Manifestation of Domestic Regime in Sanskrit in terms of Universal Welfare

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Abstract:

Family is a firm foundation of social life in India. Family stands on the strong stone of faith and fraternity. Kutumba in Indian culture starts with a small group and goes for up to the concept of the whole world "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", the whole world is one family or the Vedic idea "Yatra viśvaṃ bhavatyekanīḍam" where the whole world become a nest. We may call duality of mother father or wife-husband, but one thing is certain that man and woman are two cycles of the cart of household life. One is incomplete without the other. The most important factor which nourishes the Indian family life is marriage. Ancient family life was bound by sixteen saṃskāras. Marriage was the most important among them.

Keywords*: Family, Kutumba, father and mother, society, marriage*

Introduction:

Family is a firm foundation of social life in India. Family stands on the strong stone of faith and fraternity. Family is a noble conception, a unit of society and a way of life. *Kula*, *Parivāra* or *Kutumba* is the backbone of household or *garhasthya*. In ancient times Indian seers had conceived the concept of family and old Sanskrit scriptures have a vivid account of all constituents of a family. The purpose of this system was to lead a life full of happiness. An idea progeny was born in an ideal environment of a family and welfare of all was intended in the welfare of a family. Different Sanskrit texts from early Vedic age have been depicting the structure of a family, as it was a peculiar achievement and successful accomplishment of Indians which India can boast of. The concept of family starts from a small unit of two to twenty or more persons originally coming from one linege (*kula* or *Vaṃśa*) living normally under one roof, having normally one kitchen. This family had one master to control it, he or she being the eldest member of the group.

The idea rooted in the conception of a family was that amongst all the *Āśramas* the *gṛhastha āśrama* or the house holder's *āśrama* is the best as *Vaśiṣṭhasmṛti* says:

'चतुर्णामाश्रमाणां तु गृहस्तस्तु विशिष्यते।'[1]

Manusmṛti also states: 'गृहस्थ उच्यते श्रेष्ठः।'[2]

Family is a well-arranged group persons sailing in the same boat and experiencing pleasure and pain, sharing comforts and sufferings of one another.

The concept of *Kutumba* in Indian culture starts with a small group and goes for up to the concept of the whole world "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*", the whole world is one family or the Vedic idea "*Yatra viśvaṃ bhavatyekanīḍam*" where the whole world become a nest. The concept of a family takes shape from a pair, which gives birth to a child. The pair is called parents '*pitaru*' or '*mātāpitaru*'. The roots of parents give birth to offshoots, the progeny son or daughter. Among the series the mother is the prime bearer of the same. *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka* describes it in this way:

'जाया पूर्वरूपं, पतिरुत्तररूपं, प्रजा संहिता।'[3]

In *Taittirīya upaniṣad* the words in this context are changed '*Prajā saṃdhiḥ*',[4] the progeny is the union. It means mother and father get perfection or are united through the progeny. The same conception is depicted in another way in *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka* such as:

'जाया पूर्वरूपं, पतिरुत्तररूपं, प्रजा संहिता।'[5]

We may call duality of mother father or wife-husband, but one thing is certain that man and woman are two cycles of the cart of household life. One is incomplete without the other. The concept of *Ardhanārīśvara* in Śaiva philosophy is a purely Indian vision that wife and husband both dwell is each other's body in a half way. Śiva is incapable without Śakti. Left side of Śiva belongs to his consort Umā. Still man becomes complete by giving birth to a new child, as *jāyā* in Sanskrit means, in whom the husband himself is again born. As *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* establishes this theory: 'अर्धं ह वा एष आत्मन यज्जाया तस्माद्यावाज्जायायां न विन्दते, नइव तावत् प्रजायते, असर्व हि तावद भवति। अथ यदिवा जायां विन्दते थ प्रजायते।'[6]

These references of ancient scriptures shows the strong bondage of relations between man and woman turned into husband and wife and in a later period turned into father and mother after giving birth to the next generations through their union. Thus relations tied the rope of love and faith produce prosperity in nation, as *Arthavaveda* states: 'अभिवर्धताम पयसाभि राष्ट्रेण वर्धताम्।'[7]

