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Paper : **Social and Cultural History of India**
(From Earliest to 1707 A.D.)

Module : **Marriage System in Ancient India**


ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये

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Development Team

Principal Investigator	Prof. P. Bhaskar Reddy Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati.
Paper Coordinator(s)	Dr. Rita Chaudhuri Dept. of AIHC, University of Calcutta.
Content Writer (s)	Prof. Korada Subrahmanyam Center for ALTS, University of Hyderabad.
Content Reviewer	Prof. Rani Sadasiva Murthy Rashtriya Sanskrit University, Tirupati.

Component-I (B) – Description of module:

Subject Name	Indian Culture
Paper Name	Social and Cultural History of India (From Earliest to 1707 A.D.)
Module Name / Title	Marriage System in Ancient India (Significance -Practice-Types-Forms)
Module Id	IC / SCHI / 10
Pre requisites	
Objectives	To know about the significance of marriage, marriage practice, types and forms of marriage in ancient Indian tradition
Keywords	Marriage / vivaha / Parinaya / Samskara / Asrama

E-text (Quadrant-I) :

1. Introduction:

In Indian tradition there are four Āśramas (stages) people should follow - Brahmacharyam (which runs until marriage), Gārhasthyam (household life), Vānaprastham (optionally living in a forest after noticing children of children) and Saṁnyāsa (renouncing the worldly bindings and trying to attain Mokṣa).

Bṛḥgu (Manusmṛti, 6-89, 90) asserts that the second Āśrama, i.e. Gārhasthyam is considered the best as the Gṛhastha (householder) takes care of the people of the other three Āśramas and just like all the rivers find a place in the ocean; people of all Āśramas find a place in a Gṛhastha.

Vivāha (marriage) is the most important of all Samskāras. Vivāha, Pariṇaya, Pariṇayana, Upayama and Pāṇigrahaṇa are synonyms of Vivāha.

The Vivāha in Indian tradition is full of rituals and therefore 'marriage' is a rough translation. The origin of Vivāha can be traced to Vedas - Taittirīyasamhitā (7-2-89), Aitareyabrāhmaṇam (27-5), Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇam (7-10-1) etc.

2. Purpose: Gṛhiṇī

According to Ṛgveda (10-85-36) the purpose of marriage is to enable a man, by becoming a Gṛhastha (householder) to perform sacrifices and to produce sons.

It (3-53-4) asserts that 'the wife herself is the home'. Śāntiparva (144-66) of Mahābhārata also says the same - 'nagṛhamgṛhamityāhuḥgṛhiṇīgṛhamucyate (the term 'gṛham' does not mean a house, rather the wife is called 'gṛham').

Jāyā:

It means wife. Aitareyabrāhmaṇam (33-1) states - wife is called 'jāyā' because the husband is born in the wife as the son. This concept is stated by Bhṛgu (Manusmṛti, 9-8) also.

Ardhāṅgi:

Both Taittirīyasamhitā (6-1-8-5) as well as Śatapathabrāhmaṇam (5-2-1-10, 8-7-2-3) clearly state that wife is half of the body of the husband. So, as per the tradition, after marriage there are no two persons but one only. This concept is also mentioned by Āpastamba (Āpastamba-dharmasūtram, 11-6-13-16, 17) - jāyāpatyoḥnavibhāgovidyate. The Śatapatha above also says when a man secures a wife and gets children he becomes complete.

Sahadharmacāriṇī:

Āpastamba in the above reference also states that after Pāṅgrahaṇam, both the wife and husband perform the rites together and the wife partakes of the Puṇya (the result of good deeds, opposite of Pāpam / sin, an untranslatable term), i.e. not Pāpam. Thus the wife is called sahadharmacāriṇī. Jaimini (Pūrvamimāmsā, 6-1-4-17) rules that after the Vivāha the rite performed by wife and husband together would be a single Karma (rite).

