

## CHAPTER IV

MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND POSITION OF WOMEN

## I

MarriageIntroduction

As a social institution, the aspect of 'Marriage' is very important for the social study. It covers one of the longest periods of one's life and its influence on the human society enables one to understand and appreciate the spirit of its culture and civilization in as much as repercussions and percolations of it are felt on the various factors of the social organization.<sup>1</sup>

Westermarck defines Marriage in its capacity of Social Institution "as a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognised by custom or law and involves certain rites and duties both in the case of the parties entering the

---

1 Kantawala, S.G., Op.Cit., Ch. III, P. 196.

union and in the case of the children born of it."2

According to the Hindu view of life, Marriage is not a contract but a very important sacrament, one of the *śārīrasam-skāras* through which every man and woman should pass at the proper age and time.

#### Terms to Denote the idea of Marriage

Several words are employed to denote the idea of Marriage. Thus the words *udvāha* i.e. taking the girl out of her paternal home, *vivāha* i.e. taking the girl away ~~for~~ in a special way for a special purpose i.e. for making her one's wife, *Pariṇaya* or *Pariṇayana* i.e. going round or making a *Pradakṣiṇā* to fire, *upayama* i.e. to bring near and make one's own, and *Pāṇigrahaṇa* i.e. taking the hand of the girl are employed to convey the sense of marriage.<sup>3</sup>

The Br. P. also uses the words *Vivāha*, *udvāha*, *pāṇigrahaṇa* and *Dārasamgraha* to denote the idea of marriage.<sup>4</sup> Though these words signify one of the rites of marriage still all of them are used to indicate the totality of the several acts that settle the ceremony of marriage.<sup>5</sup> The Br. P. also

2 Westermarck: History of Human Marriage, Vol.1, P.26.

3 Kane P.V., HDS, Vol.II, P. 437.

4 36.56, 37.1, 8.7, 111.20

5 Vide *Evamupayamaṇa pāṇigrahaṇas'abdavātpariṇayanas'abdo'pi dandinyāyenaiva karmasamudāye śāstresu*  
*Prayogate | Aparāṅka P.91*

uses them in the collective sense.

### Purpose of Marriage

From the vedic times Marriage was considered as obligatory for man as it enabled him to become a householder, to perform sacrifices to the gods and to procreate sons. According to the smrtis and Nibandhas, Dharmasampatti, Prajā (and consequent freedom from falling into hell) and rati (sexual and other pleasures) are the principal purposes of marriage.<sup>6</sup> "To be mothers were women created and to be fathers men, therefore, the vedas ordain that Dharma must be practised by man together with his wife."<sup>7</sup> Manu considers marriage as a social institution for the regulation of proper relations between the sexes.<sup>8</sup>

The Br. P. also states that one should observe one's dharma by marriage as without marriage, there is no progeny and without progeny, one goes to hell. Moreover, the women are the source to obtain happiness. Thus according to the Br. P. also Dharmasampatti, Prajā and Rati are the three main purposes of marriage,<sup>9</sup> called there 'Dārasamgraha'.<sup>9</sup> Besides, the woman is half of the man and therefore in order to attain

6 Vide Manu IX-28, Kane P.V., Op.Cit., P. 429.

7 Manu IX.96

8 Esoditā Lokayātrā nityam Strīpumsayoḥ Subhā ।

9 228. 24-29.

completion also, a man should marry.<sup>10</sup> Again it is said that a father who after giving birth to a child does not give him all the Saṃskāras according to the vedic rites suffers in the hell permanently. Here the emphasis is placed on the saṃskāra called vivāha.<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere the Br. P. states that marriage was considered to be very important in a man's life as without it, the fire-worship was not done and the śrauta and the smārta ṛnas were not fulfilled (99.2).

#### Qualifications of the Bride and the Bridegroom

Yama quoted in smṛti-candrikā states that one should seek for seven qualities in a bridegroom, viz. good family, good character, bodily appearance, fame, learning, wealth and support of relatives and friends.<sup>12</sup> Brhat-Parāśara<sup>13</sup> enumerates eight qualities in a bridegroom, viz. caste, learning, youth, strength, health, support of many friends, ambition and possession of wealth. The Br. P. also joins hands with these two and states that the qualities to be sought for in a bridegroom are wealth, learning, youth, good family, fame, good nature, and support of others.<sup>14</sup> Again when king Śūrasena wanted to arrange the marriage of his son, he describes his son as

10 (129.61,62). As regards the discussion on this point, refer the section 'Position of women - woman as wife' of this chapter.

11 Janeyitvā tmajānvedavidhiṅ Khilasamskṛtiḥ |  
na karyādyaḥ pitā tasya narakānāsti niṣkṛtiḥ || Br. P. III. ||

12 kulam ca śilam ca vaquryadaśca vidyām ca vittaṃ ca sanāthatām ca |  
etānṅgmaṅbaktā parikṣya deyaḥ kanyā budhah śaśamadāntarīyam || yama in

13 P.118, Jiv.ed., Vide Kane, Op.Cit., PP. 429-30. <sup>Smṛticandrikā, I p. 78</sup>

14 Śrimate viduse x yūne kulīnāya yaśasvine |  
Udārāya sanāthāya kanyā deyaḥ varāya vai || 165.8.

the possessing of good qualities, intelligent, brave, invincible, a trouble for the enemies, and an expert in chariot-driving, elephant riding and Dhanurvedyā (111.18,19). Thus among the kṣatriyas, besides the common qualities mentioned above, certain auxiliary qualities like valour and knowledge of the necessary vidyās for the kṣatriya seem to be considered necessary. The Br. P. provides one more instance from which the standard of a bridegroom could be judged. Thus when Śiva was not invited in the sacrifice conducted by Dakṣa, Satī, Śiva's wife, asks her father Dakṣa the reason as to why the husbands of all her sisters were invited and Śiva was not called. Dakṣa thereupon answers that Śiva can never stand in the same line along with his other sons-in-law as they were śreṣṭha, varīṣṭha, brahmīṣṭha, observing vratas, great yogins, religious, and from all the points of view more meritorious, whereas Śiva had none of these qualities. This shows incidentally that the above qualities were much sought for in a brahmin-bridegroom (34.16-19).

Kātyāyana states that the following defective bridegrooms are to be avoided viz. the lunatic, one guilty of grave sins, leprous, impotent, one of the same gotra, one bereft of eyesight or hearing, an epileptic and adds that these defects are to be avoided even among brides.<sup>15</sup> Though, the Br.P. does not mention the defective traits to be avoided in the bridegroom, still it provides an instance from which it could

15 Unmattah patitah kuskhi tatha dandha svagotrakah |  
 cakṣuṣ'rotravihīnaś'ca tathāpṣmāradūṣitah |  
 Varadoṣā hyete smṛtā hyete kanyādoṣāś'ca kṛtītah ||  
 Smṛticandrikā I, 159

be seen how people hesitated in arranging the marriage of a defective person. Thus it so happened that a king Śūrasena obtained a son who ~~had~~ instead of having the human form, had the form of a serpent. The king carefully concealed this trait of his son from all the people but when the serpent came of age and asked his father to settle his marriage, his father was very worried and after due considerations asked the advice of his minister. The minister being tactful arranged the marriage of the serpent with a princess Bhogavatī but did not reveal the fact of the bridegroom being a serpent, to the father of Bhogavatī. The serpent himself could not remain present, therefore, he sent his weapon as his representative with which Bhogavatī was married. Being too good natured, Bhogavatī accepted the serpent as her husband after the marriage. The story is then given a religious turn and the serpent at the end gets a human form. Though, the whole matter remains on the range of improbability, still the idea that clearly comes forth from it is that it was too difficult to arrange the marriage of a defective bridegroom. (A.111).

A study of sūtras and smṛtis reveals that the rules for the selection of the bride were far more elaborate than those for selecting a bridegroom, though, in some respects they are the same. The Āśv. Gr. states that one should marry a girl who is endowed with intelligence, beauty, a good character and health.<sup>16</sup> The Br. P. describes the good qualities, viz.

16 Buddhirūpasīlalakṣeṇasampannāmarogamupayaccheta | Āśv. Gr. s. I. 5-3, vide also Ap. Gr. III. 20.

beauty, youth and an intent service of the parents-in-law as the good qualities of Bhogavatī as a bride. (111.51), Elsewhere it is stated that a bride coming from a noble family is the greatest helpmate in a husband's life. (167.25)

As regards the defective signs to be avoided in the brides, Nārada states: When they suffer from long-standing or disgusting diseases, when they are devoid of a limit or have already have connection with another man, when they are wicked or have their minds fixed on another, they should not be selected.<sup>17</sup> The Br. P. states that one should not select a bride who is devoid of a limit, of a bad character and who has many diseases.<sup>18</sup>

The Mānava Gr. I. 7.8, Manu III.11 and Yāj. I.53 state that the girl to be chosen must not be brotherless. In ancient times when a man had no son, he could make his daughter do for a son (i.e. she herself became putrikā) and stipulate

17 *Dīghakutsitarogartā vyaṅga samśyāṣamaitṥnā |  
Dvṣṭānyagatabhāṃ cā kanyādoṣāḥ prakīrtitāḥ || Nārada cṣṭūpumsṃyoga*  
36

18 The text gives the reading as 'Vyāṅginīm varjayetkanyām kulajām vāpyaroginīm' which seems to be wrong, the reading of ms. 'ka' viz. 'Vyāṅginīm varjayetkanyām kulatām cātiroginīm' seems to be the better reading. The ms. 'ga' reads 'Kulajā' according to the text but reads 'Atiroginīm' for 'Aroginīm' (221.73). Or it may mean that one should not marry a girl physically defective or one who has a disease even though she be born in the noble family.

with the person marrying her that the son born of her would be his (i.e. the girl's father's) son and would offer Pindas as a son to his maternal grandfather. The result would be that the son of such a girl would not offer Pindas to his father and would not continue the line of his father. In medieval times this prohibition against marrying a brotherless girl gradually was ignored and as MM. Prof. Kane sarcastically remarks in modern times the pendulum has swung the other way, a brotherless girl being a coveted prize if her father be rich.<sup>19</sup>

The Br. P. also does not seem to regard the state of being a putrikā as a defective trait in a bride. It evidences to the marriage according to the 'putrikāvidhi' and states that the son of a putrikā gets the right to perform the śrāddha of his maternal grandfather (22 .77). In the family of the sage Atri, ten daughters were married to Prabhākara according to Patrikāvidhi. (13.11-13)

Again, the Br. P. states that in marriage-relationship equal status of both the parties was one of the main considerations. (111.27)

#### Qualifications

The Br. P. states that in settling a marriage both the parties see the family, beauty, age, wealth, learning, occupation and good character of each other. (165.19)

---

<sup>19</sup> Kane P.V., Op.Cit., PP. 435-436.

Beauty was considered to be one of the most important requirements in a bride. The Br. P. relates what worries Sūrya had to suffer in order to settle the marriage of Viṣṭi, his daughter, who was terrible in appearance. At last Sūrya succeeds in finding out an equally ugly husband for her and eventually she is married to Viśvarūpa, the son of Tvastā (165.18-27). The same anxiety regarding an ugly sister is expressed by the sage Bharadvāja, When he is unable to settle the marriage of his sister Revatī. At last he asks his pupil Kātha to marry his ugly sister Revatī by way of Gurudakṣiṇā and the pupil could not deny whatever is asked by the teacher, therefore Kātha married Revatī (A.121). This shows what a great part beauty played in the life of a girl.

#### Age of Marriage

The discussion of the qualifications of the bride and the bridegroom leads us to a discussion of their age at the time of marriage. Gaut.(IV.1.) and Vas. (8.1), Mānava gr. I.7.8, Yāj. I. 52 and many others say that the girl must be younger than the bridegroom. The Br. P. also states that the marriage of a bridegroom ~~and~~ younger than the bride is not proper and illustrates it by giving the story of the sage Vṛddha-Gautama.<sup>20</sup> Further it states that a young maiden for an old man is as dangerous as poison and a young man for an old maid is as beneficial as neetar,<sup>21</sup> and that the marriage of a young man with

<sup>20</sup> Ahaṃ Bālastvaṃ ta Vṛddhā naivāyaṃ ghaṭate mithah | 107.31.

<sup>21</sup> Viṣaṃ vṛddhasya yuvatī vṛddhāyā Amṛtaṃ yuvā | Iṣṭāniṣṭasamāyoge Drṣṭopāsmābhiraho cirāt | 107.47.

an old woman is considered to be 'Iṣṭāniṣṭasamāyoga' (A.107). The Br. P. provides another instance where the marriage of a young bridegroom with a bride much older than him has been made possible. Thus it is said that king Jyāmagha brought a maiden from a victorious campaign and presented her to his wife saying that she would be their future daughter-in-law. It is to be noted that king Jyāmagha had at that time no son. Later on his wife practised severe penance and gave birth to a son. When the son came of age, he was married to the girl who of course had grown much older than him. (14.17-21). Again the age-bar does not seem to have come in the way of the marriage of Māyāvati with Pradyumna, kṛṣṇa's son. Thus it is said that Māyāvati who was acting as the wife of the demon Saṃbara found Pradyumna, lord kṛṣṇa's son, from the belly of a fish when he was just six days old. He was brought up by Māyāvati and as he grew up of age, she fell in love with him. Pradyumna himself was astonished to see her feelings and asked her why she showed towards him feelings other than those of a mother. Eventually lord kṛṣṇa made it clear that Māyāvati and Pradyumna were Kāmadeva and Rati in their former life, and there was nothing improper in their marrying in this life also, and finally they were married. Here it can be seen that at the time of the marriage, Māyāvati must be much older than Pradyumna as she herself had brought him up from his very childhood (A.200).

Besides the relative age of bride and bridegroom in

general, the Br. P. does not thro<sup>u</sup>gh much light on the age of the bridegroom in particular. But it seems that a man was married at quite a mature age as he had to enter the Grhasthā-srama after completing the Brahmacharyāsrama. And this can be evidenced by many instances furnished throughout the Br.P. As regards the age of the bride, a detailed discussion is given in the section 'Position of women'. But one thing needs to be made clear here. Though the Br. P. at one place advocates in express terms the pre-puberty marriage (165.13-14), still the examples it furnishes throughout, viz. those of Ahalyā (A.87), Pārvatī (A.36), Uṣā (A.205), Rukmiṇī (A.199), Ilā (A.108), suggest that the marriages of the girls took place at quite a mature age.

#### Types of Marriage

The types of marriage can be classified on the basis of numeric variation in marriage, i.e. the variation of the number of consorts united to each other and accordingly the types usually listed are monogamy, polygamy, Polyandry and group-marriages.<sup>22</sup> As regards the group-marriages, the Br.P. does not provide any information, therefore, it can safely be eliminated from the discussion.

Monogamy:- It is not only the most important type of marriage, not only that which predominates in most communities and which occurs statistically speaking in an overwhelming

<sup>22</sup> Malinowski: Marriage, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol.14, P.949.

majority of instances, but it is also the pattern and prototype of marriage.<sup>23</sup>

The ideal monogamous unions are exemplified in the Br. P. by Rāma and Sītā (A.159), and Śiva and Pārvatī (A.34.43-45). Though, of course, Pārvatī sneers at the attachment of lord Śiva with the river Ganges (175.38). King Jyāmagha did not remarry even though his wife Śaibyā had no issue. Of course, she gave birth to Vidarbha at an advanced age after practising severe penance. (15.12-18).

Polygyny:- Polygyny is that form of union in which a man has more than one wife at a time.<sup>24</sup> Though, monogamy seems to have been the ideal and was probably the rule, the practice of polygyny among the vedic Aryans is abundantly proved by direct references in the R̥gveda and other texts.

In the Br. P. some personages are stated to be polygynists while some others are stated to be bigamists. The Br. P. also notes the cases of sororal polygyny where the co-wives are sisters. Thus Prajāpati Dakṣa had sixty daughters out of whom ten were given to Dharma, thirteen to Kasyapa, twenty-seven to Soma, four to Ariṣṭanemi, two to Bahuputra, two to Aṅgīrasa and two to Kṛśās'va (3.26,27). Elsewhere it is stated that ten daughters were given to Dharma, thirteen to

---

23. Ibid, P, 950.

24. Kapadia K.M., Marriage and Family in India, P. 94.

Kasyapa and the remaining to Soma (2.48). The seven daughters of Devaka were given in marriage to Vasudeva (15-57). Bhajmana had two wives Bāhyakasrñāyī and upabāhyakasrñjyā, the daughters of king Srñjaya (32-33). All these are the cases of sororal polygyny where the marriage has taken place with two or more sisters. 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>25</sup> and thus likely to maintain the peace and solidarity of the family.

