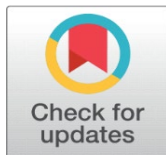
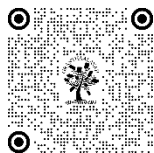


# EVALUATION ON DHARMA SASTRAS AND WOMEN WITH SPECIAL FOCUS TO ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL INDIA

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## ABSTRACT

The sacrificial ritualism of the Vedas grew to be defined and systematized, obviously because it was widely adopted, and this is evident in the socio-religious culture that can be inferred from the later Vedic literature, the Samhitas of Yajus and Sama-vedas and the Brahmana and Aranyaka texts. However, there is no doubt that it was also eventually losing its hold on the populace. In this article, evaluation on dharma sastras and women with special focus to ancient and medieval India has been discussed.

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**Keywords:** Dharma, Sastras, Women, Ancient, Medieval, India



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The numerous tribal populations invading the country, moving across in search of lands for raising their settlements, and interacting with the autochthons during such movements, the social civilization at the time was chaotic and confused, leading to the haphazard growth of customs and traditions. The situation persisted largely in the same pattern into the centuries prior to Christ and even into the early centuries following Christ, and as a result of the people's longstanding adherence to tradition, which was systematized and incorporated into the dharmasastra literature, the situation crystallized into strong customs and traditions. [1]

As a result, social acceptance of religion and religious endorsement of social culture were gradually drifting apart, and their development was not mutually reliant but rather parallel. Thus, the Kalpasutras were created in order to outline the socio-religious civilization and establish procedural requirements. As a result, they include the Srautasutras, Grhyasutras, and Dharmasutras, the third of which is presumably unrelated to the first two. The rules and regulations controlling ritualism are the sole focus of the first two parts, while the rules and regulations guiding people's behaviour both individually and collectively in the organised societies in which they live make up the third. The srautasutras deal with large-scale sacrifice rituals, which were likely carried out by the village's entire population but were ultimately carried out by the monarch on behalf of the entire gana, or tribal society, including Asvamedha, Vajapeya, etc. As

previously mentioned in the preceding section, the queens of the king, especially his chief queen, participated throughout the course of their performance, which was presided over by their purohitas in the societies that were politically structured into states. The Grhyasutras deal with the domestic rituals performed by the householder and his wife and are primarily concerned with their peace and prosperity. santi-svasty-ayana, as well as the samskaras to their children. These rituals include namakarana (the naming ceremony), cudakarma (tonsuring), annaprasana (first feeding with solid food), upanayana, vivaha, etc. They are all required. The dharmasutras, which make up the third section of the Kalpasutras, are more significant for the current study because they define and explain social civilization, personal and social behaviour of the individuals, customs and manners, as well as the code of conduct that they were expected to observe in their daily lives, both as individuals and as the society at large. They define the family unit, how it contributes to the development of a civilised society, and the place of the woman in it. [2]

The dharmasutras are written in the form of formulae that are not immediately understandable but instead are made up of short phrases or even half-sentences, and occasionally just a mess of words. They date back to a time when all subjects were presented solely in the form of formulae or aphorisms, as was the case with the Panini Vyakarana-sutras, Patanjali's Yogasutras, Badarayana's Vedantasutras, all six philosophical systems, and even Vatsyayana's Kamasutras. As time went on, however, literary compositions in the form of metrical verses started to become popular, most likely starting with the creation of the two great epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. From that point forward, legal literature also started to be produced in a vernacular form, with metres being used to control the rhythm. Technically speaking, these metrical writings on law and legal procedure are known as dharmasastras, and their composition can be dated to the third century B.C. and beyond, beginning most likely with Manusmṛti and lasting until the end of the seventh century A.D. These compositions were not original; rather, they were simply the earlier dharmasutras' subject matter presented in the form of metrical verses, as if the composers had memorized and presented them in accordance with Vedic tradition. For this reason, they were also known as smṛti works, or memorizations. These were harshly condemned for their brusque expression and for having been prejudiced against the feminine world because they are more scholarly, penned in highly conventionalized language, in metrical verses, and with an authoritative tone. The time of their composition can be said to have started around 200 B.C. and increased in output in the centuries leading up to and following the birth of Jesus, even after the creation of texts on the sruta and grhya-sutras had all but stopped, lasting until approximately 600 A.D.