Nāticarāmi (I do not ignore):

This pledge is made by the bridegroom during the marriage as per Āpastamba. The Purohita says - this girl should not be ignored by you in terms of Dharma, Artha (money matters) and Kāma (matters related to sex). Then the groom would make the pledge.

The above mentioned tenets put the wife on a par with the husband on the above mentioned three fronts. This is called - 'dampatyohsahādhikāraḥ' i.e. both wife and husband have equal rights (neither is superior or inferior to the other). The result being the wife does not ask for money but rather takes and so on.

The Aitareyāranyakam (1-2-4) says – therefore, a man, after securing a wife, regards himself as more complete. Satapathabrāhmaṇam ((5-2-1-10) supports this view.

Patnī:

The wife is called Patnī and Pāṅini (4-1-33, patyurnoyajñasamyoge) says if the wife is partaking in the five Mahāyajñas (called Pañcamahāyajñas) to be performed regularly by husband (Pati) then she is fit to be called Patnī. Elsewhere the wife is called Patnī due to similarity - explains Patañjali in Mahābhāṣyam (4-1-33).

Dāyabhāga or Partition of wealth:

It is due to this guideline that wife does not get any share separately from husband during partition of wealth in a joint family.

Protection of a girl child:

Bṛḥgu (Manusmṛti, 5-148) and other Ṛṣis ordained that a girl should be protected throughout her life and should not be left (or sent) alone - during childhood a girl should be under the protection of the father, during youth she should be protected by husband and when the husband dies the sons have to take care of her and as such she should not be left alone.

In this context the word 'svatamtratām' is wrongly translated as 'independence' by some. In such cases the context has to be taken into consideration while deciding the meaning.

Punarvivāha:

A woman can go for a remarriage if the husband is missing or dead or has taken saṁnyāsa or influenced by vices.

Second wife – Monogamy - Purpose of Marriage:

Āpastamba (Dharmasūtram, 2-5-11-12) forbids taking a second wife if the first is endowed with pregnancy and the performance of Dhārmika karmas (rites). Here Haradattamiśra, author of Mitākṣarā commentary explains - it indicates that the main purposes of marriage are two, viz. the wife enables a man to perform Dhārmika karmas and the mother of son or sons, who are supposed to save a man from hell (punnāmanarakātrāyateitiputraḥ). Sex is Laukika(mundane). Bṛḥgu (Manusmṛti, 9-28) states that on the wife depend the production of sons, the performance of Dhārmika karmas (rites), service, highest pleasure, heaven for oneself and one's ancestors. So these three, viz. dharmasampatti, prajā (and consequent freedom from falling into hell) and rati (sexual and other pleasures) are the principal purposes of marriage according to Smṛtis and Nibandhas (digests).

Polygamy :

In Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata, we come across this tradition – a single person marrying more than one person. Mostly Kings and Emperors used to follow Polygamy .

3. What is Vivāha?:

Medhātithi (Manusmṛti, 3-20), a commentator says that Vivāha is a composite rite comprising several subordinate elements which have to be done in a certain order and the last of which is seeing the constellation of the seven sages and the rite brings about the status of a woman as a person's wife.

Selection of Bridegroom:

Different Smṛtis discussed the question of how to choose a bridegroom and what qualifications make a person a desirable bridegroom - Āsvalāyana in his Gṛhyasūtram (1-5-2) says 'one should give a Kanyā (a virgin)in marriage to a man endowed with intelligence'.

Āpastamba (Gr̥hyasūtram, 3-20) remarks 'the accomplishments of bridegroom are that he must be endowed with good family (Abhijanah), a good character, auspicious characteristics, learning and good health.

Baudhāyana (Dharmasūtram, 4-1-12) states 'a virgin should be given in Vivāha to one' who is endowed with good qualities and who is a celibate (Brahmacāry).

Even in Abhijñānaśākuntalam (Act 4) Kālidāsa (thru Anasūyā) echoed the words of Baudhāyana - the best idea is to give one's daughter to a man endowed with good qualities.