The following is the list of Polygynists

Name of the Polygynist	Name/number of the consorts
1 Dharma	Ten daughters of Dakṣa, viz. Arundhatī, Vasu, Yāmī, Lambā, Bhānu, Marutvatī, Saṅkalpā, Muhūrtā, Sandhyā and Viśvā(3.29).
2 Kasyapa	Thirteen daughters of Dakṣa, viz. Aditi, Diti, Danu, Ariṣṭā, Surasā, Khasā, Surabhi, Vānetā, Tāmra, Krodhavaśā, Irā, Kadru and Muni (3.51,52).
3 Soma	Twenty Seven daughters of Dakṣa. All of them had the names of Nakṣatras but their names are not given (3.34).
4 Ariṣṭanemi	Four daughters of Dakṣa. The names are not given (3.27).

---

25 Radcliffe Brown A.R., Structure and Function in Primitive Society, P. 80.

Name of the Polygynist	Name/number of the consorts
5 Prabhākara	Ten daughters of king Raudrāśva: Bhadra, Sūrā, Madra, Saladā, Maladā, Khaīḍā, Naladā, Surasā, Gocapalā, Strīratnakūṭā (13.7,8).
6 Usīnara	Five wives: Nrgā, Krmī, Navā, Darva, Drsadvarī (13.21).
7 Ajamīdha	Three wives: Nīlī, Kesinī and Dhūminī (13.82).
8 Vasudeva	Fourteen wives: Paurakī, Rohinī, Madirādi, Vaisākhi, Bhadrā, Sunāmnī, Sahadevā, Sāntidevā, Sīrīdevī, Devaraksitā, Vr̥kadevī, Upadevī, and Devakī and two paricārikās viz. Sutenu and Vadavā (14.36-38) <sup>26</sup>  Elsewhere it is mentioned that the seven daughters of Devaka were given to Vasudeva, viz. Devakī, Sāntidevā, Sudevā, Deva- raksitā, Vr̥kadevī, Upadevī and Sunāmnī (15.56,57).
9 Satrajit	He had ten wives. The names are not mentioned. (16.45)
10 Dasaratha	Three wives: Kausalyā, Sumitrā and Kaikeyī (123.35).
11 Kamsa	It is stated that Kamsa had many wives but the number and their names are not mentioned. (194.7)

---

26 The names are not given in mss. 'kha' and 'ga' and the fact of Rohinī being the daughter of King Bāhlika is not mentioned in the ms. 'ka'.

Name of the Polygynist	Name/number of the consorts
12 Kṛṣṇa	Sixteen thousand one hundred and eight wives out of whom the following are mentioned: Rukmiṇī, Kālindī, Mitravindā, Satyā, Wagnājī, Jāmbavatī, Rohiṇī, Susilā the daughter of the king of Madra, Sātrajitī, Satyabhāmā and Lakṣmaṇā (201.3-5), (16.41,47).

The following is the list of bigamists

1 Sagara	Kesinī, the daughter of the king of Vidarbha and Mahatī, the daughter of Ariṣṭanemi (8.63-64)
2 Yayāti	Devayānī, the daughter of Uśanas and Sarmisthā, the daughter of Vṛṣaparvā (12.5,6).
3 Kroṣṭu	Gāndharī and Mādri (14.1).
4 Madhu	The daughter of a king of Vidarbha and the daughter of a king of Ikṣvāku line (14.28).
5 Bhajamāna	Bāhyakasṛñjayī and Upabāhyakasṛñjayī, the daughters of king Sṛñjaya (15.22).
6 Kesarī	Añjanā and Adrikā (84.3).
7 Aniruddha	The granddaughter of Ekmi (201.8) and Uśā, Bāṅṅsura's daughter (A.205).
8 Sūrya	Uśā, the daughter of Tvastā and Chyāya. (165.2).

Even in modern times several cases of bigamists and polygynists are found.

Polyandry:- Polyandry is a form of union in which a woman has more than one husband at a time or in which brothers share a wife or wives in common.<sup>27</sup>

There is difference of opinion regarding the existence of polyandry in vedic times. Scholars like Mr. Dr. Kane<sup>28</sup> and Dr. Altekar<sup>29</sup> deny the existence of polyandry in the vedic society, while Dr. B.S. Upadhyaya maintains that it existed in vedic society.<sup>30</sup>

The oft-cited and the most controversial instance of the polyandrous union of Draupadī's marriage with five Pāṇḍava princes is not mentioned by the Br. P. But the Br. P. mentions an instance of the polyandrous union of Mārīṣā, the daughter of Soma, with ten Prācetasas, the sons of Prajāpati. Prācīnabarhiṣ and Savarnā (2.31-32), (34.46). This is a case of adelphic or fraternal polyandry which means marriage of a woman with two or more brothers.<sup>31</sup>

---

27 Kapadia K.M., Op.Cit., P.52.

28 Hds. Vol.II, P.554.

29 Altekar A.S.: The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation, PP. 34-35.

30 Upadhyaya B.S.: Women in Rgveda (P.112); vide also Majumdar R.C.: Ideal and Position of Indian Women in Domestic life, Great Women of India, P.7; and Kapadia K.M., Op.Cit., PP.109-110.

31 B.Malinowski: States that in Tibet and the adjacent countries polyandry of the fraternal type exists. Among the Nāyars and the Tōḍa, a sort of polyandry is practised (B.Malinowski, Marriage, Encyclopaedia Britanica, Vol.14, P.949, also vide Vol.18, P. 178)

Forms of Marriage

From the times of the Grhyasūtras, Dharmasūtras and Smṛtis the ancient Indian law recognised the eight forms of marriage denoting the method of consecrating a marriage-union.

(1) Brāhma:- In this the father gifts the daughter after decking her with ornaments to a man learned in the vedas and having a good character, whom the bride's father himself invites. The Br.P. states that one who gives a daughter in marriage well-decked with ornaments goes to the abode of Yama surrounded by divine brings. (216.32).

(2) Daiva:- This consists of the gift of a daughter decked as above to a priest who duly officiates at a sacrifice, during the course of its performance.

(3) Ārṣa:- In this the daughter is given in marriage to the bridegroom, after receiving a cow and a bull, or two pairs of these from the bridegroom, in accordance with the requirements of Dharma and not in any sense with the intention of selling the child.

(4) Prājāpatya:- In this after offering due honour to the bridegroom, the father of the bride addresses the couple 'May both of you perform your duties together'.

(5) Āsura:- In this the bridegroom gives as much wealth as he can afford to kinsmen of the bride and bridegroom.

(6) Gāndharva:- In this the mutual love and content of the bride and bridegroom is the only condition required to bring about the union.

Rākṣasa:-  
(7) It is described as "the forcible abduction of a maiden from her home, while she cries and weeps, after her kinsmen have been slain and wounded and their houses broken." It is the capture of the bride by force.

(8) Paisāca:- This involves the seduction by stealth of a girl who is sleeping, intoxicated or deranged and is considered to be the basest and the most sinful type of marriage.<sup>32</sup>

As regards the first four forms all the law-givers approve of them and agree also to the fact that the last is the worst but opinion is divided as to which of these are the approved ones for the members of the different varṇas.<sup>33</sup>

The Br. P. refers to the Rākṣasa form of marriage though the mode differs. Thus it states that Lord Kṛṣṇa married Rukmiṇī according to the form of Rākṣasa marriage.<sup>34</sup>

32 MS. 3.21,27-34; vide Prabhu P.N.: Hindu Social Organisation, PP.153 ff.; Pandey R.B.: Hindu Saṃskāras, PP.271 ff.; Altokar A.S., Op.Cit., PP.41 ff.; Kane P.V., Op.Cit., PP.516 ff.

33 Kane P.V., Op.Cit., PP. 521 ff.

34 The text reads "Rākṣasena vī<sup>h</sup>ṭāhena" but the mss. 'ka' and 'kha' read 'Rākṣasena Vivāhena'.

It so happened that lord kṛṣṇa asked for the hand of Rukmiṇī to Rukmi but through malice Rukmi decided to give her to Sisupāla. On the day previous to that<sup>of</sup> the marriage, kṛṣṇa carried away Rukmiṇī and a terrible fight ensued between both the parties and eventually Rukmi was defeated and lord kṛṣṇa succeeded in marrying Rukmiṇī (A.199). Here though the bride is captured by force, her unwillingness of the act is not stated.<sup>35</sup> The disapproval of the Kanyā-harāṇa form of marriage by the Br.P. can be seen from the fact that it states that to carry away a bride from the Mandapa was a great adharmā and such a person was disowned by his father and it did not rain in the country in which such a thing took place (7.98). Though the term 'Gāndharva-vivāha' is not expressly used still the enjoyment of Aniruddha and Uṣā with each other depending on their sole desire without a precedent requirement of the permission of elders fulfills the conditions of the Gāndharva type of marriage (A.206).

The smṛtis do not recognise a form of marriage which plays a great part in the Purāṇas, viz. the svayamvara or self-choice, a ceremony at which a princess chooses for herself a suitor at a great assembly held for the purpose. The act of

---

35 Among predatory and warlike tribes marriage by capture is often common; indeed on account of the social and military honour attached to wife capture, it sometimes comes to be the favourite form of marriage. - Ellwood Charles A.: Encyclopaedia Americana, Vol.18, PP.312-313.

choice might be preceded by a trial of strength on the part of the suitors, the victor being rewarded with the hand of the maiden or it might be an unconditional choice of the bride. The Br. P. refers to the marriage of Sītā where the condition of proficiency was to be fulfilled by the bridegroom and after showing his proficiency in the Dhanurvedyā, Rāma obtained Sītā (123.102,103), and the Br. P. also furnishes the instance of the svayamvara of Pārvatī where no conditional precedent was put forward to attain her. Here Himālaya himself declares that whomsoever Pārvatī would choose in the svayamvara, he would be her husband (35-14).

At the same time even in the svayamvara, the Brahma-Purāṇa provides a modification. When lord Śiva came to Pārvatī and asked her to marry him Pārvatī replied that she was not independent and that her father had all the rights to select a husband for her <sup>36</sup> and then Śiva also proposed to Himālaya for Pārvatī's hand whereupon Himālaya declared that Pārvatī would select a husband of her own choice in the svayamvara ceremony that was to take place immediately afterwards.<sup>37</sup>

This reminds one of the two parallel instances in the Rāmāyana. When Vāyu asked the daughters of Kusanābha to be his wives, they firmly answered that they would be the wives of

36 Bhagavanna svatantrā'ham pītā me svagranthigāhe |  
sa prabhukmama dāne vai kanyā'ham dvīpapurjara ||  
gatvā yācova pītarāṃ mama sailendramuvyayam |  
sa ceddadati mām vipra turhyam tadukitam mama || 35. 9, 10

37 (35.16).

him whom their father considers as a fit husband for them.<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere in Rāmāyaṇa also, when the king Daṇḍa forced himself upon Arajā, the sage Sukra's daughter, she expressed her denial by expressing the result of her future life as dependent on her father's will.<sup>39</sup>

Besides the above form of marriages, the Br. P. refers to two more forms of marriage. It states that a kṣatriya can marry in many ways. If a bridegroom does not want to present himself at the time of marriage, he can send either his weapon or his ornament as his representative and the marriage ceremony would be accordingly performed with the emblem (111.43,44). The Br. P. further relates that as king Sūrasena's son had the form of a serpent, he sent his weapon without revealing the secret about his form and obtained a virtuous wife. (A.111).

#### Limitations of Marriage-relationship

In the discussion connected with the institution of marriage the next vital problem is that of marital regulations containing the rules of endogamy and exogamy<sup>40</sup> laid down in the Dharmasāstras for regulating the Hindu marriage with a view to control the choice of mates. The exogamy of the Hindus has the

38 Yasya no dāsyati pitā sa no bharatā bhaviṣyati | (Rām.I.32. 21-2).

39 Mā mām spr̥ṣa balādrājankanyā pitrvasā hyaham |  
Varayasva narasreṣṭha pitarāṃ me mahādyutiṃ || 7.80.9-11.  
For details vide Vyasa S.N.: Rāmāyaṇakālīna Samāja (in Hindi), Ch.8.

40 For a summary of the different theories expounded to explain the rise of exogamy, vide Pandey R.B., Op.Cit., PP.296 ff.

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 prescribes the marriage of persons of the same Pravara.<sup>41</sup> As the Br.P. does not throw any light on these two types, we would not go in details regarding them.

The opinion is divided regarding the meaning of the word 'Sapinda' between two schools represented by Mitākṣarā and the other by Jimūtvāhana (author of Dāyabhāga). Both are agreed that a Sapinda girl cannot be married. Sapinda relationship (between two persons) arises from (their) being connected by having particles of the same body. Yājñavalkya states that after the fifth on the mother's side and after the seventh on the father's side the sapinda relationship ceases. According to the Mitākṣarā the following rules regarding the prohibitions based on Sāpindya follow: (i) In computing degrees, the common ancestor is to be included. (ii) Regard is to be had to the father and mother of the bride and bridegroom both. (iii) If computation is made from the mother's side of either the proposed bride or bridegroom, they must be beyond the fifth degree from the common ancestor and if it is made through the father of either, they must be beyond the seventh from the common ancestor while according to the Dāyabhāga school, Sāpinda means one who is connected with another through oblations of

---

41 Kantawala S.G., Op.Cit., P. 221.

food.<sup>42</sup> The Br. P. differs a bit and states that one can marry the seventh from his father's side and the fifth from his mother's side (221.73).

The rules about the prohibition of marriage on the ground of Sapinda relationship, particularly where agnates were concerned, have not been observed in numerous instances over wide areas from very ancient times and the striking instance where the question is sharply divided is regarding the question whether a man can marry his maternal uncle's or his paternal aunt's daughter. The *Āp. Dh.* I.7.21.8 and II.5.11.16 Gautama Dh. §. XI 20, *Baudhāyana* I.I.19-26 and *Manu* (XI,172-173) forbid the marriages with a maternal uncle's or a paternal aunt's daughter. But the *Baudh. Dh. Sūtra* (I.I.19-26) states that to marry the daughter of the maternal uncle or of a paternal aunt was a practice peculiar to the south. From this it is clear that a marriage with one's maternal uncle's daughter or paternal aunt's daughter was in vogue in the south (below the Narmadā probably) long before the *Baud. Dh. s.* (i.e. several centuries before the christian era) and that North India did not go in for such marriages and that orthodox writers like Gautama and *Baudhāyana* reprobated such practices.<sup>43</sup>

Among these supporting the marriage with a maternal uncle's daughter and paternal aunt's daughter, the most prominent are the *Sm.C.* (I.PP.70-74) and the *Par. M.* (I.2.PP.63-68).

42 For the detailed discussion, vide Kane P.V., *Op.Cit.*, PP.452-477; Karandikar S.V., *Hindu Exogamy*, Chs. 9-10.

43 Kane P.V., *Ibid.*, PP. 458-459.

The Br. P. provides two examples of the marriage with a maternal uncle's daughter and one example with paternal aunt's daughter. Thus it states that Pradyumna, the son of lord Kṛṣṇa and Rukmiṇī married with the daughter of Rukmī, Rukmiṇī's brother. Thus here it can be seen that the marriage with a maternal uncle's daughter has taken place (201.6). Again Aniruddha, the son of Pradyumna, marries with the granddaughter of Rukmī, thus here also Aniruddha married the maternal uncle's daughter (201.7).

Kṛṣṇa	=	Rukmiṇī	(Rukmiṇī's brother)	Rukmi	
:		:		:	
:		:		:	
Pradyumna	=	Rukmi's daughter	:	Son	44
:				:	
Aniruddha	=			daughter	

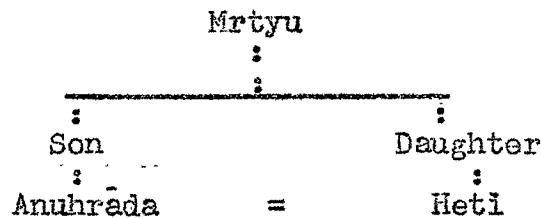
The Śm. c. and the Par. M. state when a woman is married in one of the four forms, Brāhmā and others, she passes into the gotra of her husband, becomes a sapinda in the husband's family and so she is severed from her father's family (as to gotra and sapinda relationship), but when a woman is married in the āsura, gāndharva and other forms she does not pass over into the gotra of her husband, but remains into the gotra of her father and her sapinda relationship with her father and brother continues. Therefore, the son of such a woman, if he marries the daughter of his mother's brother, would be marrying a girl who is a sagotra and sapinda of his mother<sup>45</sup>

44 The sign of = shows the union of the two by marriage.

45 Kane P.V., Op.Cit., P.463. Regarding cross-cousin marriages, vide Karve Irevati; Kinship organisation in India, PP.47 ff; 37 ff, Kapadia K.M.: Hindu Kinship PP.63 ff.