It is with both of them that they may attain a new and sublime life. Indian culture through these scriptures does not teach *viccheda* or divorce, but a happy union, in which both of them may affectionately care for each other. Actually they are made for each other, as we find in *Nāradapurāṇa*:

'यथा सुखं भवेद् भर्तुस्तथा कार्यं हि भार्यया।

अनुकूलं हितं तस्या इष्टाया भर्तुराचरेत्।।'[8]

Again *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa* admits that the wife is the source of attainment of fourfold *puruṣārtha* of man:

'जाया त्वर्ध शरीरस्य नृणां धर्मादिसाधने।

नाटस्तासु व्यथां कांचित् प्रतिपकूलं समाचरेत्।।'[9]

Mahābhārata maintains the position of wife in relation with husband in the same way:

'अर्धं भार्या मनुष्यस्य भार्या श्रष्ठतमः सखा।

भार्या मूलं त्रिवर्गस्य भार्या मूलं तरिष्यतः।।'[10]

It is maintained now that woman in the form of wife was on the key position in the household life, she was source of all happiness, as is said in *Pakṣasmṛti*:

'गृहवासः सुखार्थे हि पत्निमूलं चा तत्सुखम्।'[11]

Prajāpatismṛti goes further and declares that no home can be said to be home. Actually wife herself is home:

'न गृहं गृहमित्याहुर गृहिणी गृहमुच्यते।

गृहे तिष्ठति सा यावत् तावत् तिर्थसमां गृहम्।।'[12]

Thus it is proved that woman as a mistress of the house was placed on high position. The form of family is expanded, when mothers and fathers come across a newly wedded wife of their son. When this new bride enters her new house, she is called to be the Empress in relation with all and in every respect, *Ṛgveda* declares:

'सम्राज्ञी शवसुरे भाव, सम्राज्ञी श्वश्वां भव।

ननान्दरि सम्राज्ञी अधिदेव्रषु।। '[13]

These references confirm the purity and stability of the relations, and greatness of the positions of women in a family. The whole structure of the family is based on the cordial relations among all the family members, as *Arthavaveda* states:

'अनुव्रतः पितुः पुत्र मात्रा भवतु संमानाः।

जाया पत्ये मधुमतिं वाचं वदतु शान्तिवाम्।।'[14]

There may be conflicts and clashes of interest in one family. The seer in *Arthavaveda* wishes elimination of all conflicts and establishment of harmony among the members of a family:

'मा भ्रातरं द्विक्षन् मा स्वसारमुत स्वसा।

सम्याञ्चः सव्रता भूत्वा वाचं वदत भद्रया।।'[15]

The most important factor which nourishes the Indian family life is marriage. Ancient family life was bound by sixteen *saṃskāras*. Marriage was the most important among them. Marriage has its sources in family. In ancient times large

family was a blessing. Marriage was a family affair rather than a personal one. *Vivāha* was meant to be the origin and centre of all domestic sacrifices. Every man in his normal conditions was expected to marry and run a home. A sweet home, a sweet wife and fondling in the home these were coveted objects for the Vedic Āryans. We find references of marriage ceremonies in *Ṛgveda* and *Arthavaveda*. Marriage might have started as a social necessity but gradually when religious consciousness developed, marriage become a religious ceremony. Marriage was regarded as a sacrifice and man who did not enter married life was called one without sacrifice. When the theory of three debts (*ṛṇatraya*) evolved, marriage gained more significance and sanctity, as one could pay off one's *pitṛṛṇa* by producing children. Thus generations of offspring was main motive of every union to the end that a man's house or family may not die out. So the boat of marriage is bound with such strong ropes of religion, custom, rituals and culture. Unlike western marriage it is not a sexual relation alone or a transitory contract, but a union of two souls, which cannot be separated in this life. Rather they are to be reunited in the next births again and again. It is only in India, where a noble wife can undertake a vow and pray that she may attain the same man as her husband in several births to come, unlike in western countries where a husband and wife can take divorce many times in one birth. The union of the pair was made lasting by essential religious ceremonies. We find references of a lot of rites and ceremonies in *Ṛgveda* and *Arthavaveda.* Each and every ceremony confirms the piousness of the marriage system. The system of '*kanyāvaraṇa'* and '*varavaraṇa'* was a formal betrothal and acceptance of the bride and bridegroom from the family members of both the rides. The marriage ceremony is performed by adopting the Fire God, the purifier of all, as witness of the same. Vedic hymns are pronounced by the priests. The couple goes round the fire seven times.