Before criticizing the provisions of the dharmasutras and dharmasastras, it is important to understand them in the context of the historical period in which they were written because, as was previously stated, this period coincided with the composition of the epic-puranic literature and was characterized by chaos and confusion in social civilization. It is important to keep in mind that the sutra and smṛti texts were not intentionally written to be prejudicial toward women; rather, they were the products of a number of independent sages from various cultures and historical periods who had no way of meeting or discussing with one another. On the other hand, defining them in this way is clearly the consequence of historical studies that are biased, not in the direction of revealing the truth, but in the direction of advancing the vested interests of political groupings. The sages were moved by the current disorder and confusion in social civilization and inspired to stop the escalating disorder by highlighting and strengthening the timeless and universal principles of the nation's civilization and culture in order to ensure the advancement of material prosperity and the well-being of the entire society. Since the sages were serious thinkers and not poets, they took up writing to express their ideas clearly and directly rather than in a smooth and figurative language with aesthetic appeal at first and moral and spiritual instruction at second. Of course, the language in those works is undoubtedly forceful. They claim that following the norms is necessary and that breaking them would result in punishment since the state enacts laws and uses force to enforce them. As a result, they are referred to as "prabhusammita," which means that they are similar to royal decrees. However, it is untrue to say that Indian civilization and culture had any type of punishment for breaking social laws. Instead, sociological laws always take the form of conventions and traditions, whose keepers are the society as a whole, with the support of each individual's conscience. [3]

The efficacy and significance of ritualism were declining at the time the legal literature, particularly the sutra texts, were written. As a result, the Kalpasutras made provisions for the dharmasastras apart from the kalpa and grhya-sutras. It was the era when the heterodox religious schools of Buddhism and Jainism first appeared and began to grow widely, purportedly in response to the Vedic ritualism that was reducing the power of the Brahmanical priesthood over the

general populace. Under these circumstances, the Brahmanical priesthood would not have made the misguided decision to create strict laws for social discipline and further isolate themselves from the populace, as common-sense dictates. As a result, the situation needs to be reexamined in order to understand its true colours and contours, as opposed to historians generally repeating, like a parrot, that there was a social and religious uprising against the decadent and degenerate Vedic Brahmanism in the country around the sixth century B.C., and that a similar uprising predominated in contemporary China and Persia, which led to the rise of Confucianism and Zoroanism. It should be emphasised that this was also the period when the earliest upanisads were written, starting with the Brhad-Aranyak upanisad around 800 B.C., whose name suggests that it was likely originally an Aranyaka book but was included in the category of upanisads due to its primarily philosophical nature. Philosophical speculations started during the Later Vedic period, especially in the form of the Aranyakas, as a result of intuitive contemplation (itapas) on the part of the sages who sought to realize the Supreme Truth (jnana) as the cure for all evil in human thoughts and deeds rather than take determined action (karma-marga) in the form of sacrifice rituals and moral discipline. In other words, the philosophical hypotheses were the result of intellectuals realizing the inadequacy of sacrificial ritualism, which primarily consisted of kamyakarmas, the offering of sacrifices driven by desires—desires for prosperity, progeny, longevity, the eradication of bad luck, and bestowing all that is good—and would, therefore, not lead to the realisation of the truth. This demonstrates that both the jnana and the karma paths fundamentally grew out of the same causal background, that is, flaws in the socio-religious culture of the time brought on by confusion and disorder and meant to stop them and create a better social order.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is essentially "how" a certain piece of research is conducted in practice. More specifically, it deals with the methodical methods a researcher employs when designing a study to guarantee accurate outcomes that meet the goals and objectives of the investigation. The exact steps or methods used to find, pick, process, and analyze information on a subject are known as research methodology. This historical research relates with qualitative research design and secondary data. So, primary data was not applicable in this research.