Qualities:

Smṛticandrikā (1878) quotes Yama (Smṛti) - 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); the other matters need not be considered.

Bṛhatparāśara (p 118) enumerates eight qualities in a bridegroom, viz. caste, learning, youth, strength, health, support of many (friends etc.), ambitions (arthitvam) and possession of wealth.

Āśvalāyana (1-5-1) and others place Kula (a good family) in the forefront in the case of both the bride and the bridegroom. 'One should first examine the family (of the intended bride or bridegroom) as it has been said above' (i.e. Āśvalāyanaśrautasūtram, 9-3).

Bṛghu (Manusmṛti, 4-244) regards a good family as the most important from the eugenic point of view - one who desires to raise his family to excellence and eminence should always enter into marriage alliance with the best and avoid alliance with the low; and adds (3-6, 7) that ten kinds of families, even though richly endowed with cattle, wealth etc. should be avoided in marriage, viz. in which the Samskāras are not performed, in which there is no male progeny, which are devoid of Veda (study), which have hairy members, that suffer from piles or tuberculosis or indigestion or epilepsy, white or black leprosy.

Bṛghu (3-63, 64 and 65) explains under what circumstances good families are reduced to a bad state.

Hārīta (quoted in Samskāraprakāśa, p 589) says that the offspring is in accordance with the (qualities of the) families of the parents.

Marriage between similar parties:

Mahābhārata (Ādiparva, 131-10; Udyogaparva, 33-117) observes 'friendship and marriage should take place between those alone whose wealth is similar and whose learning (in the families) is of equal status, not between rich and poor.

Selection of bride:

Rules, such as necessity of good family, absence of diseases etc. are common for the groom and bride (Vasiṣṭhasmṛti, 1-38, Kāmasūtra, 3-1-2).

Āśvalayana (Gr̥hyasūtram, 1-5-3) says - 'one should marry a girl who is endowed with intelligence, beauty, a good character and auspicious characteristics and who is healthy'. Śāṅkhyāyana (Gr̥hyasūtram, 1-5-6), Manu (3-4) and Yājñavalkya (1-52) also stated that the girl should possess the auspicious characteristics.

Girl should be younger:

Gautama (4-1), Vasiṣṭha(8-1), Mānavagr̥hyasūtram (1-7-8), Yājñavalkya (1-52) and several others say that the girl must be younger (Yavīyasī) than the bridegroom and the Kāmasūtra (3-1-2) recommends that she must be younger than the bridegroom by at least three years. The Mitākṣarā (Yāj. 1-52) explains 'Yavīyasī' as meaning 'younger in age and smaller in stature' (than the bridegroom).

Some scholars said the age gap between bride and groom can be three or five or eight years.

Āyurveda:

Age matters a lot - a raw pepper causes phlegm whereas a dry pepper kills the phlegm. The following verse is quoted to show the result of age gap between the bride and groom -

bālāprāṇapradāproktā

yuvatīprāṇadhāriṇī |

prauḍhākarotivṛddhatvam

vṛddhāmarāṇamādiśet ||

(a girl of below sixteen years of age would increase the longevity of the bridegroom, a lady in youth would help in maintaining the longevity, an older girl would cause early aging and an old lady would kill the person at the earliest).

Girl should have brothers:

Mānavagr̥hyasūtram (1-7-8), Manu (3-11) and Yājñavalkya (1-53) require that the girl to be chosen must not be brother-less.

In Ṛgveda (1-124-7) it is said 'as a brotherless maiden comes back towards the male relations (her father's family) ...'. In the Atharvaveda (1-17-1) we read 'like brotherless women let them sit still with their splendor gone'. Nirukta (3-4, 5) quotes and explains both these passages.

Putrikā:

In ancient times when a man had no son, he would make his daughter do for a son (i.e. she herself became 'Putrikā') and stipulates 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 Piṇḍas (balls of cooked rice offered to elders during death ceremony) as a son to his maternal grandfather (Vasiṣṭhadharmasūtram, 17-16, Nirukta, 3-4).