It is to be noted that in the Br. P. Pradyumna was born of the marriage of kṛṣṇa and Rukminī performed by the Rākṣasa type marriage, married his maternal uncle's daughter. The Sm.C. and the Par. M. and other works say that the Smṛti texts forbidding marriage with maternal uncle's daughter refer to a person whose mother was married in the Gāndharva, Āsura, Rākṣasa and Paisāca forms, but not to a person whose mother was married in the Brāhma, and the other three approved forms. The Br. P. as has been seen, allows even the marriage with a maternal uncle's daughter of a person whose mother was married in the Rākṣasa form.

The Br. P. notes one instance of the marriage with paternal aunt's daughter. Thus it states that Anuhrāda was the grandson (son's son) of Mrtyu and Heti was the grand-daughter (daughter's daughter) of Mrtyu. Both of them married. Here there is an instance of marriage with paternal aunt's daughter (125-2,3).



The Br. P. provides one more instance of marriage within the same blood-relationship. Thus it states that

Simhikā, Diti's daughter married Vipracitti, Danu's son. Now Diti and Danu are sisters as well as co-wives. Therefore, this seems to be a curious example of very close marriage-relationship, as from the point of view of relationship of Diti and Danu being regarded as sisters, Simhikā becomes the maternal aunt and considering that Diti and Danu are co-wives Vipracitti and Simhikā become brother and sister both being the progeny of the same father, though their mothers are different. (3.64-65, 78-79, 86).

Kas'yapa	<	= Danu	-	Vipracitti
		= Diti	-	Simhikā

Kas'yapa was married to two sisters Danu and Diti, the daughters of Dakṣa, and Vipracitti was his son by Danu and Simhikā was his daughter by Diti.

As regards limitations in general it is stated that a younger brother should not marry before the elder one. Thus one who does so is called a Parivitti and he incurs the sin according to the śāstras. Thus the Br. P. states that as Kakṣivān, the elder son of king Prthusravā, did not marry on account of Vairāgya, his younger brother also did not marry even though he was willing to do so on account of the feat that he would be called a Parivitti (99.1-3). Parivitti is technically explained as a younger brother who marries even though the elder brother remains unmarried.<sup>46</sup> Again the Br.P.

<sup>46</sup> Kane P.V., Op.Cit., Vol.IV, P.11; vide also 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, ASORI, Vol.XX, P.46.

considers 'Didhiṣūpati' to be also a sinner (227.27). Didhi-  
 ṣūpati is technically explained as one who married a younger  
 sister while the elder sister was yet unmarried.<sup>47</sup> To be a  
 son of Parivedanikā, a younger sister who marries before the  
 elder one was also not considered to be good. (220.130-131).

### Marriage Ceremony

Among all people, savage as well as civilised, legal  
 marriage is usually accompanied by some form of ceremony which  
 expresses the sanction of the group upon the union. This cere-  
 mony is of a magical or religious character, though, in a few  
 people it is apparently purely social.<sup>48</sup> All the texts concern-  
 ing the ceremonies and rituals connected ~~the~~ with vivāha refer  
 to the bride as being given away by the father or her guardian  
 in the family who invites the bridegroom. The bridegroom goes  
 to the bride's ~~pāx~~ home where the vivāha takes place.(199.4).

The Āśvalāyana Gr̥hya sūtras deal with the following  
 rites of marriage-ceremony, viz. Kanyādāna, Vivāha-homa, Pāṇi-  
 grahana, Agni-Parinayana, Asmārohana, Lālāhoma and Saptapadi.<sup>49</sup>

The Br. P. refers to the following rites:

(i) Agnisthāpana and Homa:- It means establishing the

---

47 Kane P.V., Ibid., P. 11

48 Ellwood Charles A., Op.Cit., PP.312-313.

49 Prabhu P.N.: Hindu Social organization, P. 166.

fire and offering of <sup>ā</sup>ajya oblations into fire. Here there is great divergence about the number of <sup>ā</sup>hutis and the mantras to be recited.<sup>50</sup> It requires that having placed a mill-stone to the west of the fire which is kindled symbolically as a divine witness and sanctifier of the saṃskāra, and having deposited a water-pot to the north-east of fire, the bridegroom has to offer oblations, the bride participating in the offering by grasping the hand of the groom that makes the offering.<sup>51</sup>

The Br. P. states that lord Brahmā took the place of the upādhyāya in the marriage of Śiva with Pārvatī and offered oblations. (36.127).

Pānigrahaṇa:- The word is used in the Br. P. to denote the whole marriage-ceremony though really it denotes one of the elements of the rites of marriage ceremony (8.7), viz. taking hold of the bride's hand. Here the bridegroom stands facing the west, while the bride sits in front of him with her face to the east and seizes her hand reciting the vedic Mantra (viz. RV. X. 85.36)<sup>52</sup> The Br. P. also states that the mantras were recited in the Pānigrahaṇa (8.7).

Kusabandhana:- The Br. P. states that the hands of the bride and the bridegroom were tied by Kusā grass (36.130).

50 Āśv. Gr. 1.73 & # I. 4.3-7, ĀP. Gr. V.1, Gobhila Gr. II.1. 24-26, Mānava Gr. I.8, Bharadvāja I. 13.

51 Prabhu P.N., Op. Cit., P. 167.

52 Prabhu P.N., Op. Cit., P. 167.

Lājāhoma:- In this the bride offers a sacrifice of fried grain, which is poured in her hands by her brother or a person acting in her brother's place to the gods Aryamān, Varuṇa, Pūṣan, with Agni as the intercourser on her behalf in order that these four may be pleased to release her from the bonds.<sup>53</sup>

The Br. P. states that Maināka, Pārvatī's father was ready with Lājā and the ceremony of Lājāhoma was performed in her marriage. (72.14-16).

Agniparinayana:- The bridegroom going in front takes the bride round the fire and water jar reciting the mantras.<sup>54</sup> The Br. P. states that after Lājāhoma, Śiva and Pārvatī circumambulated the fire (72.16), (36.132).

Asmārohana:- In this with the helping hand of the groom, she treads on the stone and he recites the mantra<sup>55</sup>. The Br. P. states that in order to touch the stone, Pārvatī touched the right foot of lord Śiva (72.17-18).

Santapadī:- This is the most important rite in the whole saṃskāra. This is done to the north of fire, there are seven small heaps of rice and the bridegroom makes the bride step on each of these seven with her right foot beginning from the west.<sup>56</sup> The Br. P. states that Satyavrata, Trayyāruṇa's

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., P.168, Vide also Kane P.V., Op.Cit.,P.534.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Prabhu P.N., Op. Cit., P. 169.

<sup>56</sup> Kane, Op.Cit., P.534.

son, carried away a maiden when her marriage-ceremony was taking place and while the Saptapadī was being performed. For his ignoble act, his father abandoned Satyavrata.(7.97-100),(8.7).

### Marriage-Celebration

The graphic description of Śiva's marriage with Pārvatī evidences the fact that the occasion of marriage was then even as now an occasion of great joy and festivity. The description of Pārvatī gives an idea as to with what pomp the ceremony was celebrated. Himālaya had invited all the gods, demons and siddhas for the marriage-ceremony. Lord Brahmā came there sitting on a blooming lotus surrounded by siddhas and gods. Indra came there wearing divine garlands and sitting on his elephant Airāvata. Vivasvān came there brightening all the directions and sitting on a golden aeroplane. Bhaga came in a bejewelled aeroplane. Yama came with his danda sitting on a bull. Vāyu also came in an aeroplane. The fire scorched all the gods by his brilliance. Kubera appeared in a divine aeroplane studded with many jewels. The moon came there decorating himself in a beautiful dress and wearing fragrant garlands. The two Asvins came mounting one aeroplane. The kings of Gandharva, Nāga, Yakṣa, Kinnara and the sons of Diti too had come to partake in the svayamvara (36.1-26).

Before all these gods, Parvatī chose Śiva as her

husband and kept her garland on his feet. (36.52,53).

In order to celebrate the marriage ceremony the gods constructed a beautiful city studded with all the types of jewels. Vāyu brought fragrant wind, Sun and Moon brought there shining jewels, the Gandharvas began to play musical instruments, the sages recited the Kathās, the divine maidens began to sing and all the six seasons began to blow fragrant winds; and <sup>came</sup> ~~their~~ with their various splendours (36.54-125), Viśvakarmā constructed a bejewelled altar, Ilā performed the Bhuvah karma, the Auśadhis performed the Annakarma, Varuṇa the Pānakarma, Kubera the dānakarma, Viṣṇu the Pūjākarma and the Vedas began to sing, the Gandharvas and the Kinnaras also joined them and the Apsarasas began to dance (72.9-14).

Pārvatī was well-decorated with ornaments and Himālaya himself came and introduced Pārvatī in the hall (36.126).

Though, here the description pertains to the domain of mythological setting, still the human elements are easily discernible.

### Inter-caste Marriages

Owing to the rapid spread of co-education and the rise in the marriageable age of girls, love marriages have become somewhat frequent and the lovers do not stop to consider the

matters as caste-relationships and as a result in modern times the inter-caste marriages tend to cut across the caste-lines and undermine the caste-rigidity.

Since the vedic times, the literature exemplifies the inter-caste marriages. The <sup>Br.</sup>Śāṭ<sub>ṛ</sub> relates the marriage of Cyavana, a Bhārgava with Sukanyā, the daughter of king Sāryāta.<sup>57</sup>

The law-givers like Āpastamba condemn such marriages out and out while liberal writers like Manu (III.12,13), Yājñavalkya (I.56 and 57), Vasistha (I.24), and Gautama prescribe the anuloma marriage, i.e. the marriage between the male of a higher varṇa with a woman of a lower varṇa<sup>58</sup>, but there was a difference of opinion about the approval of marriage of a twice-born with a sūdra woman.<sup>59</sup> But Pratiloma marriage, i.e. the union of a woman of higher varṇa with a male of varṇa lower than her own was considered as reprehensible and not permitted.<sup>60</sup>

The Br. P. provides the instances of both the anuloma and pratiloma marriages. The instances of the anuloma marriages are furnished by the marital relations of sage Saṃvarta and Saṃyatā, king Marutta's daughter (13.143,144), the sage Ṛcika and

57 SB 4.1.5; Kane P.V., Op.Cit., Vol.II, PP.447 ff.

58 cf. BDE I.8.e, VIDS 24.1-4 etc.

59 Kane P.V., Op.Cit., P. 449.

60 For the views of various law-givers on this vide Kane, Op.Cit., PP. 50-58.

Satyavatī, king Gādhi's daughter (10.28,29), the sage Jamadagni and Renukā or Kāmali, daughter of king Renu and of Ikṣvāku dynasty (10.51), the sage Prabhākara and ten daughters of king Raudrāsya (13.5-8), King Vasudeva and two maidservants (14.38) a sage Gautama and a Vṛddhā who was the daughter of a kṣatriya (107.30). Again, the Br. P. notes one more instance which proves that caste-restrictions were not very rigid in case of marriage -relationship. Thus king Mahābala declares that who-soever might he be a brahmin, kṣatriya, vaiśya or a śūdra would be successful in rewarding the eye-sight to his daughter would be allowed to marry her (227.72,73). Once it is said that in the family of the Pauravas or the Kausikas, the relationship between brahmins and kṣatriyas took place (10.63). These examples show that there was no bar to Anuloma marriages. The instance of the Pratiloma marriage is provided by the Br. P. in the case of the marriage of king Yayāti with Devayānī, the sage uśanasa's daughter (12.5), (Mat.P. 30.18).

The case of conjugal relationship between king Yayāti and Sarmiṣṭhā, the demon Vṛṣaparvan's daughter, provides an example of inter-communal marriage (12-6). It may be suggested that the marriage of Yayāti with Sarmiṣṭhā and Devayānī may, probably, be an attempt to establish cordial relations between the belligerent Āsuras and Aryans.<sup>61</sup> Many of the medieval digests and writers like the smṛticandrikā and Hemādri quote

---

61 Kantawala S.G., Op. Cit., P. 221.

verses from Brahma-Purāna on matters forbidden in the kali age among which inter-caste marriages are included. But these passages are not found in the present edition.

### Niyoga

The institution of leviration was quite common in ancient times in several civilisations. In early societies a son by levirate was preferred to a son by adoption.<sup>62</sup> There is a difference of opinion about the origin and purpose of this institution. Law-givers like Manu permit this practice while those like Āpastamba condemn and forbid it. Under the system of niyoga if a woman's husband was dead or incapable of procreating children, she was allowed to have conjugal relations with her brother-in-law or some other near relative till she got one or two sons.<sup>63</sup> But the Br. P. states that vicitravīrya's wife had three sons, viz. Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Pāṇḍu and Vidūra by Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana (13.119-122). Further it may also be mentioned that in the Mbh. also when Kuntī raised three sons by Niyoga and when her husband Pāṇḍu was not satisfied and asked her to have some more sons, Kuntī protested against the suggestion pointing out that the custom permitted only three sons by niyoga and no more.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Altekar A.S.: The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation, PP. 168.

<sup>63</sup> Kane P.V., HDS, Vol. II, PP. 601-607.

<sup>64</sup> Mbh. I. 132.63-4.

Here it may be noted that the Br. P. is silent about Bhīṣma's services solicited for niyoga relations with the wife of Vicitravīrya as is given in the Mahābhārata.<sup>65</sup>

According to the Smṛtikāras, the wife is called kṣetra, the husband of the wife is called kṣetrin or kṣetrika and the person appointed to produce offspring is called bījin or niyogin.<sup>66</sup> The Br. P. states that Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana begot in the kṣetra of Vicitravīrya, thus here the word kṣetra stands for the wife (13.119-122). The Br. P. also refers to the story of the birth of Prthā alias Kunti, King Vṛddhasarmā's daughter. She was married to Pāṇḍu and had three sons, viz. Yudhiṣṭhira by Dharma, Bhīmasena by Vāyu and Dhanañjaya by Indra (14.19-21). The Br. P. does not reflect upon the conditions necessary for niyoga.

This practice is forbidden in the kali age. Aparārka quotes the Br. P. in stating that niyoga was included among practices forbidden in the Kali age. But this passage is not found in the present edition.<sup>67</sup>

### Illicit Unions

As evil and good always go together, the society where

65. Kane P.V., Vol. II, P. 603, Meyer J.J., Sexual life in Ancient India, P. 165.

66. Vide Manu IX.32, 33, 53, Gautama 18.11, Āp.Dh.S. II.6.13.6; Kane P.V., Op.Cit., P. 599.

67. *strīṇāṃ punarvivāhastu Devarātputrasaṃgatib |  
svātantrye ca Kaliyuge Kartavyam na Kadācana ||*

Br.P. quoted by Aparārka P.97

there are regular relationships also contains those which are irregular and abnormal. Thus the Br. P. notes the instances of monogamy, Polygyny and polyandry as well as the instances in which sexual laxity has taken place. These instances, of course, do not represent the condition of society in general but reflect upon one of the phases of society wherein on account of the evil element in human nature preponderating over the good one, man tends to slip off from the right path.

The Br. P. notes the following instances of free sex relations.

(1) Soma and Tārā

Soma carried away Tārā, Bṛhaspati's wife and raped her. Bṛhaspati and Soma fought with each other and after the intervention of Brahmā, Bṛhaspati regained his wife but in a pregnant condition. After the birth of her son, Bṛhaspati forced her to disclose the name of the genitor of the son. After much hesitation, she declared that Soma was the genitor, whereupon Soma accepted the son <sup>with</sup> pleasure and named him Budha (A.9).

(2) Garga and Ghosakanyā

In this instance, it is stated that Gopālī - a nymph who had assumed the form of a cow-herdess was carried off by Garga for cohabitation and the result of their union was the

birth of Kālayavana (14.15-17).

(3) Budha and Ilā

Budha, Soma's son, invited Ilā, Manu's daughter for sexual intercourse. Here it should be noted that Ilā was a maiden when Budha cohabited with her (7.16).

(4) Indra and Ahalyā

Indra enjoyed with Ahalyā, sage Gautama's wife. He came to the hermitage of the sage Gautama in his absence assuming his form and enjoyed with Ahalyā. Afterwards he was cursed to be a 'Sahasrākṣa' for his abominable act. Here it should be noted that Ahalyā was very devoted to her husband and she had no knowledge of Indra's fraud (87.32-47).