### Research Design:

The framework which methods and procedures adopted a researcher known as the "research design". The framework makes it easier for researchers to focus on particular topic at hand and to design their studies for the best possible results. Qualitative research design typically involves gathering data through secondary data.

### Secondary Data:

Secondary data was received from books, newspapers, journals, magazines, documents, e-resources, periodicals & other information sources like government & non-government documentary evidences.

### Research Tools:

The historical approach was used.

### Analysis:

In this research analytical and interpretive tools, such as critical thinking, research methodologies, and theories of historical interpretation were used for evidence have gathered. Additionally, for analysis pictures also used.

## WOMAN OFFERING RITUALS

The *śrautasūtras* mostly discuss the mechanics of sacrifices and their magical effects, but they also shed some light on the place of women in a ritualistic culture in terms of their participation in sacrifices as partners with their husbands as opposed to their independence in making them. It has already been mentioned that one of the most famous practitioners of ritualism, *Kasakrtsna*, was a woman. She wrote a work on *Purva Mimamsa* known as *Kasakrtsni*, and a school of philosophers known as *Kaskrtsnas* later accepted it. Despite the social backlash against it in favour of philosophical pursuits, such as upanisadic speculations and heterodox schools of philosophy, the Buddhism and Jainism, *Purva Mimamsa* was one of the six philosophical systems that upholds the path of *karmakanda*, or sacrificial ritualism, as the means to realize the Ultimate Truth.

The premise that women were the pioneers and even inventors of cultivation and cattle-herding, the fundamental modes of producing wealth in early stages of economy, was likely the basis for the hypothesis of matriarchal societies and matrilineal succession of power and property, by virtue of women being proprietors over the means of production. [4] Man and woman must have been inclined to become mutually dependent and yearn for each other because of their inherent attraction to each other, even in the prehistoric period when humans had not yet developed any clear kinship bonds. As a result, even when they hunted and foraged for food, physiological reasons determined by nature must have made a woman dependent on a man, despite the fact that she must have been just as strong and courageous as a man during the childbearing stage and while caring for her sensitive infants.

Without a doubt, the discoveries of women cultivating crops and multiplying cattle wealth had far-reaching effects, as they fundamentally altered the pattern of economy from one of food-gathering to one of food-production and led to massive territorial settlements of people in societies with persistent interests and the development of persistent social patterns. However, the economy afterwards developed primarily by reclaiming land and clearing the vast jungles and trees that had covered the fertile areas. This could not have been accomplished by a woman alone, despite there being no denying her participation and cooperation. Because it required stronger muscles from men rather than the delicate bodies of women, economic primacy had to eventually shift from women to men. As a result, women could no longer maintain their control over the means of production to the extent that the anthropological hypotheses mentioned above would have us believe. During the Rgvedic civilization, people lived in villages as cultivators and cattle keepers, organising themselves into joint families in which members did not divide their means of production but instead lived together for generations. This situation prevented women from having ownership rights over the cattle and arable land. [5]

According to the Jaiminiya school, women can make sacrifices and earn money on their own by providing food for others or by saving a portion of the money that their husbands give them for household expenses. However, this claim needs little further discussion because it is undoubtedly not based on any religious law or historical fact. However, academics stressed that there were rituals that could only be performed by women, such as the Sita sacrifice at harvest time and the Rudra sacrifice to guarantee the fecundity of the cattle, which were connected to fertility cults to boost agricultural output and raise animal riches. They don't appear to have been a part of the mandatory soma sacrifices or Agni offerings that were made by everyone in accordance with the grhyasutras. It should be noted that the use of iron tools and improved cattle-herding methods allowed the Vaisyas to amass wealth, made their line of work lucrative and significant in the sociopolitical order, and ultimately tended to the expansion of monarchical powers through their tax payments and their role as the guardians of those wealthy sections. The use of iron in the Indo-Gangetic plains, at least beginning around B.C. 1200, made the Brahman, his Vedic lore, and Vedic ritualism obsolete.