The real ceremonial name for marriage is '*pāṅgrahaṇa'* i.e. 'the grasping of the bride's hand'. The bridegroom sizes the right hand of the bride with the words:

'गृभ्णामि ते सौभगत्वाय हस्तं मया पत्या जरदष्ठिर्यथासः।'[16]

At the same time seven conditions are put forth from the side of bridegroom, the bride takes a vow to admit them. Vice versa seven conditions are put forth from the side of bride and the bridegroom takes a vow to fulfil them. Only after this mutual agreement the bride comes to the left side of the bridegroom to be his wife. In the same order the great ceremony of '*Saptapadī'* takes place. The bride and bridegroom go round the fire step by step seven times. Till sixth step the bride still does not become wife, but as soon as seventh step or final step of Saptapadī is performed, marriage is regarded legally complete.

The marriage in India is not a social contract only, but a religious institution, a sacrament. There are many sacraments and symbols to make marriage spiritual phenomenon. One symbolical ceremony in marriage is '*hṛdayasparśa*'. The bridegroom touches the heart of the bride watching over her right shoulder with the words: 'मम व्रते ते हृदयं दधामि, मम चित्तं अनुचित्तं ते अस्तु।'[17]

One symbolical ceremony is '*samajñāna*'. The father of the bride anoints the pair. While this ceremony is performed, the bridegroom recites the verse: 'समञ्जन्टु विश्वेदेवः समाप हृदयानि नाउ।'[18]

Conclusion:

Thus we see that various rituals and performances performed in the *Vivāha saṃskāra* indicate that marriage is not only a physical union of two persons, but also a union of two hears or souls. Marriage reaches perfection only when the conjugal relationship is based on the realization that marriage is a great sacrifice, an act of responsibility for the welfare of the family. Marriage is the backbone of family system in India. On the one hand marriage is a union of two souls, on the other side it is a union of two families of the similar status. The institution of family was held on high esteem in ancient Sanskrit works, as it bestowed solace in soul, peace in mind, stability in relation and harmony in society. Breakdown of family life in many western countries is causing disharmony, dissatisfaction, distrust and disintegration in society. Men and women relations are on doldrums. Cases of divorce causing sufferings, conflict and frustration are increasing day by day. Prosperity cannot replace pleasure. Frequent divorce means distrust and dishonor between the two. In a system full of divorce somebody may feel a transitory relief for same time, but not a lasting happiness. Thus a joint family bound by love and trust can bring real joy in life. Joint family system in India gave affection and protection to the needy members at the time of mishap or misfortune. Though some evils and atrocities increased in family system also, but it was due to misuse of the system. The welfare of the human beings is bound in family system prevalent in ancient India and described in ancient Sanskrit scriptures. The family system found in Sanskrit texts and practiced in India from early dawn of civilization till today is certainly for the global welfare of the next generation.

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2. *Manusmṛti*, 6/89
3. *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka*, 7/16
4. *Taittirīya upaniṣad*, 1/3
5. *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka*, 7/17
6. *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 5/2/1/10
7. *Arthavaveda*, 6/78/2
8. *Nāradapurāṇa*, 2/16/55
9. *Bhaviṣyapurāṇa*, 1/8/37
10. *Mahābhārata*, *Ādiparva*, 74/40
11. *Pakṣasmṛti*, 4/7
12. *Prajāpatismṛti*, p.55
13. *Ṛgveda*, 10/85/4
14. *Arthavaveda*, 3/30/2
15. *Ibid*, 3/30/3

16. *Ṛgveda,* 10/17/1
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