During the course of time, scholars resolved that if the brotherless girl's father's brothers have got a male child then it is okay. Also such a father can adopt a male child.

Girl from same caste – Endogamy:

There is a restriction in Smṛtis (Āpastamba, Jīvānanda , p 549, chapter 9; Āśvalāyanagr̥hya-sūtram, 1-5-1) that a girl from the same caste (Varṇa) should be chosen (endogamy).

Sameness of Gotra and Pravara forbidden:

Marriage between a bride and groom of the same Gotra and same Pravara is forbidden by many Smṛtis (Viṣṇudharmasūtra, 24-9; Yājñavalkya-smṛti, 1-53; Vedavyāsa, 2-2 etc.).

Sapiṇḍavivāha forbidden:

Gautama (4-2), Vasiṣṭha (8-2), Yājñavalkya (1-53) and many others prohibit the marriage between a bride and a bridegroom, who are Sapiṇḍas, i.e. seven generations on father's side and five generations on mother's side.

Pūrvamīmāṃsā:

All these prohibitions (including 'younger girl') against marrying a girl of Sagotra, Sapravara or Sapiṇḍa are extremely important. According to Pūrvamīmāṃsā if there is a dr̥ṣṭaprayojanam (a perceptible result) for a rule in the sacred texts, it is only recommendatory and a breach of such a rule does not nullify the principal act. But if there is an adr̥ṣṭaprayojanam (a non-perceptible result) for a rule and there is a breach of such a rule the principal act itself is rendered invalid. If one marries a girl who is diseased then there will be unhappiness (dr̥ṣṭaprayojanam) etc. but the marriage is perfectly valid. On the other hand , there is no dr̥ṣṭaprayojanam for the prohibition against marrying a Sagotra or Sapravara girl. Therefore, such rules go to the root of the matter and are obligatory and if there is a breach of them, the marriage is no marriage, it is null and void (Medhātithi, Manu, 3-7, 3-11; Yāj 1-53).

Girl choosing husband:

Manu (9-89, 90) declares that a maiden may rather stay in her father's house even till her death, though she may have attained puberty, but the father should never give her to one who is devoid of good qualities. A maiden after attaining puberty may wait for three years but after this period she should seek a husband who is similar to her. Anuśāsanaparva (45-16), Baudhāyana (4-1-14) and Vasiṣṭha (17-67, 68) support the latter part of the ruling by Manu. Baudhāyana and Vasiṣṭha add that the father or guardian incurs the sin of destroying an embryo at each appearance of menses as long as the girl is unmarried. Yājñavalkya (1-64) and Nārada (Strīpumsa, 25-27) state the same rule.

4. Jyotiṣam decides matches:

Jyotiṣam (Astrology) plays an important role in Vivāha, right from deciding a pair of bride and groom down to the auspicious time (Muhūrta) for performing the Vivāha.

Twenty one Mahādoṣas (great defects) are enumerated in Jyotiṣam which should be avoided while fixing the Muhūrta (Muhūrtadarpaṇam, 344-347).

By and large, all months are acceptable for performing marriage (Baudhāyanagr̥hyasūtram, 1-1-18 to 21)

Triyeṣṭham:

Eldes(t)(Jyeṣṭha) son and eldest (Jyeṣṭha) daughter should not get married in Jyeṣṭhamāsa.

Guṇas:

The conjugal relation between wife and husband will be good if there will be eighteen points (Guṇas) or above when the stars of bride and groom are put side by side. There is a chart that is useful as a ready reckoner.

Kujadoṣa:

This is a very important aspect in terms of compatibility between the horoscopes of the bride and groom. Agastyasamhitā says - if Kuja (Mars) is there in second, fourth, seventh, eighth and twelfth houses, when counted from Lagna (Ascendant), Candra (Moon) or Śukra (Venus) it is called Kujadoṣa (Māṅgalic). If this defect is there in the bride's horoscope then the groom would die and vice versa.