(5) Kārtikeya and the wives of various Gods

After the slaying of the demon Tāraka, Pārvatī permitted Kārtikeya to enjoy all the types of pleasures. Discarding the limits of enjoyment, he approached the wife of any god and enjoyed with her against her wishes. The wives of the gods complained to Pārvatī about Kārtikeya's misbehaviour and when in spite of Pārvatī's objection Kārtikeya did not improve his conduct, Pārvatī took the form of the wife of every god and when Kārtikeya saw his mother in all the female forms, he took a strict vow to consider all the females to be his mother/ (A.81). Here

it may be remarked that the wives of the gods had a strong opposition to this type of sexual laxity and the other thing to be inferred is that an incest with mother was not dared.

(6) Mahī and Sanājjāta

After the death of her husband Dhṛtavrata, Mahī kept her son Sanājjāta in the hermitage of the sage Gālava and wandered in different countries enjoying with various people. At last she came into contact with her own son who had grown up into a man. When both of them came to know of their relationship, they observed the expiations. Here it should be noted that though the relation of Mahī with other persons was due to the result of her own free sweetwill, the relation with her own son was developed out of her passionate desire without the knowledge of their mother-son- relationship (A.92).

This is a case of Oedipus complex, i.e. relation between parent and child of opposite sexes held by psychoanalysts to <sup>u</sup>cause repressions.<sup>68</sup>

(7) Suvarṇa, Suvarṇā and others

Suvarṇa and Suvarṇā were the children of Agni and

---

68 In Homer we are told that Oedipus, the central figure of the Theban Saga, unwittingly killed his father and married his own mother, Epikaste (The Jocasta of later writers) and that she hanged herself when the matter became known - Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 16, P. 712.

Svāhā and they were married to Samkalpā and Dharma respectively, but they did not observe any rule of conjugal chastity and dallied with the persons of their own choice. Hence they were cursed. This pronouncement of the curse suggests that sexual freedom was not approved of (128.26-37).

(8) Brahmā and his daughter

Incest on one's sister is referred to in connection with the vedic gods. Like Sūrya too, Pūṣan is the wooer of his mother and lover of his sister.<sup>69</sup> Prajāpati is said to have committed incest on his daughter. The Br. P. also states that after creating a beautiful maiden, Brahmā got mad after her and the maiden being afraid ~~her and he~~ took the form of a female deer. In order to preserve righteousness, lord Śiva took the form of a hunter and threatened to kill Brahmā whereupon he refrained from following her (A.102). An earlier version of this occurs in the Ait. Br.<sup>70</sup> The incest of Brahmā with his daughter is also referred to in the Mat. P. (3.31 ff. 4.1 ff.).

(9) Añjanā, Adrikā and Vāyu, Nairṛti

Añjanā and Adrikā, the wives of the monkey Kesari had

69 Keith A.B.: The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads, HCS, 31, P.107.

70 Ait.Br. 3.33, Sat.Br. 1.7.4.1. ff; Vide also Macdonell A.B.: Vedic Mythology, P.119. This episode is beautifully summarised in the following śloka of the Mahimna Stotra:

Prasānātham nātha Prabāthamadhikam svām dukitaram  
 gatam Rohidbhūtām Viramayisum rājasya vapuṣā |  
 Dhanuṣpaṇerjātam divamapi sapātrakṛtamamum  
 trasanta te'dyāpi tyasati na myganyādhakabhasā ||

the sons Hanumāna and Adri by Vāyu and Nairṛti respectively who were enamoured of them when they were joyously singing on the peak of the Añjana-mountain (A.84).

The above instances show how in some cases sexual morality was not the sine qua non of the marriage obligations. Here it might be noted that many primitive tribes do not always regard marriage as an institution controlling sexual behaviour.<sup>71</sup> A realistic analysis of the institution of marriage does not confound the theory and actuality in sex-behaviour nor does it derive conjugal life from sexual drive. To merge the two concepts is to forego an insight into the distinctively human element of the phenomenon.<sup>72</sup>

#### Kinds of Sons

The discussion regarding marriage leads us to the several kinds of sons.<sup>73</sup> The Br. P. does not throw any light on the kinds of sons on their legal and social status. But the two theories of sonship, viz.: (i) the biological theory and (ii) the sociological theory of sonship are referred to in the Br.P. According to the biological theory as given in the Br. P., the

---

71 Patil D.R., Op.Cit., P. 158.

72 Lowie, Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, 10.146.

73 For details regarding various sons, vide Kane P.V., HDS, Vol.III, PP.643 ff., Kapadia K.M., Op.Cit., PP.110 ff.,

mother is conceived merely as an incubator or a wallet where the father is the real genitor of the child. The son belongs to the father by whom he is begotten.<sup>74</sup> Tārā's declaration that Budha was Soma's child suggests that the child belonged to the biological father and not the social father (9.30-32). 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 the children born to his wife and so even after the death of a 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>75</sup>

The Br. P. notes some cases of the adoption of the sons too. Thus it is said that the sage Atri adopted Uttānapāda as his son (II.7), (15.12) and king Asamañjā adopted three sons (16.8). Marut, Karandhama's son, adopted Duṣyanta of Puru genealogy as he had no son through king Yayāti's curse (13.45). That the system of adoption prevailed can also be surmised from the term 'Dvyāmuṣyāyana' i.e. the son who was born of one father and

74 Meyer J.J., *Sexual Life in Ancient India*, P. 201.

75 Karve, Iravati, *Kinship terms and the Family organisation as found in the critical edition of the Mahābhārata*, BDCRI, Vol.V (1943-44), P.131.

adopted by another and both the fathers considered him as their own son, He offered Pindas to both of them and got their inheritance (220.77).

## II

### Family

#### Introduction

The family is the backbone of society. It provides a background and furnishes opportunities for a healthy and allround development of an individual. It designates that portion of human experience which has resulted from the enlarging, refining and lengthening of the behaviour that among the higher animals gathers about reproduction and care of offspring.<sup>76</sup>

It is difficult to define Family covering its varied aspects but a short and workable definition is given by MacIver: "The family is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children."<sup>77</sup>

- 
- 76 For details, vide Jennings K.S.: The Biological basis of Human nature, P. 254, and Groves E.R.: The Family and its Social functions, Ch. I.  
 on Society, a textbook of Sociology, P.196, Copy
- 77 MacIver Robert/1937. Reprinted by permission L-right  
 of Ferrar and Rinehart, Inc., Publishers; also vide Baber Ray E.; Marriage and the Family, Ch. 1.

The most important service of the family is that it provides for the satisfaction of what Thomas regards as the four 'fundamental' wishes or desires, viz. the wishes for new experience, for security, for recognition and for response, because these and their combinations perhaps include all other desires and therefore can be used, To explain the inner motivations of social behaviour.<sup>78</sup> The family is the most significant field where every individual takes his first lessons in the satisfaction of these wishes.<sup>79</sup>

This general background and discussion on family would help us to understand the specific modes of the relations of the members of the family, viz. the interpersonal relationship of the husband, the wife, the son, the daughter, and the parents with each other.

The Br. P. throws good light over these relationships. As regards the relationships of wife and husband and the daughter and father, refer to the section 'Position of women' of this chapter. In this section, therefore, would be treated the relationships of father and son, brothers and other relatives-in-law.

---

78 Burgess and Locke, H.J.: The Family, pp. 302 ff.; also Britt. S.K.: Social Psychology of Modern Life, (1949), pp. 106-8.

79 Prabhu P.N.: Hindu Social Organization, p. 213.

Position of Son

The attainment of sons was considered to be the primary aim of marriage. The son saves the souls of the deceased ancestors from the hell into which they might fall without his birth. The Ms. states that as the man protects his ancestors from the hell called put, he has been called Putra.<sup>80</sup> The Br. P. also advocates the religious view in support of having a son and states that a son saves the parents from the hell called put (4.52). One who had no son was unable to go to the other world. One who takes a bath at the birth of a son gets the reward of ten aśvamedhas. By getting a son, one gets the ātmapratīṣṭhā. A son releases the ancestors from the three Ṛṇas. The penance is of no avail without a son. Without a son, one cannot attain either heaven or liberation. The son is the highest world, Dharma, Kāma, Artha and liberation<sup>81</sup> and the highest light and the saviour of all the beings. Whatever is given in dāna or offered in sacrifice is futile without the birth of a son. Therefore, there is nothing more desirable than a son in the three worlds. (104.6-14).

Various sacrifices and religious vows were observed to obtain a son. The Br. P. states that Manu performed a Putrakāmeṣṭhi to obtain a son (vii.3), king Prācīnabarhiṣ also

---

80 MS. IX.133; Mbh. Ādi. 74,37; cf. also Rāmāyaṇa ii,107-12.

81 cf. MS. II. 28.

performed a sacrifice with a view to get a son (153.3).

King Bharata also performed many sacrifices to get a son. (13.55-60).

It was believed that by taking a bath and giving dāna, one gets sons. If one gives gold in dāna, <sup>one</sup> gets a son. One who takes away the things given to them for protection, conceals jewels, does not perform the śrāddha, has no progeny gets the sons by taking a bath in the river Gautamī (124.80-86).

The son is the highest solace for parents.<sup>82</sup> That son was considered to be blessed who saved the ancestors.<sup>83</sup> The picture of an ideal son is provided by the Br. P. in the character of Munikumāra, the version of the famous Śravaṇa story, though the name of Śravaṇa is not mentioned. (123.57)

It did not suffice merely to get a son but one wanted a good son. It is said that to have many sons is not important. It is only the worthy son that saves the family, one who is the resort of the family and who obliges the pitrs and saves them should be considered to be the son, the other one is merely a disease (165.41,42). When king Śūrasena obtained a serpent instead of a son, he was so dejected that he spoke out that it

---

82 Maṅgānām Daśhapāthobdhāḥ Putrah Pravahaṇam Param | 108.81

83 Dhanyaḥ Sa Putro Iokesmin pitṛṇām yastu tāraḥ | 123.186

was better to have no son than to have a serpent as<sup>a</sup>son.<sup>84</sup>

Once it is stated that a son who pains his parents is a great sinner (214.124). Some people had powers to create sons of their own desires. Thus the sage R̥cika prepared two carus with a view to produce two sons, one for himself and one for his father-in-law who would be born in the forms of a righteous brahmin and a brave ksatriya respectively.

Again it is said that a son should not depend on his father for his maintenance. On the contrary, he himself should earn and distribute the money among the relatives. A son who does so is the real son, the one doing otherwise is a mere yonikīṭaka.<sup>85</sup>

A son should always follow his father in all the acts. The friends of his father are his friends and the enemies of the father are his enemies. If he acts otherwise, he is an enemy in the form of a son.<sup>86</sup> A child was not to be ignored just because he was young in age. He may perform marvels.

(13.70)<sup>87</sup>

84 Sarpādvarāmaputratā (111.6)

85 Svabhāhubalamāśritya yo'rthānarjayate sutaḥ |  
Sa kṛtārtho bhavelloke Paitryam vittam na to spr̥set ||  
Svayamārjya suto vittam pitre dāsyati bandhave |  
tam ta putram vijānīyāditaro yonikīṭakah || 170.12-13.

86 Piturmitrāṇi satruṃśca tatha patromuvartate ||  
Sa eva Putro yo'nyastu Putrarupo ripuḥ smṛtaḥ |  
Vadanti Pitṛmitrāṇi tārāyentyaḥitānāpi || 110.85,86.

87 cf. Guṇāḥ Pūḍāsthānaḥ Guṇiṣu na ca  
liṅgam na ca vayah | Uttarāṅgācaritam 4.1.

From the bewailings of Pippalāda, it can be surmised how the children cherished their parents. Thus it is stated that those children are blessed who are under the control of their parents, who serve them daily and who always wait to hear their command. Those who are unable to see their parents are great sinners. Those who save their parents alone should be considered as sons, others are mere burdens on their mother's belly(110.173-178, 184).

Once it is stated that in this world the embrace of a son is the highest cause of peace for the father (154.19,20).

#### Status and Position of the Father

Since the vedic times, the apotheosis of the father gave him the position of the head of the family. The children used to act according to the commands of the father.

Generally the relationship between the father and the son was cordial as can be seen from a review of the section on 'the Position of son' but instances are met with of some refractory sons who would not easily accede to their father's ardent requests for which they would be severely punished to suffer for the whole life. The Br. P. states that king Yayāti requested his sons Yadu, Tarvasu, Druhyā and Anu for an exchange of youth so that he would enjoy the pleasures of life but they flatly declined to accede to his request and were cursed by

Yayāti for disobedience. At last, Yayāti approached Puru, his remaining son, and asked him to comply with his request. Puru obediently and willingly gave his youth. Being pleased with Puru, he disinherited the others setting aside the claim of primogeniture.<sup>88</sup>

Moreover, if a son misbehaved violating the rules governing the modes of behaviour, the father had the powers to drive him out of the family. The Br. P. states that when Satyavrata, the son of the king Trayyārūna, carried away<sup>a</sup> a maiden from the sacrificial mandapa, king Trayyārūna was very irritated and asked Satyavrata to go out of his country (7.97-104).

From the above episodes, it may be observed that a father had all rights over his sons and absolute obedience was expected from them, the breach of which was punishable even to a 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 would obey him.<sup>89</sup> A son who does not worship his parents after taking birth considers his life worthless as the worship of elders, gods, brahmins and parents make one's life worth living (194.3,4). To live without a father was considered to

---

<sup>88</sup> A.12; Cf. also Mat. P. 24.57 ff.; 33.2 ff.; and Bh. P. 9.18.37, P.I, Vol. III, P. 18.

<sup>89</sup> Vide Kantavala S.G., Op.Cit., PP. 252-253.

be futile.<sup>90</sup>

It was considered to be the important duty of the father to get his son married. By merely giving birth, the father's responsibility is not over. He should see that his children get all the saṃskāras and a father who does not understand his full responsibility suffers in hell.<sup>91</sup> The Br. P. gives one instance when the father gives a name to the son. It is stated that when it was decided that Tārā's child belonged to Soma, he being its father, Soma affectionately smelt his head and called him Budha (9.31). It is difficult to generalise from one instance that the father used to give names to the children.

It was considered to be very important to get progeny. It was believed that by progeny one could get everything.<sup>92</sup> The influence of parents on children was so great that it was believed that even though one were pure by nature, he would commit mistakes if there are faults in the nature of his ancestors. Thus it is said that Veṇa practised unrighteousness as he had a vicious maternal grandfather, viz. Mṛtyu (4.30). If the parents are naughty then the child also becomes naughty

---

90 Dhigdhiḥpitṛvīhīnānām Jīvitam Pāpakarmaṇām | (127.12)

91 Janayitvā " tmajānvedavidhinā ' khilasamskṛtīh |  
na kuryādyaḥ Pitā tasya narākannāsti niṣkṛtīh ||11.11

92 Apatyena Mahābāho Sarvametaḍavāpyate | 34.58

(10.43). This shows that the child inherited the nature of the parents.

#### Mother and daughter

Generally the relationship of a mother and daughter is very cordial but the Br.P. notes two curious instances where it is otherwise. Thus Paurā, Gādhi's wife deceives her daughter Satyavatī by interchanging the carus prepared by her son-in-law Roika, Satyavatī's husband, to get a virtuous brahmin as her own son and she allotted the caru meant for procreating a lustrous ksatriya to Satyavatī (10.38-40). Again, Menā also pokes fun of Umā by saying that her husband was very poor (38.26,27).

#### Brothers

The Br.P. notes some instances which reflect on the relationship of brothers. Dakṣa Prajāpati had many children. Among them, a group of children, called Haryasvas, went to various places in order to create progeny and did not return. In order to search them another group of sons called Sabalāsvas went after them but they also did not return. From there onwards, the Br. P. states the saying that brothers going after brothers perish came in vogue (3.16-24).

But the relations between brothers did not always remain so cordial. The Br. P. states that Jyāmagha was driven out from the kingdom by his brothers and he had to conquer various countries by the power of his own strength (14.13-15).

Again, the relationship of step-brothers involved jealous~~y~~ and wickedness; and brought disastrous results, and the mothers of the respective children played important parts in spoiling the relationships. The Br. P. describes the fight between the step-brothers Kubera and Rāvaṇa, Kumbhakarṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa (97.370). The famous example of the enmity between <sup>viz.</sup> step-brōthers/that of gods and demons, is referred to by the Br. P. also. (A.32)

#### Son-in-Law

The position of a son-in-law is of particular significance in the Hindu family. The parents-in-law remain very eager to please him as the happiness of their daughter in her married life depends completely on him.