However, according to the second school of thought, the social order changed in such a way that a wife, a slave, and a son have no property of their own, and whatever they earn becomes the wealth of the man to whom they belong. As a result, women began to be seen as the husband's property, and her earnings, if any, belonged only to him. Thus, the debate has led scholars to a completely different type of response: that a woman had no economic independence and that she could not hold property in her own right, while on the other hand, she was herself equal to a piece of property and the exclusive possession of her husband, and her own property and earnings, if there could be any, would pool into his property. This answer is that women had no economic independence and could not hold property in their own right. The reason why Vessantara gave his wife, Maddi, to Brahmans in the Buddhist Jataka stories and why Harisandra was able to sell his wife, Candramati, in the puranic narratives is that both customs were prevalent in the community at the time when the respective literatures were written.

The Ikshvaku kings, who controlled the plains around the mouth of the river Krsna in the third century A.D., were thought to be ardent followers of Vedic Brahmanism because they were said to have performed significant rituals like Asvamedha, Vajapeya, Agnistoma, etc. However, their queens and those in their families made generous grants and gifts to the Buddhist caitya there, which led to its renovation and enlargement. That the kings would not have likely allowed them to do so and made any funds available for them for the purpose; as a result, could the queens have their own independent sources of income, without depending on the king and his financial assistance etc., made the majority of historians in the past amazed. It is more amazing than the phenomenon that experts who were just born in India and

raised in the social climate of the nation have drawn so many questionable hypotheses. When a husband and wife have a normal inclination toward love, the former would kindly fulfil the latter's request and make the necessary cash available when she suggests doing something of a religious and spiritual kind, feeling that he was pleased and approved it out of his love. As his equal partner in his worldly as well as other worldly pursuits, she would undoubtedly feel free to use her husband's financial resources for performing rituals or to donate to temples and viharas, etc., and there would be no purpose to marriage and married life in the socio-religious culture of India if the husband and wife had separate incomes and expenses. Similar to this, the Satavahana queen Gautami Balasri donated one of the caves excavated on the hillside adjacent to the city of Nasik to the Buddhist sect of Bhadrayaniya. In the inscription the queen had etched, she included the prasasti of her distinguished son, Gautamiputra Satakari. There could be no doubt that the cave was excavated by the king at the instruction of his mother because she was portrayed in it as always adept at obeying her commands with the fullest regard, and she would undoubtedly not have had a separate source of cash for the purpose. In India's history, even sons' spouses would not have objected to women participating in religious rites or charitable endeavours. [6]

However, a significant change that has occurred since the later Vedic period must be taken into account in this context. Women were gradually losing the right to be initiated into Vedic study, and since Vedic ritualism and study were already losing popularity with the general public, their ability to perform Vedic sacrifices was undoubtedly becoming a rare occurrence. In regards to her religious studies and observances, she became equated with Sudras despite being a Brahmana vama herself. She used to observe fasts and vows focused on worshipping gods and goddesses with devotion, etc., but she would not have thought about Vedic rituals, of which she must have had little knowledge. Even today, women in India are free to practise their right to observe these vows and worship the gods and goddesses as they like, and there is undoubtedly no one who would oppose her or refuse to provide the required funds for their observance.

Another compelling argument made by the Jaimini school was that, in the case of a conflict between the *srti* and *smrti*, or the *Veda* and *dharmasastra*, the former had priority over the latter because the latter was merely an exegesis of the former but was not intended to be exclusive of it. They also strongly disagree with the idea that the father of the bride in an *Arsa*-style marriage sold her to the prospective husband since, while prices may vary depending on the quality of an item when it is sold or bought, in the case of the marriage in question, they remain the same. Although *Smrti* had a different viewpoint, *Sabarasvamin* proclaimed that it was not at all a price for the bride but rather a fixed amount in accordance with *Srti* as a religious observance, regardless of the attributes of the bride.