Kujadoṣa nullified:

If there is Kujadoṣa in the horoscopes of bride and groom then the same is nullified. Kujadoṣa from any one of the three houses will be the same.

Further, Devakeralam adds that Kujadoṣa will not be there for those who are born in the own houses of Kuja, viz. Meṣa (Aries) and Vṛścika (Scorpio), in the Uccarāśi (Zenith) of Kuja, i.e. Makara (Capricorn) and the houses of Kujas friends, viz. Candra (Karkaṭaka / Cancer), Ravi (Simha / Leo) and Guru (Dhanus / Sagittarius and Mīna / Pisces).

There are many factors mentioned in Jyotiṣaśāstram that are useful in deciding the compatibility of a bride and groom.

Marriage with one's maternal uncle's daughter:

There is difference of opinion among the authors of different Smṛtis and Nibandhas (Digests) regarding the acceptability of one's marrying with his maternal uncle's (mother's brother's) daughter. This custom has been prevalent in South India. Those who supported this custom stated that one need not verify any details of bride and groom if they fall under the said category.

Āpastamba (Dharmasūtram, 1-7-21-8), Manu (9-172, 173), Kumarila (Tantravārtikam, 1-3-7) etc. opposed the above said marriage. They also opposed marriage with paternal aunt's daughter.

On the other hand, Mādhavācārya (Parāśaramādhavīyam, 1-2), Devannabhaṭṭa (Smṛticandrikā, 1, pp 70-74) support such a marriage. They while quoting Manu, Śātātapa etc. say that there are passages of the Veda (Śatapathabrāhmaṇam, 1-8, 3-6; Ṛgveda, Vol. II, p 672) and some Smṛtis (Bṛhaspati; Vyavahāramayūkha) in support of it and Śiṣṭas (learned and respectable persons) observe this practice and so such marriages are Sadācāra and not forbidden.

5. Eight forms of marriage:

Eight forms of marriages are described in Smṛtis (Āsvalāyanagr̥hyasūtram, 1-6; Gautmadharmasūtram, 6-6 yo 13; Manusmṛti, 3-21 etc.) - Brāhma, Prājāpatya, Ārṣa, Daiva, Gāndharva, Āsura, Rākṣasa and Paiśāca.

1. Brāhma: The father of the girl invites a man, who is learned in Vedas and of good conduct and offers his daughter who is adorned with garments and jewels.
2. Daiva: The father gives away his daughter who is adorned to an officiating priest during the performance of the sacrifice.
3. Ārṣa: The father takes a cow and a bull and gifts his daughter.
4. Prājāpatya: The father having addressed the couple - 'may both of you perform your Dhārmic duties together', honors the bridegroom with Madhuparka etc.

In the above four forms of marriage there is the gift of a girl, called 'Kanyādānam' by the father to the bridegroom. Here the term 'dānam' is used in the secondary sense, i.e. in the sense of the father's right of guardianship and control of the maiden to the husband. All gifts are to be made with water.

5. Āsura: The girl is given away at the father's will after the bridegroom gives as much wealth as he can offer to pay to the relatives of the girl and to the girl herself.
6. Gāndharva: The union of a girl and the bridegroom by their mutual consent is known as Gāndharva, which springs from the passion of love and has intercourse as its purpose.
7. Rākṣasa: The forcible abduction of a girl from her house, while she weeps and cries aloud, after her relatives are killed or beaten or wounded and their houses are broken open and it is Rākṣasavivāha.
8. Paiśāca: A man has intercourse with a girl while she is asleep or intoxicated or disordered in mind (or unconscious) it is Paiśācānanda and this is the most sinful.

Saptapadī:

The wife and husband walk together for seven feet while relevant Mantras are recited and by the seventh step the girl loses her father's Gotram and attains her husband's Gotram. Henceforth she is called 'sahadharmacāriṇī' (one who performs all the rites together with her husband and partakes of the Puṇyam, he acquired.)