The Br. P. also gives a happy picture of the cordial reception of the son-in-law at his father-in-law's house. But at the same time if the son-in-law ill-treated the daughter, the father of the daughter intervened and asked for justice

regarding the treatment of his daughter. Thus when Saṃjñā, Tvastā's daughter, being unable to bear the lustre of the sun (her husband), left her home and came to her father's house, her father advised her to return to her husband's house but when he saw that she was adamant in her decision, he allowed her to practice penance in the forest. Later on, when Sūrya came to know about his wife's decision, he came to Tvastā's house where he was given hearty reception but at the same time, Tvastā advised the Sun to lessen his lustre so that his daughter could be happy with him. Whereupon the sun pared his brightness on Tvastā's wheel (A.6.30 ff.). The son-in-law on his part also properly respected the father-in-law.

Thus it is said that once the demon Mahāsani captured Indra. All the gods approached Varuna as he was the father-in-law of Mahāsani. At the request of Varuna, Mahāsani released Indra (129.14-29).

But the Br. P. also gives an instance where a father-in-law shows unequal treatment towards his different sons-in-law. Thus it is stated that Dakṣa invited all his sons-in-law in the celebration of his sacrifice but did not invite Siva, the husband of his eldest daughter Satī, as he had a prejudice against him and openly condemned him in the sacrificial hall when Satī asked the reason for such distinction of treatment (34.7-24).

## III

The Position of Women

For an appreciation of the possibilities of any society, at least in so far as social change is concerned, a knowledge of the position of women is necessary.<sup>93</sup> One of the best ways to understand the spirit of a civilisation and to appreciate its excellences and realise its limitations is to study the history of the position and the status of women in it.<sup>94</sup> Her status, position and honour have been vitally affected as she passed through the different stages of life in the capacity of a daughter, a wife, a mother and the other conditions as affected by the circumstances.

Woman as Daughter

The status of woman in a society can be determined by the relative feelings evoked by the birth of a son and a daughter. In ancient times in India, the birth of a daughter was not a very welcome event. Even in the Indo-Iranian age, the birth of a daughter was not preferred to that of a son.<sup>95</sup> As the marriage hymn of the Rgveda refers to a prayer for ten

---

93 Oliver Cromwell Cox: Caste, Class and Race, P.47.

94 Altekar A.S.: The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation; vide also Menon Laksmi N.: The Position of Women. P.1.

95 Geiger, Civilisation of the Eastern Iranians, PP.53-4.

sons, without any reference to that of a daughter, it seems to indicate that the latter was less welcome than the former. The AV. contains charms and rituals to ensure the birth of a son in preference to that of a daughter.<sup>96</sup> The AB says that while the son is the hope of the family, the daughter is the source of trouble to it.<sup>97</sup>

A daughter was not greeted at birth, not because the father had no love for her, but because of the great concern felt for a daughter's well-being in life and her character that made the parents anxious that no daughter be born to them.<sup>98</sup> Such factors led to the lamentable attitude shown towards girls; otherwise they are depicted in a favourable light. There are frequent references in the Rv. to daughters being fully caressed and affectionately brought up by parents. They were lovingly treated by parents and shielded by the strength of their father and brother.<sup>99</sup>

The Br. P. also seems to express the sentiment that the birth of a daughter was unwelcome not so much because of the hatred of her sex as due to the all-engrossing anxiety to see her well-settled in life with an assurance of comfort and

96 III. 23, vi.11.

97 Sakhā ha Jayā Kṛpaṇam hi duhitā jyotiṣhi  
Putrah Parame vyoman ) AB. vii.13, cf. also  
Mbh I. 173.10: Ātmā Putrah Sakhī Bhāryā  
Kṛcchram tu duhitā nṛṇām; Mbh. Cr.ed., 1.147-11

98 Kane P.V., HDS. Vol.II, PP. 510-511.

99 Bhagavat Saran Upadhyaya: Women in Rgveda, PP.33 ff.

happiness. Manu performed a sacrifice with a view to get a son (Putrakāmeṣṭi) and when he offered an oblation in honour of Mitra and Varuṇa, a maiden arose from the sacrifice and Manu accepted her as his daughter, received her with joy and named her Ilā.<sup>100</sup> This shows that the birth of a daughter was not deprecated. Again when Himavān asked for a boon of getting a son, Brahmā granted the boon that Himavān would have a daughter through whom he would get fame. She would be the result of the worship of all the gods and the visit of all the holy places of pilgrimage (34.77-79). Again, the Br. P. notes a noble sentiment when it states that a daughter is the means to obtain Dharma. The whole earth together with its mountains and forests and a healthy decorated maiden are considered to be equal for dāna and a father who gives the dāna of such a daughter entails the merit of Prthvīdāna (165.9-10). A father who gives dāna and offers worship for the sake of the daughter gets the reward and that whatever is given to a daughter entails endless merit (165.6-9)<sup>100</sup>

The Br, P. notices at the same time that heart-rending anxiety of the father regarding the welfare of his daughter which led him to the extent of saying that the daughter constituted a heavy burden. Thus it states that as long as the daughter was

---

100 (7. 5,6)

101 The last idea expressed in the above sentiment is not noted in the ms. 'gha'.

not married, she was a great burden to her parents and the parents were greatly worried about her, that no one should have a daughter as she is the very death of every person during all the stages of his life.<sup>102</sup> The Br. P. also states that in order to avoid the birth of a daughter, one should not have sexual intercourse on the fifth day (221.75).

A daughter was not independent. She had to act according to the sole desire of her father. The father was considered to be fully authoritative regarding all the matters concerning the daughter. Manu also states that a daughter is protected by the father in childhood, her husband protects her in youth, and her sons protect her in old age, a woman is never fit for independence(9-23). The Br. P. provides an instance that when lord Śiva proposed to Pārvatī for marriage, she replied that she was not independent and that her father had the right to give her <sup>in</sup> marriage and so if he consented she was ready to marry him.<sup>103</sup> But when Śiva goes to Himālaya and asks for Pārvatī, Himālaya states that Pārvatī would be married in the svayamvara and would select a husband of her own choice (35-16).

As regards the age of girls at the time of marriage , it should be stated that in the Ṛgveda the child-marriage is not referred to and girls were given at a fairly advanced age

---

102 Aho Bhūyānna kasyāpi Kanyā Dukhaikakāraṇam |  
Māraṇam Jivato'Pyasya Prāṇinastu Pade Pade || 121-5.

103 35.8

in the Rgvedic period. The same condition continued to prevail upto the time of the Grhya-sūtras, i.e. upto 5th century B.C. From the time of the Dharma-sūtras, i.e. from C. 400 B.C. to C. 100 A.D., the opinions are found slowly growing in favour of an early marriage of girls. Gradually, the marriage of a girl before puberty came to be the general rule. Manu advocates the marriage of girls even at the age of eight (9.94) but a later smṛti writer advocates the marriage of girls at a very early age, literally speaking, when they could go about naked without indecency and adds that she must be married before puberty, even if no suitable husband was available.<sup>104</sup> The later smṛti writers put the age of ten as the limit beyond which marriage could not be postponed without direct consequence to the father, marriage at eight was strongly recommended by some<sup>105</sup> whereas some other advocates of pre-puberty marriages did not remain content with the girl's age at 8 or 9 and an extreme section among them clamoured for a still lower age and it is represented in the Brāhma-Purāna which states that a girl should be married at any time after the age of four. She should be given in marriage between her fourth and tenth years when she does not feel shyness and when she passes her time in playing

104 *śadyādguṇavate kanyāṃ nagnikāṃ brahmacaṛiṇe |  
api vā guṇahīnāṃ nopaṇḍāyādeśasvalāṃ ||*

quoted in SCS (Smṛticandrikā, Saṃskārakāṇḍa), P.216.

105 Majumdar R.C.: Ideal and Position of women in Domestic life, Great women of India, P. 15.

with toys. If the father is unable to arrange the marriage during this period, he suffers in hell.<sup>106</sup>

From about 200 A.D. the popular feeling leaned towards the pre-puberty marriages by which is implied the marriage of girls designated by terms Gaurī, Nagnikā and Rohiṇī.<sup>107</sup>

In an ancient ṣāthā, the Br. P. extols the marriage of a Gaurī-girl as highly meritorious and pleasing to the Pitṛs.<sup>108</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>109</sup> In the 'Bhaviṣyakathana' it is said that in future women having an age less than sixteen years would give birth to children (230.10).

Thus in early times when brides were married at a mature age, they had a more or less effective voice in the selection of their partners in life. There are references in

---

106 caturthādvatsarādūrahnam yāvarna dadamātyayab |  
 tāvadvivāhab kanyāyāb pitṛā kanyāb prayatnatab || 165.7  
 yāvatkṣām na jānāti yāvatkṛidati pāpśukhī |  
 tāvatkanyā pradātanyā no cetpitṛorādhogatih || 165.8

107 Altekar A.S.: Op.Cit., P.67; Kane P.V., Op.Cit., Vol.II, P.443.

108 220.33; vide also Mat.P.207.40.

109 For details vide Kane P.V., HDS, Vol.II, PP.440 ff.

the Rv. to beautiful brides selecting their own husbands.<sup>110</sup> The svayamvara marriages of Sāvitrī, Damayantī and Rukmiṇī are well-known but in later times when the custom of early marriages \* came in vogue, the svayamvara custom naturally died away and the Brahma-Purāṇa in one place definitely disapproves of it. The incident is as follows: One Ūrjā or Svadhā, the daughter of Moon went to the mountain Meru where the Pitrs were residing with the Visvedevas. Svadhā went to the Pitrs and related that she had selected them as her husbands. The Pitrs too gave up their Yoga and accepted her. When the Moon came to know about the whole matter he cursed the Pitrs that as they had accepted the daughter without her father's consent, they would fall on the Himalāya and would lose their Yogic powers and cursed Svadhā that as she had selected a husband without asking the permission of the father, she would be transferred into the river Kokā.<sup>111</sup>

On the other hand, the Br. P. ~~stak~~ refers to the svayamvara marriage also. The episode of Pārvatī has already

110 Bhadrā vadhūrvhavati yatsupesāḥ svayam sāmītram

Kṛmte Jane it | Rv. X. 27.12., For the practice of pre-pubescent marriages vide Prof. Indra: The Status of women in ancient India, PP. 41-52.

111 219.9-18,

Yasmāddhītaratī cejam Patñpitrmatī satī |  
Shatanthā dharmanamatsrya tasmāddhītaratī nimnagaḥ ||

219.16,17.

been referred to. Besides, the Br.P. describes how Rukmiṇī was carried away by kṛṣṇa on the day settled for her marriage with Śiśupāla (A.199) and refers to the incident of how Aniruddha was brought by Citralākhā to the city of Bānāsura as Uṣā had selected him as her husband (206.4-6).

In the Āsura type of marriage, a husband used to get a bride by paying a reasonable price for her to her parents. But the Dharmasāstra writers severely condemned the custom of the bride-price. Baudhāyana warns the guardians that they will go to the most terrible hell if they sell daughters in marriage, and points out to the husband that a purchased wife would not become a legal wife at all<sup>112</sup> (I.11.20-1). The Br.P. also states that one who sells a daughter or a cow or sesame or a horse never comes out of the Raurava hell (165.11,12), (214.126). In pre-historic times, women were regarded as chattel and so it was the bride's father and not the bridegrooms who was regarded as justified in demanding a payment at the time of marriage. Therefore, Dowry system was generally unknown to the ancient Hindus. In rich and royal families some gifts used to be given to sons-in-law at the time of marriage.<sup>113</sup> But these presents should not be considered as fulfilling the conditions of dowry system which means a pre-nuptial contract of payment made by the bride's father with the bridegroom or his guardian.

---

112 Altekar A.S.: Op.Cit., P. 55.

113 Vide Raghuvamśa (vii-32).

The Br. P. also does not refer to the dowry system as such but furnishes an account as to how Sūrasena presented his daughter cows, gold, clothes, horses and ornaments at the time of her marriage (III.48,49).

Again when Sāmba was married to the daughter of king Duryodhana, she was given much wealth (208.39).

The married daughters absconding from their husband's place without their knowledge were not given shelter by their father and were advised to go back as it also happens in modern times.<sup>114</sup> The Br. P. relates the incident that when Saṃjñā was unable to bear the lustre of her husband Vivasvat, she went to her father Tvastā's place without informing her husband but her father asked her to return and did not provide shelter for her whereupon she went to a forest and practised penance. Later on, however, when Vivasvat came to know of it, he inquired about her to Tvastā and Tvastā reunited them.<sup>115</sup>

After marriage, the daughter was so attached to her husband that she preferred death to the ill-treatment of her husband at her father's house. The story of Satī which illustrates this sentiment is treated in many of the Puranas and upapuranas such as the Brahma, Vāyu, Liṅga, Skanda, Bhāgavata, Śiva, Brhaddharma and Mahābhāgavata.<sup>116</sup>

114 Kantawala S.G.: Op.Cit., Ch.III, P. 260.

115 II.16,32-56; MKP. 74.19; Mat.11.22, Vāyu 84.44-48.

116 Br.P. A.34; vide Hazra R.C.: Great Women in the Purāṇas; Great Women of India, PP. 232-233.

The Br. P. provides the aforesaid instance of Brahmā where he was fascinated by his daughter's beauty (A.102). Again it is said that one who approaches his daughter enters Yamaloka through the southern path (214.127). The relations of a father and a daughter seem to be quite free, thus Viṣṭi directly approached her father Sūrya and asked him to settle her marriage (165.6,7).

#### Woman as Wife

After considering the status of a daughter, let us consider the position of a wife. "In spite of the unrivalled culture and high ideals of society that ancient India placed before us, we have <sup>to</sup> bear witness to the tragic fact that we at one stage fell ever so far from the happy estate, and perhaps in no sphere of life has that fall been so great as in that of a woman. From being man's co-equal and co-sharer and help-mate she has become his subordinate - a mere chattel to be used at will for satisfying his wants with no rights or will of her own; custom and usage have dealt harshly with her.<sup>117</sup>

The dignity of a wife which was to survive in the mother, the progenitor of the Ārya and a member of unique importance in the Āryan family, was recognised in the Rgvedic society.<sup>118</sup> The Hindu wife was considered as the intellectual

---

<sup>117</sup> Amrit Kaur: Foreward to Mahatma Gandhiji's book entitled "Women and Social injustice".

<sup>118</sup> Upadhyaya B.S.: Women in Rgveda; P.129.

companion of her husband and his friend and helper in life, she was honoured by him and her supremacy in her home was absolute as wife and mother and she was trained to be a helpmate and a devoted wife to her husband.<sup>119</sup>

A wife is called Jāyā because the husband was born in the wife as a son (Ait.Br. 83.1). Even according to R̥gveda the aim of marriage was to enable a man, by becoming a householder, ~~to enable a man~~ to perform sacrifices to the gods and to procreate sons. Manu (ix.28) states that on the wife depend the procreation of sons, the performance of religious rites, service, highest pleasure, heaven for oneself and for one's ancestors. Jaimini (vi.1.17) establishes that husband and wife have to perform sacrifices together and not separately and Āp.Dh.S.(II.6.13.16-17) emphatically states that there can be no separation between husband and wife, for since marriage they have to perform religious acts jointly. ( Jāyāpatyorna vibhāgo vidyate Pānigrahaṇād hi sahatvaṃ karmasu )

According to ancient Indian ideals, the wife is the half of man and hence as long as he does not obtain her, so long is he not regenerated , for so long is he incomplete.<sup>120</sup>

119 Desai G.H.: Hindu families in Gujarat, P.417.

120 Adho ha vaiṣa ātmanāstasmādyāvassāyām na vindate adho ha tāvadbhavati akha yadeiva jāyām vindate'tha prajāyate tachi sarvo bhavati | SB. V.1.6.10, also Sa sokṣyājāyāmāmantrayate, jāye ehi sva rohāveti | rohāvetyāh jāyā | tadmāṣṣājāyāmāmantrayate | adho ha vaiṣa ātmano jāyāyā | SB. V.2.1.10, cf. also adham bhāryāṃ manuṣyasya bhāryā śreṣṭhatamaḥ sakhā | Bhāryā mūlam trivārgasya bhāryā mūlam tarīṣyataḥ || Mbh. Ādi 74.40, Āmnāye smṛtībāntre ca lokācāre ca Sūritih | sācārādham smṛtā bhāryā puṇyā puṇyaphale samā || Brhadariki quoted by Aparārka . P.740.