## WOMAN IN THE GRHYASUTRAS

The role of women in the *Ghayasutras* may be examined more closely in light of the social context that was previously examined in order to reveal the meaning and spirit of the texts in all of their complexity. They deal more with the role of the woman in her domestic life than the *srautasutras* do because, as was previously stated, they deal with domestic rituals that the householder was expected to perform daily, some of them three times a day, sitting next to his wife. They also deal with the *samskaras* for his sons and daughters, which were also associated with his wife. Since women typically play the role of housewives in ordinary families, their importance in household affairs and rituals deserves proper recognition. Instead of being viewed as notable poetesses, intellectual giants, or monarchs ruling over kingdoms, women should be seen as householders' indispensable partners, working alongside them to fulfil their socioreligious responsibilities. As a result, it is commonly said that the wife (*grhini*) is referred to as the *grha* rather than the house (*na-grham-grham-ity-ahuh grhini-grham-ucyate*). This refers to the role that women play in enhancing the beauty of the home. [7]

Different *grhyasutra* works are followed by various Vedic schools because the *grhyasutra* works are many, organised into groups, and each group is linked with one or more Vedic *samhitas*. As a result, they can be used as manuals for household ritualism as prescribed by a specific *Veda*. They were probably written by several authors in various areas of the country, and although they are all connected to the same *Veda*, they were not all written at the same time or in the same region of the country. Before beginning to compose their unique works, they obviously reflect the understanding of many sages of the same *Veda*, but in different ways, as well as the traditions created in their region of the country and combined with the Vedic traditions. As a result, it is possible to infer that people who adhered to distinct customs and traditions were relocating to various places across the nation, taking their texts and teachers with them. The texts must



have been influenced by encounters between many civilizations and cultures because they mirror the laws and regulations established by them and grow in bulk and content as a result, unwittingly promoting social and cultural integration throughout the subcontinent. Scholars agree that the Asvalayana-grhyasutra, which is the oldest of the books in the group and comparable to the Manusmṛti among the dharmasastras or the metrical legal writings, commands the greatest respect of all.

The Grhyasutras start with the guidelines on how to install the sacred fire in the home, together with his wife, at the time of their marriage, and how to keep it blazing throughout his entire life. As a result, the start of domestic rituals occurs when a man marries a girl and assumes the role of householder; in other words, the woman is crucial to the home, its customs, and its fire. The ceremony, known as Pakayajna, required them to worship the fire in unison three times per day by making sacrifices. The rite is also known as nitya, which means daily performance. When performing any other sacrifice that is more significant or sporadic, known as naimittika, in their home by way of homa, or at the time of ceremonial rituals like samskaras for their children, or at the time of sraddha, to make oblations to pitrs, sacred fire must be taken from the same pit that they have daily worshipped fire from throughout their lives. Thus, among the household rituals, marriage and the wife's participation in the daily fire worship were of utmost importance. As a result, the Ghyasutras discuss in great detail the rules and laws that regulate marriage in order to offer advice on these topics and on living a pious life.

The Asvalayana and Sankhayana-grhyasutras provide instructions on how to determine the right time (muhurta) for marriage, citing older authorities who differed from them and from whom they drew support for their respective positions. It demonstrates that marriage was a sacrament long before their time and that it used to occur in line with favorable planetary placements.

