faced social attitude, reflection and views of the society about their nature, power, etc.

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190. Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp. 567 ff.

191. MP. Chs. 208-214. cf. Mbh. Cr.Ed. 3.277-283.

## I V Prostitution

### INTRODUCTORY :

The chapter dealing with marriage, family and position of women would be incomplete without a reference to prostitutes. They are fallen females and are a great stricture to the society. Prostitution has existed in all countries from times immemorial<sup>192</sup> and India is no exception to this. From the Rgvedic times,<sup>193</sup> the institution of prostitution has existed upto modern times. In the Mbh, the great Epic of India, it is an established institution.<sup>194</sup> The MP also affords some glimpses into this institution.

### STORIES ABOUT PROSTITUTES :

A prostitute Anāṅgavatī by name is said to have observed the Vibhūtiyādaśīvrata (100.18) and became the consort of Cupid (100.32). Līlāvatī, another prostitute, is said to have observed the Lavaṇācala-vrata with due ritual and offered munificent gifts (92.23 ff). In the Mṛcchakaṭika one meets with the

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192. Vide Shadwell Arthur, Prostitution, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.18, pp.596 ff.

193. Vide Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, p.637.

194. Vide Kane, P.V., op.cit., Vol.II, pp. 637-638; Meyer J.J., op.cit., Ch. IX, pp.264 ff.



noble hearted prostitute Vasantasenā. A story is told as to how the wives of Kṛṣṇa came to be reduced to the derogatory status of courtezans. Once upon a time, nymphs, the daughters of Agni were sporting in the Mānasa lake where the celebrated sage Nārada happened to come. Without offering their obeisance to Nārada out of haughtiness, they asked him how they would get Nārāyaṇa as their husband. He told them that they would get him by giving two bedsteads and golden domestic utensils on the 12th day of the bright half in the months of Caitra and Vaiśākha; but he also pronounced a curse on them, as a punishment for their negligence in offering respects out of haughtiness and pride of their beauty, to the effect that they would be separated from Kṛṣṇa ere long and would be degraded to the status of public women by being abducted and ravished by bandits (70.20 ff). The curse to the same effect is seen to be repronounced by Kṛṣṇa when he saw them inflamed with burning passion at the sight of Samba who happened to pass by, when once they were sitting on the margin of the lake in the vernal season when the breezes charged with aroma were wafting (70.2 ff).

The sage Dālbhya is said to have reported on the authority of Indra that after the Devāsura war some numerous widows and captive and ravished ladies were married and some were forced to <sup>lead</sup> the life of prostitutes (70.26 ff). Urvaśī's assent to Varuṇa's proposal of being attached to him is styled as 'veśyā-dharma' by Indra whom she had consented to for enjoyment (61.31).

#### RESIDENCE AND DUTIES :

That the residential places of the prostitutes were temples and royal palaces can be surmised from the instructions of Indra to the captive and ravished ladies caused to be turned to prostitution as mentioned above. They had to treat the kings and the princes as their lords. Whosoever approached them with wages, whether a multimillionaire or a pauper, was to be entertained; but they had to shun the hypocrites (70.28 ff).

Over and above the professional obligations, they had also some religious obligations to fulfil. On the days sacred to the manes and the gods, they had to make charitable gifts in terms of cows, land, gold and corn according to their capacity. They

had to obey respectfully the words of the Brahmins also (70.31). They were also recommended to observe the famous Anaṅgadānavrata (70.32 ff).

STATUS AND POSITION :

That the society was not harsh towards there degraded females and had lenient attitude towards them can be inferred from the fact they were not disenfranchised from observing some vows. The Anaṅgadānavrata is a special vrata recommended to the prostitutes only. Moreover, some prostitutes are reported to have observed religious vows e.g. Anaṅgavatī observed the Vibhūtidvādaśīvrata, Līlāvatī observed the Lavaṇācalavrata (92.23 ff).

Their financial position appears to be very sound from the fact that they could make very rich gifts at the religious observances. Anaṅgavatī is reported to have proposed to give three hundred gold coins to one very poor couple who offered lotuses free of charge, for use in the performance of the Vibhūtidvādaśīvrata (100.22); she also gave away villages in charity (100.27). Līlāvatī is known to have offered golden trees etc. in the Lavaṇācalavrata. (92.23).

This accompanied by some costlier things to be gifted away in the performance of the Anāṅgadānavrata (7.3, 43) confirms our view about their sound pecuniary position. This view about their financial strength is further supported by an authority no less than Kauṭilya<sup>195</sup> who enumerates them amongst those other magnates e.g. merchants, wine-sellers etc. who are recommended to the king for being tapped for monetary help in case of emergency; and they had in fact given as much gold as they could.

That they also appear to have enjoyed protection from the state is clear from some of the rules and punishments laid down for their profession and the breaches therein committed by them or the customer, e.g. if a prostitute accepting the wages of one went elsewhere out of greed she was fined double the amount of the wages; if she was taken elsewhere ignoring the appointed person, the punishment was one māśaka of gold; if, having fetched her, she was not enjoyed, double the wages were to be paid and double the amercement was to be inflicted; if many a person approached one courtesan, they were fined

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195. Kauṭilya, Arthaśāstra, 5.2.

double the amount individually or collectively. A dvija who approached a prostitute was fined equal the amount in paṇas he paid as the wages.<sup>196</sup>

The mention of the sight of a gaṇikā at the time of starting as auspicious suggests also the high social esteem in which they stood.<sup>197</sup>

#### GENERAL REMARKS :

The accounts mentioning the deplorable status to which the consorts of Kṛṣṇa and the hundreds of women after the Devāsura war were reduced, seem to suggest that the captive ladies were either married with the conquerors or were ravished and then were forced to accept the wretched profession of prostitution and skilfully this is linked up with one of the chapters of Kṛṣṇa's life.

The Anaṅgadānavrata in which there is the worship of Kāmadeva affords to a Brahmin a good scope

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196. MP.227.144 ff.; cf. YS 2.292.; cf. Nārada as quoted by Dr. Kane, P.V., HDS, Vol.II, p. 638.

197. MP.243.17. According to the Kāmasūtra 1.3.20, a gaṇikā is a veśyā who is most accomplished and proficient in 64 kaṭās.

for the enjoyment of a prostitute under the pious name of the sacred religious vow (70.34,44-45). The Anāṅgadānavrata framed according to the sweet will of a Brahmin for the atonement of prostitutes suggests the position of the prostitutes in the society.<sup>198</sup> Incidentally, it may be mentioned that in the opinion of some scholars the sage Dālbhya might be a Brahmin who subsisted himself on the income of the prostitutes whom he gave shelters.<sup>199</sup>

The promise of the heavenly regions to the prostitutes who observed the religious vows suggests that the Purāṇas did not believe in the eternal depraved damnation in which they rotted and they rang out the optimistic note of their future.<sup>200</sup> All this tends to show that the institution of the prostitution was well established and had been a part and parcel of the society in the period of the Purāṇas.<sup>201</sup>

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198. Cf. Desai, R.V., Apsarā, Vol.IV, p.100.

199. Vide Desai, R.V., *ibid.*, p.100.

200. Cf. for a similar view Desai, R.V., *ibid.*, p.102.

201. Vide, Desai, R.V., *ibid.*, *ibid.*, p.104.