The Br. P. also states that as according to the śruti, a sacrifice cannot entail merit unless performed with a wife, Brahmā divided himself into two parts and made out of the former half a woman according to the śruti "Ardho (according to ms. 'ka', 'ardham') Jāyā" (129.61,62).<sup>121</sup> Thus the ideal of a wife as ardhāṅgī is advocated by the Br. P. also. To look upon husband and wife as complimentaries which make up a whole is the true implication of married life.<sup>122</sup> The Mbh. also states that the execution of Dharma of man depends upon woman.<sup>123</sup> Further it states that 'A wife is half the man, his best friend'. A loving wife is a perpetual spring of virtue, pleasure, wealth; a faithful wife is his best aid in seeking heavenly bliss; a sweetly speaking wife is a companion in solitude, a father in advice, a mother in all seasons of distress, and a rest in passing through life's wilderness.<sup>124</sup> The Br. P. also puts this noble sentiment that a wife was Kalyāṅī, increaser of happiness, the generator of Dharma, the owner of her husband's body, a helpmate in securing Dharma, Artha, Kāma, and Mokṣa, happiness in a contented condition, a relief in pain, a friend in solving the problems, always adhered to the husband's words, devoted to the husband and

---

121 The Br. P. seems to refer to the śruti given in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa V. 2. 10 as referred to above.

122 S. Radhakrishnan - Foreword to B.S. Upadhyaya's book cited above.

123 Mbh. Anu. 46.10

124 Mbh. Ādiparva 74, 42, 43.

beloved of her husband.<sup>125</sup> She was not only her husband's lifelong companion in weal and woe, but the mistress of his household, and a real partner in all his activities, including religious sacrifices.<sup>126</sup>

The Br. P. further states that a house without a wife is bereft of all its splendour and that even though a house might be terrible in appearance, it looks lustrous due to the presence of the wife.<sup>127</sup> A wife was necessary in order to fulfill the triple debts.<sup>128</sup> These three social obligations or 'debts' viz. Ṛṣirṇa, Pitṛṇa and the Vedas, by sacrifices and by progeny, as stated in the Taittirīya Saṃhitā.<sup>129</sup> The Br. P. again refers to the same śruti, viz. 'Ardham Jāyā' or 'Ardho Jāyā' and states that in all the works of men, a wife is the helpmate, and a husband cannot get success in any work without her help. The work done by man

125 80.30-33. cf. also Sakḥā ha Jāyā - A. Br. vii.3-13  
vide also Mbh. (Cr.ed.) Aranyakaparvan, III. 58,27 - Na ca  
bhāryasamam kim advidyate vhiṣalām matam | Anuadhān sarva-  
duḥkṣeṣu satyametadbrahṁmi te | and Raghuvamśa VIII.67: ṛṣiṇī  
sacīnah sakḥā mīthah priyasāyā Lalite kalānidhau ||

126 Hazra R.C.: Great Women of India, P. 4.

127 80.34,35, vide also Mbh. XII. P144.6  
Na gṛham gṛhamityāhuḥ ṛṣiṇī gṛhamucyate |  
gṛham tu gṛhīrḥiṇam kantarādaticyate ||

128 Rnatrayopenodāya kriyatām dārasamgrahaḥ | 99.5

129 Jāyamāno ha vai brāhmaṇastrībhīrṇavā  
Jāyate, brahmacaryeṣa ṛṣibhyo yajñena  
Devebhyah Prajayā pitṛōhya eṣa vā anṛṇo  
Yah Putrī Yajvā brahmacāriṇvāsi | Ts. 6.3-10.5;  
cf. SB. 1.7.2.11, AB.33.

single-handed entails just half the reward whereas that done with the wife entails complete merit and therefore it is a well-known śruti that a woman is half of the man.<sup>130</sup>

Again, the Br. P. states that a wife has different personalities in accordance with different situations. Thus mainly she is a Patnī, as she holds the responsibility of the family. She is a bhāryā, as she gives birth. She is a Jāyā, and on account of her qualities she is called Kalatratra<sup>131</sup>. This reminds one of the popular verse which represents different aspects of a wife.<sup>132</sup>

The duty of a good housewife was to satisfy first her guests, children and after they finish their meals, she should take her meals (136.13)<sup>133</sup>

130 pumsah sarvesu karyesu bharyaveha sahajini |  
svakṛtānāmapī karyāṇāṃ na hi siddhistayā vinā ||  
ekena yatkytam karma tasmādardhaphalam bhavet |  
jāyā tu kṛtam nātha puṣkalam puruṣo labhet ||  
tasmādetatsuvīditamartho<sup>1</sup> jāyā iti śruteḥ | 129.60-62  
1 ardham according to ms. 'ka'

131 Ādau tu patnī bharanāttu bhāryā janestu jāyā  
svagṛhāṇi kalatratra | (145.18)

132 Kāryeṣu mantrī karaṇeṣu dāsī |  
Bhojṣeṣu mātā śayaneṣu Rambhā ||

133 Brhaspati says that a wife should partake of food and condiments after her husband and elders have eaten.- Brhaspati quoted in smṛticandrikā, vyavahāramayākhya, P. 257. vide for details regarding the duties of women, <sup>Kane pp.</sup> Op.Cit., pp.565 ff.

A Wife is the keystone of the arch of the husband's happiness.<sup>134</sup> She is the surest solace to the husband, however, trying his worries and miseries may be. She is the only friend who never forsakes him in adversity. The Br. P. relates an incident where the life of a husband is at stake and he is unable to decide as to whom to approach in those adverse circumstances. At last he decides to tell about all his difficulties to his wife and finally gains permanent happiness through her advice (A.167).<sup>135</sup>

From infancy girls are taught man-worship and it constitutes their principal training. The ideal of Hindu womanhood is she who lives only to serve her husband, she who is most successful in <sup>e</sup>difying her husband. Ministering to the pleasures and desires of man is the only possible legitimate vocation of women and this goes so far as to make life without such employment a meaningless existence.<sup>136</sup>

The Br. P. records the same idea when it states a husband was all-in-all for a wife. He is the god, the

---

134 Sukhamūlā hi dārāṅ (228.25), vide also Padmapurāṇa, Uttarakhaṇḍa, 223.36-7.

Ānukūlyam hi dāmpatyostri-varḡodayahetave ।  
 Ānukūlam kalatram cektidivana hi kim tabah ॥  
 Pratikūlyam kalatram cennalakeṇa hi kim tabah ।  
 अन्वस्रमः सुखार्थया पत्निमूलम हि तत्सुखम् ॥

135 Kimakathyam Priye nitre kulīnāyām ca Yositi (165.25).

136 Oliver Cromwell Cox, Op. Cit., P. 47.

master, the best friend, the religious observance, the highest Brahman, the heaven and the mokṣa. If the husband was satisfied ~~was~~ with her, all the gods were satisfied, but if the husband is not satisfied, the wife is sure to perish. The husband is the most respected person for a wife among all her relatives.<sup>137</sup> Even if her husband may be deformed or aged or in-firm or offensive, she should manifest perfect obedience to him and that should be her sole rule of conduct in life. The Br. P. notes an instance where the husband instead of having a human form has the form of a serpent. In spite of this terrible calamity, the wife does not show the slightest tinge of averseness and accepts the serpent as her lord. She does not show any sign of pain but on the contrary she considers herself fortunate in being a serpent's wife and tells her husband that in all the circumstances, the husband is the only goal for a wife (A.111)<sup>138</sup>. The husband's advice should be the last word

137 Tuṣṭe bhartari nārīṇāṃ tuṣṭāḥ syuḥ sarvadevāḥ |  
 vparjaye tu nārīṇāmaradyam nāsamāpnuyāt ||  
 tvam devam tvam phakṣurmayam tvam suhṛtvam parāṅgamaḥ |  
 tvam vṛṣṭam tvam paṇam brahma svaḥ mokṣastvameva ca || 80. |  
 Br.P. 40,41

cf. Na pītā nātmaḥ nātma na mātā na bhūjanah |  
 iha pṛetha ca nārīṇāṃ patireko gatiḥ sada ||  
 mitam dadāti hi pītā mitam bhṛtā mitam sūkṣmah |  
 amitaḥ ca datāram bhṛtāram kā na devate || Rāmāyaṇa, II. 27.6,  
 II. 40.3

138. Maṇuṣīṇāṃ manusyo hi bhartā sāmānyato bhavet |  
 Kiṃ Punardevajātistu bhartā puṇyena labhyate || III.60  
 and Patireva gatiḥ strīṇāṃ sarvadaiva viśeṣataḥ |  
 III.69.

for the wife. Nothing more remains to be done after it. The Br. P. records an instance how Svāhā, the wife of Agni who was practising penance to get children ceased to do so as soon as her husband assured her of getting children and forbade her to practise austerities.<sup>139</sup> A wife should never hear bad words about her husband, even if the husband is of the worst type, he is the goal of wife.<sup>140</sup> Thus the husband had complete mastery over the wife. If the husband ignored his wife, her life was considered to be worthless.<sup>141</sup> If a wife did not like her husband, she was unable to tell him so directly. The Br. P. relates the anecdote of how Samjña was unable to bear the lustre of the Sun but she did not dare to tell him so and she was so much afraid that she kept another substitute of herself in her place and went to practice penance without informing about it to the Sun (6.18).

Some smṛtikāras like Atri and Devala were so liberal as to say that women who had intercourse with one not of the same caste or who had conceived by such intercourse did not become outcastes, but only impure till

139 Strīṅāmabhiṣṭadam nānyadbhartrīvākyam vinā kvacit |  
(122.3)

140 Patyuh śrīvanti yā nindām tāsam papāvadhiḥ kutah |  
yadāśastādāśo vā'pi Patih strīṅām Parā gatiḥ || 109.7

vide also Upapannā hi dāreṣu Prabhutā sarvatomukhī |  
śākuntala V.26

141 Bhartari Pratikūlānām Yoṣitām Jīvanena kim | (145.13).

delivery or next period when they became pure again and could be associated with; the child born of the adulterous connection being handed over to some one else for being brought up.<sup>142</sup> The Tai. Br. states that the sacrificer's wife had to confess if she had a lover and even when she confessed she was allowed to co-operate with her husband in the sacrifice.<sup>143</sup> The Br. P. also provides an instance of the type. Soma was enamoured of Tārā, the wife of Brhaspati and was carried her away. Brhaspati and others fought with Soma but he did not give her back. At last Brahmā intervened and Brhaspati regained ~~xxx~~ Tārā but she was pregnant and when a son was born to her, Brhaspati got enraged and asked her as to who was the father of the child. At first through bashfulness, she did not answer but later on when she was forced she told that Soma was the father of the child. Soma carried the child in his lap and named him Budha. Here it can be seen that even though Tārā was raped by Soma, Brhaspati received her back, and <sup>as</sup> said in the Tai. Br., she had to declare the name of her seducer and the child was not given to someone else for rearing as

142 *Asavaṅṅaiṣṭu yo garbhah strīnām yonau niśicyate |  
Aśuddhā sā bhavennārī yāvadgarbham na muñcati ||  
vimukte tu tatah śalye kavācāpi pradāsyate |  
tadā sa śuddhyate nārī vimalam kāñcanam yathā ||*  
Atri 195-196, also vide Devala 50-51

143 *Yasālam santam na pravrūjātprīyam śritam  
rūndhyāt | asau me jāra iti nirḍiśet | Tai.Br.  
I.6.5, also vide s'p. II.5.2.20; Kāt.s'r. V.V.6-10*

stated by Atri but it was given to the father himself.

(A.9)<sup>144</sup>

### Pativratā

In the Mbh. and the Purāṇas, hyperbolic descriptions of the power of the Pativratā occur frequently.<sup>145</sup> The Br. P. also provides many instances of the devoted wives. There is an extreme case when merely on hearing about the death of a husband, the wife too gave up her life (138.16). Infidelity to husband was considered to be a great sin and it was believed that such women went to Aksaya hell.<sup>146</sup> Once it is stated that if the parents do not behave in a proper way, the children inhere their bad qualities. Thus it is said that if the parents are bad in character, i.e. if the wife has intercourse with persons other than her husband and if the husband has intercourse with persons other than her wife, then both of them incur the doṣa called Anyonyaretavyatiṣaṅga and the children by both of them also incurred the same doṣa (128.29-37). Again it is said that those wives who are Pativratās know everything in the world and the whole world

144 Elsewhere the Br.P. declares that the moon gets the spot on account of his sin of abducting Tārā and Tārā is reaccepted by Brhaspati after purifying her with the water of the river Gautamī (A.152).

145 Kane P.V., Op.Cit., Vol.II, PP. 567 ff.

146 manasā 'pyanyapurāṣam pāpīṣṭhāḥ kāmāyanti jāb |  
akṣayānyānti narakānistāsam sarve'pi pūrvajāḥ || 87.6)

is held by them.<sup>147</sup> The contentment of husband and wife was much valued. The Br. P. states that when both husband and wife satisfy each other, there is an increment of Dharma, Artha and Kāma.<sup>148</sup> The husband had the power to curse the wife who was disloyal to him. Thus the sage Gautama cursed Ahalyā for enjoying with Indra though through no fault or desire of her own. (A.87).

The Br. P. furnishes many instances of Pativrata ladies. Thus it is said that Gaurī, the wife of king Praḡenjī was a great Pativrata (7.91). Caitrarathī or Bindumatī, the daughter of Śaśabindu became the wife of king Mādhātā and was a great Pativrata (7.94). Dhūminī, the wife of Ajamīdha was a great Pativrata. She practised severe penance for 10,000 years and obtained a son (13.103-105). Mālinī, the wife of king Śvetakarna also was very devoted to him. Śvetakarna went to a forest and Mālinī followed him. On her way, she gave birth to a child but being devoted to her husband, she kept the child where it was born and went after her husband (13.127-131). Śaibyā, the wife of king Jyāmagha, was very devoted to her husband.

---

147 Śrutamasti Punaścedam striya yasca pativrataḥ |  
Ta eva Sarvam Jānanti Dhṛutaḥ tēbhiscarācaram || (129.54).

148 Yatranukūlyam dāmpatyostriyargastatra vardhate |  
138.13.

Even though, her husband had no children by her, he did not marry again, but Saibyā also practised severe penance and obtained a son (15.20). The Br. P. denotes a whole adhyāya to describe how the Pativrata is cherished by her husband (A.80).

Reference should be made to one discordant factor, viz., the presence of co-wives in the married life of woman.<sup>149</sup> The Br. P. also states that jealousy among the co-wives was very common. Diti was very enraged when she saw that the progeny of her co-wife Aditi was flourishing while that of her own diminished day by day.<sup>150</sup> Devayānī also is depicted as jealous of Sarmisthā on account of that very fact (146.9). An instance may be added how one of the wives of king Bāhu had given poison to her co-wife Yādavī, when she was pregnant and as a result she gave birth to a child who was poisonous and eventually became well-known as Sagara (8.36-40). The relationship of Vānatā and Kadrū might also be noted in this connection (A. 159).

#### Woman as Mother

The mother outlived the wife. The latter reached the climax of her power and importance when she became a

---

149 Majumdar R.C., Op.Cit., P. 7.

150 Devapraveso'pi Sukhāya nūnam svapne'pyavekṣyā na sapatnalakṣmīḥ (124.6), 32.25-28.

mother.<sup>151</sup> In both men and women, especially in women, there is a deep desire to reproduce their kind. It is the privilege of a mother to bring up her children, to help them to develop their distinctive gifts, physical and mental, ethical and spiritual. 'Matr devo bhava' 'treat your mother as a goddess' is the advice given to the young.<sup>152</sup> John P. Jones says, "The greatest disappointment in the life of a Hindu woman is not to be able to present her lord a son to solace him in this life and to assist him through the valley of death." J. N. Farquhar observes that their welfare in the other world depends upon their having a son to take over the *śrāddha* ceremonies.<sup>153</sup>

Therefore, motherhood has been the cherished ideal of every Hindu woman.<sup>154</sup> The Brahma-Purāna also joins hands in apothecising the mother at a great height. It states that the mother stands at the highest step among all the relatives. She is greater than even a teacher.<sup>155</sup> Manu shows a very lenient attitude when it states that the *ācārya*

---

151 Upadhyaya B.S.. Op.Cit., P.144.

152 S.Radhakrishnan: Introduction to the Book, Great Women of India.

153 Vide Crown of Hinduism, P. 85.

154 Altekar A.S., The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation, P.118.

155 Sarvebhyo hyadhikā mātā Gurubhyo Gauravāna hi | (158.5); Vide also 'Gurunām Caiva Sarvesām Mātā Paramako Guruh' Mbh. I.211.16; and Nāsti vedātparam śāstram nāsti mātuh Paro Guruh | Nāsti dānatparam mitramiha loke Paratra ca | Atri 151.

exceeds by his greatness ten upādhyāyas, the father exceeds a hundred ācāryas, a mother exceeds a thousand fathers (II. 145 = Vas. Dh.S. 13.48). Again it is said that one cannot achieve one's aim if it goes against the wish of the mother. Thus the Āngirāsas practised severe penance but as they had not asked the permission of their mother, their penance did not become fruitful.<sup>156</sup>

Again, it is stated that one may avert the consequences of all the curses, but a mother's curse can never be averted. The Br. P. provides the instance of Yama and repeats it twice in order to advocate this view. It so happened that Yama, the son of Saṃjñā and Vivasvat, enraged at the discriminative treatment of chāyā, the substitute mother for his real mother Saṃjñā, raised his right leg to strike her in righteous indignation, but for such an ignoble act he was cursed by chāyā that his leg would fall out. Yama pleaded his cause to his father but his father said that the mother's words can never be falsified and the curse of the mother cannot be averted (Vi.22-23), (32-66), (89.15,16), vide also Mat. P. 11.4 ff.