### **Eight kinds of Marriages:**

The first of the eight types of marriage was Brahma, in which the father of the girl would give away his daughter, who was dressed in expensive jewellery and clothing (s-alankṛta), along with a water libation known as kanyadana. Most likely, in this type of marriage, a snataka, or young man, would personally go to the father of a maiden and ask for her hand after completing his brahmaearya, or studenthood, and receiving permission from his teacher to enter the garhastya stage of life. He might also send some of his friends or relatives. The second on the list was the daiva, also known as the "divine form" of marriage, in which the father of the bride presented the priest performing the ceremony with a gift (dana) in the form of a maiden decked out in jewellery and expensive clothing (s-alankṛta). The third type of marriage was known as "Prajapatya," which likely refers to the fact that it was sanctioned by Prajapati, or the Lord of Beings, and in which a maiden was wed to a suitable bridegroom with the requirement that they uphold dharma. The fourth type of marriage was the Arsa type, which, according to the majority of dharmasutra texts, particularly the Asvalayana-grhyasutras, involves the payment of bridal money. This type of marriage was adopted by rishis, sages, or other sophisticated people with refined manners. The Gandharva is the first among them, where the mutual consent of the bride and bridegroom was sufficient and there was no need for parental involvement or even their knowledge, as well as the ceremony with the chanting of Vedic hymns, apparently because they were in love with each other. As evidenced by the analysis, this type of marriage regularly appears in epic-puranic tales and is thought to have been very common among the families that ruled in antiquity throughout the later Vedic era. The Gandharva form of marriage, as it is literally meant, is the type of union practised by the Gandharavas, who are thought to be semi-divine beings from whom humans may have descended to earth. However, historically speaking, the Gandharavas were residents of the nation of Gandhara, which is located in the eastern part of modern Afghanistan. Since it was widely used by royal families, who were also dvijas, and was one of the eight types acknowledged by the Dharmasutra texts, it was disapproved of and not recommended as suited for dvija communities, ostensibly meaning Brahman. The Asura, which literally translates as the demonic form of marriage and is said to take place after the bridegroom appeases the bride's father by paying the amount of money that the latter would demand, came next on the list of marriages that were recognised as being legally valid but disapproved due to cultural standards. This appears to be quite similar to the above-discussed Arsa kind of marriage, in which the bridegroom was required to give the bride's father a cow and an ox, but the amount and method of payment were not predetermined. Whether or not the payment in the Arsa type of marriage can be considered bridal money, it was unquestionably bridal money (kanya-sulka) because the amount of the payment, its purpose, and its mode are ambiguous and must have varied from case to case depending on the ability of the bridegroom to pay, which was

likely the reason for its disapproval. Asura must have originally been the system of marriage predominating among a people known as Asuras, who were obviously those who were not Suras or Devas. Gandharva-type marriage was the custom of the inhabitants of the Gandhara region. In the Vedic and epic-puranic literature, these two names denote heavenly beings, and similarly, their adversaries, the Asuras, are typically believed to be inhabitants of the underworld, demonic in origin, and equated with the Raksasas, and that they engaged in immoral and unrighteous behaviour. However, it has been noted that a number of Rgvedic hymns from older linguistic strata describe the Asuras as extremely respectable individuals, if not celestial creatures, and that Varuna, one of the Rgvedic gods, is frequently referred to as having been an Asura. In historical and linguistic context, the term's pejorative connotation must have developed later, as a result of a widespread separation of peoples of different races into Indo-Iranian and Indo-Aryan groups based on language and religion. The sutra literature refers to and explains the Raksasa and Paisaca marriages, which literally mean "fiendish and wicked." These weddings were clearly crude, immoral, and obviously uncivilized. [8]

### **Marital Life of Woman:**

Girls should get married as soon as they reach puberty, or at the very least, three years later, according to the sutra literature. This will allow them to fulfil their bodily needs and enjoy fulfilling lives as housewives. Since their parents perform marriages and let them be free to choose their husbands after the period, they advise maidens not to wait for more than three years following puberty. The same rule was established by Manu, and evidence from various Jataka stories and the Mahabharata's Savitri story suggests that it was generally obeyed.

The consummation of marriage was caturthi-karma, which meant that it would take place on the fourth day after marriage, according to the grhyasutras of Asvlayana and Sankhyayana as well as certain other early dharmasutra texts, like those of Gautama and Vasistha. They therefore believed that girls should wait to get married until they reach puberty, and as a result, the situation did not significantly change from the Later Vedic period in terms of the appropriate age for girls to marry, even though at that time, women did not have the same freedom to choose and fall in love with their husbands as they did in the Early Vedic period. However, some later sutra writings appear to decree that the bride was to be given in marriage as nagnika, which means naked. This obviously occurred in the bride's childhood before she became aware of her physical abnormalities and felt self-conscious. This was undoubtedly a result of the country's altered socioeconomic and political climate, as previously explained, which made it more difficult to maintain the virginity of the country's unmarried, adult daughters who were to be given in marriage. It was evident that the idea of getting them married as soon as possible was becoming more and more popular. [9]