This anecdote implies many notions. First of all it

---

156 Māmanādr̥ṣṭya ye Putrāḥ Pravṛttāscaritum tapah |  
Sarvairāpi Prakāraistāna teṣāṃ siddhimesyati ||  
(158.7).

proves that a child can never be permitted to misbehave before the mother, secondly that a mother can never be beaten, thirdly that if the child misbehaves, a mother had the power to curse him, fourthly that even though the curse of the mother involved injustice as her words cannot be falsified the curse cannot be averted,<sup>157</sup> fifthly that even the father had not the powers to undo the mother's action, sixthly that a mother should always act impartially towards all the children<sup>158</sup>, seventhly that even in those days the evils of step-mother were well-known, and eighthly that even if the child committed a mistake the mother was so generous that she would never have an evil desire for the child if she had been a real mother.<sup>159</sup>

- 157 Sarveṣāmeva Śāpānām Pratighāto hi vidyate ।  
na tu mātrābhisepṭānām kvacitsāpanivartanam ॥ 32.70  
cf. for almost the same words Mbh.(Cr.ed.) I.33.4  
also Br.P. 'Na Śākyametanmithyā tu kartuṃ  
mātāvacaṣṭava' (6.30).
- 158 Mātrā snehena sarveṣu vartitavyaṃ suteṣu vai (6.25),  
and 'kimarthaṃ tanayeṣu vai tulyeṣvabhyadhikāḥ sneha  
ekasminkriyate tvaya'(6.3)
- 159 Śapto'haṃ tāta kopena Jananyā tanayo mataḥ tato manye  
na Jananīmimāṃ vai tapatām vara ॥ (32.67).  
and 'Nirguṇeḍvāpyapatyeṣu mātā śāpam na dāsyati'(33.74)  
and 'Apatyeṣu Viruddheṣu Jananī naiva kupyate ॥  
Yadvālyāḍabravam kimcidathavā duṣkrutaṃ krutaṃ ।  
naiva kupyati sē mātā tasmānneyaṃ mamāmbikā ॥  
Yadapatyakṛtaṃ kimcit'sādhvasādhu yathā tathā ।  
mātyasyaṃ sarvamapyetattasmānmāteti giyate ॥  
Pradhyaḥsyantīva māṃ tāta nityaṃ paśyati cakṣuṣā ।  
Vaktyagnikāślasadrśā Vācā neyaṃ madāmbikā ॥ (39.18-21).  
cf. for a similar sentiment, Kūputro Jāyeta kvacidapi  
kumātā nabhavati - Devyāparādhakṣamāpanastotra, 2,3,4.

From this, it could also be seen that a mother always showed kindness towards the children. Elsewhere it is stated that on account of the anger of mothers, the children of king Bharata perished (13.58).

A mother cannot show unworthy feelings towards a son. The Br. P. states that when Māyāvati, the wife of Śambarāsura tried to love Pradyumna (whom she had reared like her own child) as his beloved, Pradyumna was much confused and was unable to understand how Māyāvati whom he had always considered to be his mother could show such improper feelings for him (200.2-14).

Mothers were never more unhappy than when away from their children.<sup>160</sup> The Br. P. depicts how Rukminī craves for her lost child Pradyumna (200.21,22). Sometimes the love of the mother for the child attained to such an intensity that the mother was unable to live without the child. The Br. P. notes an extreme case when a mother immolates herself after the death of her son (228.52).<sup>161</sup>

In order to get a son, a woman practised severe penance, observed regularity in meals and slept on kuśa bed (13.103). The Br. P. deals at length with the rules that a pregnant woman should observe during her crucial period. The

---

160 Altekar A.S., Op.Cit., P.119.

161 Vide also 'Na mām Mādhava Vaidhavyam nārthanāso na vairitā | tathā śokāya Bhavati yathā Putrairvinā Bhavaḥ || Mbh.V. 90.69.

Br. P. states that a pregnant woman should not do any base type of work on both the Saṅdhyās. During this period she should neither sleep nor go outside nor keep her hair loose. She should eat only good things, remain cheerful and should not yawn and at the time of twilight. She should not occupy the inner apartments of the house. She should not carry any heavy thing like pestle, mortar etc. and should not sleep with a raised head. She should neither speak lie nor should she go to anyone's house. She should not see any man other than her husband (124.20-26). There were special Sūtikā-grhas-maternity homes- for the delivery of the child (200.2); and nurses were kept to rear the child (8.70,111.57).

#### Position of a daughter-in-law

The position of the daughter-in-law seems to be quite good and as happens in some families even in these days, she had not to suppress herself. The Br. P. shows such a lenient attitude that if a daughter-in-law had any trouble with her husband, she <sup>could</sup> ~~can~~ approach her father-in-law and solve her difficulty (144.8). Again, the father-in-law who went after his daughter-in-law, was considered to be a great sinner (214.127).

#### Position of a widow

The treatment which a widow receives is often an

index to the attitude of society towards women as a class.<sup>162</sup> From the Br. P. it can be said that the position of widow was miserable. The Br. P. states that Mahī, the wife of a brahmin Sanājjāta became a widow in her childhood. As there was no one to protect her, she went to the hermitage of the sage Galava and kept her son there and she became a prostitute (92.5). This incident shows that when there was no one to take care, the life of a widow sometimes became degraded.

Aparārka quotes Brahma-Purāna and states that the remarriage of widows is forbidden in the Kali age.<sup>163</sup> But, Aparārka quotes a passage from the Brahma-Purāna itself which speaks of a fresh saṃskāra of marriage for a child widow or for one who was forcibly abandoned or carried away by somebody.<sup>164</sup>

These passages are not found in the present Br. P.

### The Custom of Sati

Suttee-mindedness is an extreme form of the man-centred attitude of Hindus. It may be said to represent man's supreme achievement in subjugating women to his service

<sup>162</sup> Altekar A.S.: Op. Cit., P. 135.

<sup>163</sup> *Strīnām Punarvīhastu devatāpatrasamkatiḥ |  
svātantrīyaṃ ca kalijuga kartavyaṃ na kadācana* || Br. P.  
quoted by Aparārka, P.97, Kane P.V., Op.Cit., P.606.

<sup>164</sup> *yadi bā bālanidhanaḥ balāktya kṛtāthanaḥ kṛnait |  
tada bhūyastu saṃskāryā arhitaḥ yena kenait* || Br. P.  
quoted by Aparārka P. 97, Kane P.V., Op.Cit., P.612.

and it is an overwhelming symbol of the meaninglessness of her life apart from her husband.<sup>165</sup> The ancient vedic literature and the Grhyasūtras do not show any sign of this custom, therefore, it seems to have arisen in Brahmanical India a few centuries before Christ.<sup>166</sup>

The Br. P. strongly emphasises the practice of Satī. It states that it is the highest duty of the woman to immolate herself after her husband and this path for women is enjoined by the vedas and is greatly reputed in all the worlds.<sup>167</sup> Angiras also argued that the only course which religion has prescribed for a widow is that of Satī.<sup>168</sup> The Br. P. maintains that the wife can purify her husband from the deadliest of sins, if she burns herself after her husband. Just as a snake-charmer forcibly drags out the snake from a hole, so does a wife who follows her husband goes to heaven. She lives with her husband in heaven for as many years as there are pores on the human body, i.e. for three and a half crores of years.<sup>169</sup> Farāsara also says the same thing in almost the

165 ~~Oliver~~ Oliver Crowwell Cox., Op.Cit., P. 102

166 Kane P.V., Op.Cit., P. 625

167 Strīnāmeyam Paro dharmo yadbharturanuvesānam |  
Vede ca vihitō Mārgaḥ sarvalokeṣu pūjitaḥ || (80.75).

168 Sādhvīnāmīha nārīnāmagniprapatanadr̥ṣṭe |  
nānyo dharmostī vijñeyo mṛte bhartari kutrachit ||  
quoted by Aparārka at Yaj.I.87

169 Vyālagrāhī yathā vyālam bilāḍduddharate balāt | evaṃ  
tvanugatā nārī saha bhartrāhivaṃ vrajet || Vīśrah koṭy-  
ordhakotī ca yāni romāṇi mānuṣe | tāvatkālam vasets-  
varge bhartāram yā'nugacehati ||

same words (IV.31-32). According to Altekar, the passage in Parāśara is an interpolation, because two verses earlier Parāśara permits a widow to remarry.<sup>170</sup>

The Br. P. states that eight queens of kṛṣṇa, Rukmiṇī and others burnt themselves along with his body (200.2)<sup>171</sup> The Viṣṇupurāṇa also says the same thing whereas the Mbh. states that Rukmiṇī, Gāndhārī, Saibyā, Kaimavatī, Jāmbavatī among the consorts of kṛṣṇa burnt themselves along with his body and other queens like Satyabhāmā went to a forest for tapas, (Musalaparva 7.73-74). Revatī also embraced the body of Balarāma and immolated herself (212.3). Devakī and Rohiṇī, the wives of Vasudeva also burnt themselves (212.4). Prāthīyī, the wife of the sage Dadhīci, circumambulated fire after holding the sacrificial vessel in her hand and entered fire after knowing about the death of her husband (110.72). There is also another instance of a very devoted female pigeon entering fire after the death of her husband and both went to the heaven in a shining aeroplane (80.80-82). The Mbh. also relates how a Kapotakī (female pigeon) entered fire on the death of her husband, the pigeon (Śāntiparva Ch. 143). The Mitākṣarā on Yājñavalkyasmṛti (I.86) quotes this passage of the Mbh. in support of the plea that Satī is

<sup>170</sup> Altekar A.S., Op.Cit., P. 148.

<sup>171</sup> Astau mahiṣyaḥ kathitā Rukmiṇīpramukhāstu yān |  
Upagṛāhya Harāṇdeham vividustā kutāganam ||  
(212.2) - For the same words vide Viṣṇu-Purāṇa  
(V. 33.2).

enjoined and leads to great bliss in the other world.<sup>172</sup>

The earliest historical instance of Satī is that of the wife of the Hindu general Keteus, who died in 316 B.C. while fighting against Antigonos. Both the wives of the general were anxious to accompany their husband on the funeral pyre, but as the elder one was with child, the younger one alone was allowed to carry out her wish.<sup>173</sup> The Br. P. also states that a pregnant woman was requested not to become a Satī. Thus Yādavī, the wife of king Bāhu, was pregnant when king Bāhu died. In spite of her condition, she determined to follow her husband but the sage Aurva requested her not to become a Satī and afterwards she gave birth to a child who was known as Sagara (8.39,40).

Aparārka quotes Brahma-Purāna stating that anumareṇa occurs when, after her husband is cremated elsewhere and she learns <sup>of</sup> his death, the widow resolves upon death and is burnt with the husband's ashes or his Pādukās.<sup>174</sup>

172 Kane P.V., Op.Cit., P.626 - f.n.1467.

173 Altekar A.S., Op.Cit., P.142.

174 Des'āntaramāte taomiṅṣādhvī tat pādūkādvaṅgam |  
Nidhāyoreṣi samśuddhā Prāviś'asātarvedasam ||  
Rgvedavādātsādhvī sthū na bhavedātmaghātini |  
tryahāschauce tā nirvṛtṭe śhāddham prāpnoti śāśvatam ||  
Br. P. quoted by Aparārka, P. III.

Prostitution

From early times prostitution has existed in all the countries.<sup>175</sup> The Rv. refers to women who were common to many men(I.167.9) and in the Mbh., it is an established institution.<sup>176</sup> The Br. P. also makes stray references to the prostitutes.

It seems that the occupation of prostitution was looked down upon as is seen from the case of Mahī, the wife of the brahmin Dhṛtavata who became a prostitute after her husband's death and was much condemned for it (92.8...). The persons who wanted to enjoy with the prostitutes gave money to them (92.9).

That the society was not harsh to them and showed a lenient attitude towards them can be seen from the treatment given to them. They lived happily and were specially employed to bring about definite purpose. Thus Indra sent Menakā to disturb the penance of Yama and addresses her as Ganikā (86.34).

Elsewhere they are referred to as witnessing the public sports (193.22-24), The prostitutes waved fans round

---

175 Shatwell Arthur, Prostitution, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 13, PP. 598 ff.

176 Kane P.V., Op.Cit., Vol.II, P. 637; vide also Jagdish Candra Jain: Life in ancient India as depicted in Jain Canons, P.

the idols of lord kṛṣṇa and Balaramā. They are described as wearing yellow clothes, wearing garlands, divine earrings and golden flowers (65.18).

Women and their description, toilet etc.

From the description of women of the Puruṣottama-kṣetra it seems that they were wearing golden bangles, divine clothes, ear-ornaments, jewels, karnapūras, and necklaces (46.13-22). Elsewhere it is stated that the women wore Kañcakīs, Paṭṭadukūlas and anklets, and jewels consisting of Vajra, Vaidūrya, Māṇikyā and Mukṭika (47.86). They applied fragrant things to their body and chewed the tāmbūla (41.24,25), (43.40).

Attitude towards women in general

The degree of freedom given to women to move about in society and to take part in its public life gives a good idea of the nature of its administration and enables us to know how far it had realised the difficult truth that women too have a contribution of their own to make to its development and progress.<sup>177</sup>

The Br. P. gives different phases of women's position. It states that women were free to move as they liked (41.20). Thus on her father's death, Satyabhāmā went

---

177 Altekar A.S., Op. Cit., P. 2.

to Vāraṇāvata sitting in a chariot (17.6). Kaikeyī accompanied Daśaratha in battle (123.25). Satyabhāmā accompanied kṛṣṇa in heaven (A.203). Women were invited to witness sacrifices and celebrate the festivals (38.26), (47.44). The queens accompanied the kings when they went to witness the performance of the sacrifice (47.67-70).

But elsewhere their position has been shown in a disfavourable light. The abduction of Tārā referred to above shows that women were dragged away without consideration of her own will (17.22). There is another reference of a bride ~~is~~ being dragged away from the wedding hall by some person other than her fiancée (VII.98). Though here the consequences, viz. the ceasing of rain-showers shows that such type of behaviour was considered to be unrighteous. The women were protected by bodyguards and were followed by decorated chariots, singers and <sup>a</sup>bards (44.25). In a sacrifice, women were given in dāna (47.76-92). Some women did the work of fanning the king (68.23). The well-known example of Sītā's abandonment by Rāma is referred to. Here even though her chastity was proved by Fire-ordeal still she was abandoned as the people had doubts regarding her character (A.154).

#### Women and higher studies

In spite of the unhappy attitude shown towards women

in some phases of life, they are not denied the rights of spiritual and intellectual development. The vedic literature states that women too were entitled to the vedic studies and down to the beginning of the Christian era, the upanayana, with which began the vedic studies, was common for both boys and girls.<sup>178</sup> Lopāmdrā, viśvavarē, Śikatā, Nivāvarī and Ghoṣṭā are the renowned poetesses of various vedic hymns.<sup>179</sup>

There were two types of women students: (i) Brahmavādinīs who were the life-long students of theology and philosophy and (ii) Sadyodvāhās who used to prosecute their studies till marriage.<sup>180</sup> The Br. P. refers to Ilā, king Matināra's daughter, who is called a Brahmavādinī but is married afterwards to king Tamsu (13.53). Thus here the meaning of the term 'Brahmavadini' seems to differ from that of the general classification referred to above. Brhaspati -'s sister and Prabhāsa's wife was a Brahmavadini and Yogasiddhā (3.42.43).

Elsewhere women are referred to as knowing the art of dancing and singing (41.33). They are referred to as playing various instruments like Vīṇā, Dundubhi, Venu,

---

178 Altekar A.S.: Op.Cit., P.11

179 Altekar A.S.: Op.Cit., P.12

180 Ibid, P.13,17 - Dvividhāh striyo  
Brahmavādinīṣaṃ sadyodvāhāśca | tatra  
Brahmavādinīṣaṃ aganīndhanam vedādhyāṇam  
svagrūhe ca Bhaikṣacaryeti |

Mṛdaṅga, Paṇava, Gomukha and Saṅkha (46.21-22). The progress in fine arts like music and dancing depends a good deal on the facilities given to women for specialising in them. Once it is stated that the dancing and the singing were the arts in which a woman should specialise (108.53).

Some women in the Br.P. like the Mat.P.<sup>181</sup> and Vayu P.<sup>182</sup> are seen practising penance to get a husband or a son of their own choice. Śatarūpā practised severe penance for 10,000 years and obtained Svāyambhuva Manu as her husband (2.3-4), Svāhā, Agni's wife practised severe penance in order to get children (128.3). Ekaparṇā, Aparṇā and Ekapātalā were called Brahmācārinīs (34.88,89). Ekaparṇā practised penance eating only one leaf (34.82), Ekapātalā practised penance eating only one pātala for 10,000 years and Aparṇā practised penance without eating anything (34.82,85).

When the Daityas and the Dānavas destroyed the gods, Aditi observed strict regulations with a concentrated mind without eating anything (32.11). Dhūminī, king Ajamīdha's wife practised severe penance for 10,000 years to get a son (Br.103,104 - missing in ms. 'kha').

<sup>181</sup> Kantawala S.G., Op.Cit., P. 266

<sup>182</sup> Patil D.R., Cultural History from the Vāyu-Purāna, P.42.

Women and Religion

How far a religion stands for justice and fairplay and how far it has succeeded in exploding prejudices and shibboleths of a primitive age can be seen from the position it assigns to women in its ritual and theology.<sup>183</sup>

Women are excluded from religious service almost everywhere because they were regarded as unclean, mainly on account of her periodical menstruation. During this period Hindu society has been regarding women as extremely impure and temporarily untouchable. During the period of confinement.<sup>184</sup> The Br. P. also states that to see a woman in her monthly period and during the period of confinement is extremely unholy (221.141-142).

As regards women and their impurity during the monthly period and the period of confinement vide the section 'popular superstitions' of the chapter V on 'Social and Economic life.'

As the vedic sacrifices became very complicated and as the vedic studies declined in women - owing to the practice of early marriage coming in vogue and also as the society was not prepared to tolerate the dilattante vedic

---

183 Altekar A.S., Op.Cit., P. 2

184 Ibid., P. 231.

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 disenfranchisement and created a vacuum to be filled by the Bhakti-Paurāṇika religion.<sup>185</sup> As early as the 3rd century B.C., women were already accustomed to perform a number of vōws and fasts.<sup>186</sup>

In the Br. P. there is ample evidence to show that women were not disenfranchised from participation, in the religious matters. The Ekoddiṣṭa śrāddha is prescribed by women (220.74-76). Again, they too are promised the highest positions as rewards for performing religious observances. Women get the highest siddhi by devoting themselves to lord Nārāyaṇa (178.185,186); (226.14). The women who control their senses, worship the Sun with pure faith and devotion get the desired things and the highest status (28.39). The women observed the vratas like Krcchra-Cāndrāyaṇa during the period of pregnancy (32.33).

#### Women and Śūdras

The discontinuance of upanayana and its equation with the marriage ritual had the most disastrous consequences

185 Altekar A.S. as summarised by Kantawala S.G., Op.Cit., P.273.

186 Altekar A.S., Op.Cit., P.244.

upon the social and family status of women and their status was automatically reduced to that of the sūdras. At about 300 B.C., it began to be argued that women were ineligible for vedic studies like sūdras.<sup>187</sup> Viṣṇu states that the dvijatis were to take their bath to the accompaniment ~~were~~ of vedic mantras, while women and sūdras were to bathe ~~silently~~.<sup>188</sup> The Br. P.<sup>189</sup> also states that the first three varṇas should take a bath and do the Japa as stated in the vedas whereas the snāna and japa to be performed by the women and sūdras should be devoid of vedic rites (67.19). Again it is stated that the first three varṇas should perform the śrāddha with the recitation of the mantras whereas the women and sūdras should perform the śrāddha without the recitation of mantras and they should follow the instruction of brahmins (220.3,4). In one place the women are grouped with the Vaiśyas and sūdras and it is stated that by reciting the Śivastuti composed by Dakṣa, the women, Vaiśyas and sūdras attain the Rudraloka (40.136), (vide Gītā 9.32-3).

#### Women not to be killed

In spite of degradation in the status of women and

187 Aitkar A.S., Op.Cit., Great Women of India, P.34.

188 Brahmakṣatraviśām caiva mantravatsnānamisyate |  
tūṣṇīmeva hi sūdrasya strīṇāṃ ca kurunandana  
Viṣṇu quoted in smṛticandrikā: § I. P.181.

189 Vedoktam Triṣu Varṇeṣu snānaṃ Jāpyamudartham |  
Strīsūdrayoḥ snānajāpyam vedoktavidhivarjitam || 67.19.

many heavy disabilities imposed upon them, they enjoyed certain privileges and certain favoured treatment in ancient India.<sup>190</sup>

Since the very early times, the killing of a woman was regarded as a very disgraceful offence. The Śatapatha-Brahmana points out that a woman ought not be killed.<sup>191</sup> The Mbh. states that those who know Dharma declare that women are not to be killed,<sup>192</sup> and that one should not direct one's weapons against women, cows, brāhmins and against one who gave livelihood or shelter.<sup>193</sup> The Kamayana also notes the sentiment when It is interesting to note that even inspite of the universally accepted divinity of Rāma, critics like Bhavabhūti have ventured to fearlessly censure his conduct in killing Tātikā.<sup>194</sup>

The Br. P. also states that it is a general rule that women, though, born in the lowest category, should not be killed and if anyone tried to kill a woman, it was considered to be in opposition to righteousness.<sup>195</sup> But at the

---

190 Kane P.V., Op.Cit., P.595.

191 Strī Vaisā yatscrīna vai strīyaṃ ghāntyuta  
tvasya jīvantya evādadata itī | Śat.Br.XI.4.3.2.

192 Avadhya striya ityāhurdharmajña dharmaniscaye - Ādiparva  
158-31.

193 Strīṣu Goṣu na sāstrāṇi pātayet Brāhmaṇeṣu ca |  
Yasya cānnāni bhujjīta yatra ca syātpratisthayaḥ ||

194 Uttararāmacarita, Act V.34; Vide for details Altekar  
A.S., The Position of Women in Hindu Civilisation, P.380.

195 Avadyam ca striyam prahustirbhagyonigatesvapi |  
Yadyevam prthivipala na dharmam tyaktumathasi || (4.80).

same time, the Br. P. modifies this rule and states that if many persons are benefitted by killing one inauspicious woman, then there is no sin in killing her.<sup>196</sup> Not only killing a woman in such conditions was desirable but such act entailed % the merit of performance of hundred Aśvamedhas.<sup>197</sup> The Rāmāyana also notes a similar sentiment when Rāma was called upon to kill Tātakā.<sup>198</sup>

#### Women and Fighting

From some story references, it is seen that the women also know the art of fighting. The Br. P. states that lord kṛṣṇa thought of building the city Dwārṅkē with such a fort from which even the women could fight (196.11). Kaikeyī, king Daśaratha's wife, accompanied king Daśaratha in his fight with the demons and helped him at a crucial moment by keeping her hand in the place of the spoke of the chariot when it was broken (123.26,27). It was considered

196 Ekasyānte tu yo hanyādātmano vā parasya vā ' |  
Bahūnvā prāṇinō'nantaṃ Bhavettasyeha pātakam ||  
Sukhamedhanti bahavo yasminstu mihate'subhe |  
tasminhate nāsti bhadre pātakam copapātakam || (4.82,83)

197 Yatropkāro'nekānāmekanāśe bhaviṣyati ' |  
na doṣastatra pṛthivī tapasā dhāryēprajāḥ ||  
na doṣamatra paśyāmi nācakṣe 'narthakaṃ vacaḥ |  
Yasminnipātite saukhyaṃ bahūnāmupajāyate |  
Munayastadvadham Prāhuraśvamedhasatādḥikam || (141.21,22)

198 Rāmāyana (Cr.ed.) Bālakāṇḍa I. 24.15.

to be a great stigma to the military career of man if he were defeated by a woman (124.30).

### Seclusion of Women

No wise and far-seeing nation can ever harbour the idea of secluding its women and no nation can hope to attain greatness and prosperity which suppresses the healthy habits of its mothers.<sup>199</sup>

Though, there is no reference in the vedic literature regarding the seclusion of women and the purdah was quite unknown down to about the beginning of the Christian era, it seems that after this period a greater seclusion of women was advocated.<sup>200</sup>

Though, the Br. P. does not refer to the purdah system as such and allows freedom of movement to women as referred to above, still the Br. P. states that women should always try to protect themselves in the harem. Men were unable to control themselves when they saw women in a lonely place, therefore, women were advised not to see the face of a man other than their husband (152.5-9). That the bodyguards were kept outside the harem to protect women can be seen from

---

199 Upadhyaya B.S., Op.Cit., PP. 46 ff.

200 Kane P.V., Op.Cit., PP. 596-598, Altekar A.S., Op.Cit., P. 200.

the case of Uṣā, Bānāsura's daughter, whose private dalliances with Aniruddha, Pradyumna's son, were conveyed by the bodyguards of the harem to Bānāsura (206.5,6). Rukminī and Māyāvati are also said to reside in the antahpura (200.20,23).

#### Views about Women's nature

Along with the passages expressing very fine and chivalrous ideas about women, there are others of an opposite nature casting serious reflections upon women and their character.

The women are said to be very jealous by nature.<sup>201</sup> The Br. P. furnishes many instances to evidence the jealous nature of women. Thus Pārvatī, lord Śiva's wife, planned a conspiracy with Gaṇeśa to separate the river Gaṅgā from lord Śiva. When she saw the increasing attachment of lord Śiva for Gaṅgā (A.74). Devayānī, Yayāti's wife also felt very jealous when she saw that her co-wife Sarmistha had three sons whereas she herself had only two sons (146.9). Diti, the sage Kāśyapa's wife also felt jealousy when her own children perished whereas those of Aditi, her co-wife prospered (124.4 ). Kaikeyī, Dasāratha's wife, directed Rāma, her co-wife Kausalyā's son, to go to a forest-exile

---

201 cf. 'na hi nāryo vinerśyayā'.

when she saw that he was getting the throne and by doing so she she secured the throne for her own son Bharata (123.107,108). The example of one of the <sup>queens of</sup> the king Sagarawho gave poison to her co-wife is already referred to. King Jyāmagha was so afraid of this wife Saibyā that even though she did not give him any child, he did not marry again. This may be the result of Saibyā's fear that she would loose her control over her husband in case her co-wife won the love of her husband by presenting him with a child (15.13-20).

A Rgvedic passage shows that women are very fickle by nature.<sup>202</sup> The Mbh. at one place states that sexual enjoyment is the sole aim of woman's existence.<sup>203</sup> The Rāmāyana states that women combine the fickleness of the lightning, the sharpness of the weapon and the swiftness of the eagle (II.13.6-7). The Br. P. also states that no one is able to stop a woman when she takes a wrong path (100.12) and that women are fickle by nature and it is in their nature to desire men.<sup>204</sup> The Br. P. also states in similar words the idea expressed in the Rgvedic passage cited above.<sup>205</sup> Again, the Br. P. mentions that the quarrels of women are so intricate that it would be known

202 Na Vai straināni Sakhyāni santi śālāvṛkāṇām hrdayānyetā | X.95.15.

203 Asambhogo Jarā strīṇām | Mbh. IV.39.78 (B).

204 Strīṇāmesa svabhāvo vai pumskāma yoṣito yataḥ | svabhavaśapalā Brahmanyōṣitaḥ sakalā api || 101.14,15.

205 Na vai straināni Jānīṣe hrdayāni mahāmate | Śālāvṛkāṇām yādṛmṣi tasmāttvaṁ bhūpa mā śucaḥ || (151.12).

by women alone.<sup>206</sup> It is also stated that the nature of women is so complex that it could be thoroughly known by women alone.<sup>207</sup> Moreover, it is a general characteristic of the nature of women that their sexual affairs be done in privacy.<sup>208</sup> At one place, the Br. P. decries the women to a great extent and says that they cheat <sup>and</sup> /infatuate others and are illusory like the dreams. They never give happiness<sup>209</sup>. It is interesting to note that this passage and the one quoted in f.n. 205 refer to Purūravā-Urvaśī episode, the same as the ṛgvedic one.

The deterioration of their position and the blackening of their character and nature were the outcome of the rise of the renunciation school whose end in view was to dissuade men from marriage and family life. Varāhamihira boldly tried to attack this tendency.<sup>210</sup>

- 
- 206 Strīnām vivādam tā eva striyo Jānanti netare (137.26)  
 207 Strīnām svabhāvam Jānanti striya eva surādhipa (129.51)  
 208 Strīnāmesa svābhāvosti ratam gopāyitam bhavet (108.27).  
 209 Vidya cañcalacittānām kva sthairyam nanu yoṣitām ||  
 ko nāma loke Rājendra Kaminībhira vañcitatā |  
 Vañcakatvam Nrsamsatvam cañcalatvam kuśilatā ||  
 iti svābhāvikam yāsām tāḥ katham sukhahetavaḥ |  
 kalena ko'ñhataḥ ko'rthī Gauravamāgataḥ ||  
 Striyā na bhrāmitaḥ ko va yosidbhiḥ ko na khanditaḥ |  
 Svapnamāyopamā rājanmadaviplūtacetasā ||  
 Sukhāya yoṣitāḥ kasya jñatvaitadvijvaro bhava (151.13-16)  
 210 Altekar A.S., Op.Cit., PP. 386 ff.; Kane P.V., Op.Cit.,  
 P. 579, Brhatsamhitā, Ch. 74.

Attitude towards Women captives

One of the best ways to ascertain the attitude of society towards women is to find out its angle of vision towards women overtaken by the misfortune of falling in the hands of ruffians or enemies. Such a situation is the real touch stone to test the genuineness of society's sympathy towards the weaker sex, it enables us to find out how far man is prepared to rise above the prejudices of his sex and judge the woman by an equitable standard.<sup>211</sup>

With a broadmindedness that is indeed 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 rituals.<sup>212</sup> From about the 13th century, 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>213</sup>

The Br. P. furnishes two instances which reflect on the condition of women captives. Thus ~~being~~ king Jyāmagha brought a girl as a captive from a victorious

---

211 Altekar A.S., Op.Cit.,P.367.

212 Ibid., P. 369,

213 Kantawala S.G., Op.Cit., P.277.

campaign and out of fear from his wife presented the girl to his wife saying that she would be their future daughter-in-law. It is to be noted that king Jyāmagha had no son at that time and when later on a son was born to him, the girl was married to him though much older than her husband (14.16.18,20) (cf. Mat.P. 44.33, Vāyu 99.33-35). When kṛṣṇa conquered the Prāgjyotiṣpura he found 16,100 maidens in the Kanyāpura of king Narakāśura (202.31) and afterwards he married all of them (204.14-16). These instances show that the captor assimilated the women captives into the family with human treatment and assigned them honourable positions.

#### Woman's share in Patrimony

Āpastamba, Manu and Nārada do not allow the widow of a sonless male to succeed as heir, while Gaut. 28.14 appears to say that she is an heir along with sapinḍas or sagotras. The Sakuntala (act VI) also contemplates the same view. Yājñavalkya II.135 mentions the widow as the first heir of a sonless man dying separately. Viṣṇu, Kātyāyana and others say the same. So in medieval times the rights of widows to property were better recognised than in the times of the early sūtra writers. In this respect, the position of women improved in medieval times, though in the religious and other spheres their position became worse, as they were

equated with sūdras.<sup>214</sup>

The Br. P. mentions an instance from which the idea can be gathered regarding its views on woman's share in paternal property. Thus it is said that when Vaivasvat Manu decided to divide his kingdom, he distributed it amongst his nine sons and Sudyumna did not get any share as he was formerly in the form of a girl and was known as Ila, but his share was given to his son Purūravas (7.20,21). Thus it can be seen that the girls had no share in patrimony but their share was transferred to their sons.

---

<sup>214</sup> Kane P.V., Op.Cit., PP. 581,582.