The proposal to marry the couple's son with his daughter was typically made by the bridegroom's party during a ceremonial visit to the bride's home. Once the proposal was accepted, the bridegroom performed various ceremonies, the most significant of which was snataka. The rite denotes his receiving official consent from elders to leave the stage of Brahmacharya, or studenthood, and enter the stage of a house-holder. The word "snataka" literally means "one who has taken a bath," but in this context, "taking a bath" refers to shampooing with the application of several fragrant items and unguents that are typical of luxurious enjoyment, from which he was prohibited throughout his entire life as a Brahmacharya due to vows he was required to make at the time of the Upanayana. This means that the event, known as mangala-snana, marks his entry into the garhasthya, the most significant stage of his life, when he might live a life of luxury with his wife. On the day of the wedding, the bride also takes an auspicious bath (mangala-snana), is dressed out in pricey clothing and jewellery, and participates in the ritualistic activities. She begins by worshipping the traditional gods of her family's home. The most significant of them is the sacrifice known as Indrani-karma, which is connected to some elderly women (who would not be widows) in her household or among her close relatives. A priest oversees the rite. It was done to appease Indrani, the wife of Indra, who was regarded as the presiding deity for longevity, in order to pray for a long and productive marriage to her future spouse, as well as for her to live in peace and prosperity with him. Following the ritual of giving her to him as a gift, known as kanya-dana, the bridegroom pays a visit to her home with his friends and family and presents her with appropriate gifts. Next, panigrahana takes place, during which the bridegroom takes her right hand into his right hand and swears to never leave or neglect her in the pursuit of the three purusarthas, namely dharma, artha, and kama. The following phase of the rite, known as saptapadi, involves him leading her around the sacred fire while they both take seven steps in unison to formally declare their union and marital connection in the presence of the fire.

### 3. CONCLUSION

It was determined that forcing girls into marriage as soon as possible after reaching puberty was the most effective way to encourage social discipline, protect them from potential sexual abuse, and ultimately end immoral relationships between men and women. The sutra and smṛti literature undoubtedly provided strict rules and regulations, governing people's behavior with such a goal and naturally giving the understanding that they are the sole and sanctified basis for the social order and its function and shouldered woman, on one side with the burden of responsibilities, of managing her household, accompanying him in his religious duties, serving him obediently and on the other side. However, they provide her the authority to pursue dharma, artha, and kama with her husband as their lifelong, inseparable partner, fulfilling her maternal and procreative tendencies and making her entitled to enjoy physical pleasure with him as a result. This is known as puruṣartha. As a result of their mutual love and affection, the husband and wife's harmonious relationship was sanctified by their provisions, guaranteeing them a pleasant and happy existence on earth in the best possible way. Parents of the girls were strongly advised to have their daughters married and settled in life as soon as they reached puberty because this was the solution to the societal problems of the time, which were chaotic. In contrast to what is frequently believed, maintaining chastity and remaining loyal were mandated for both men and women in order to produce godly offspring. As a result, parents of girls began to place greater importance on having their daughters married as chaste virgins to acceptable grooms than on sending them to college with the aim of fostering their intellectual prowess. Of course, they undoubtedly placed a greater emphasis on the morality of women than men in their ordinance on conjugal morality because there were numerous ways in which she might be abused. As a result, they carefully laid out the potential transgressions that both men and women could commit and the many forms of sin that would result from these omissions and commissions in their behaviour, and they provided for expiatory ceremonies (prayascitta) to purge the sin. Since the sages who wrote the literature did not insist on punishment but rather only the realisation and repentance of people for their shortcomings in their thoughts and actions, it is obvious that the provisions in the dharmasastras had no power to punish those who violated them. The only punishment in such cases was the sin, which was cleansed by means of rituals, the prayascitta, to get rid of the sin. [10]

### CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

None.

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