Chapter XI

Gotra and exogamy

In dealing with questions of marriage, the narrower sense of gotra is stressed. The septs, included in any one of the eight principal Ṛṣi-clans, cannot enter into a marriage relation with one another. This is indicated by the prohibition of marriage within the same gotra. A marriage is held to be irregular, if the bride and bride-groom are of the same gotra (samāna-gotra) and of the same pravara (samāna-pravara).

Both Asvalāyana and Baudhāyana do not make any tangible discrimination between samāna-gotratva (sameness of gotra) and samāna-pravaratva (sameness of pravara). According to them, the septs of a clan, called by one of the names of the eight Ṛṣis, are regarded as exogamous.

The gotra affiliation is to be ascertained in the case of marriage by the first Ṛṣi name of the pravara. For example,

---

1 - Vide Gobhila Grihya Sūtra III. 4. 3 - 5, — anujñātah dārān kurvita. asagotrān, mātuh asapīndān; see also p. 82. The Grihya Sūtras, pt. II, Eng. Tr.
2 - See Āśv. Śr. S., Parisiṣṭa, p. 467.
3 - Baudh I. 2.
4 - See p. 150, Pravaradarpana, Gpnk, — gotratvena pariṣṭā- nām madhye yamapakramya pravarāṁmaṁ sa teṣām gotram; Bhṛgvaṅgiro-bhinnāikarsyaṁuvṛitteh sagotratvam.
the first name of the pravaras of the Kusikas and the Lohitas is Visvamitra; hence, their gotra would be considered as Visvamitra and they would be treated as belonging to the same gotra.

This rule has its exception in the cases of gotra-groups, included in the gana of Bhrigu or Angiras. Among them, the identity of three Rishi names in the case of five-Rishi pravaras or of two Rishi names in the case of three-Rishi pravaras determines the sameness of gotra or pravara and debar a marriage relation. For examples:

(i) The Vatsas and Vidas recite five-Rishi pravaras, which consist of three identical names; hence, they are regarded as samana-pravara and exogamous in relation to each other.

(ii) The Gautamas and Yamadevas have three-Rishi pravaras, ascribed to them, consisting of two identical names; hence, they are considered as samana-pravara and exogamous in relation to each other.

1 - Vide Baudh VI. 31.
2 - Ibid VI. 32.
3 - Ibid I. 2.
4 - Ibid I. 3.
5 - Ibid I. 4.
6 - Āṣv. Sr. S. II. 6. 11.
7 - Ibid.
The sameness of gotra is almost in all cases the sameness of pravara. But, Āśvalāyana cites the instance of Vatsas, who form two groups, of which one is affiliated to the Jamadagni gotra and the other is a different gotra-unit. Both these groups are treated as samāna-pravara and exogamous in relation to each other.

The rules of gotra exogamy seem to have been binding upon Vedic and post-Vedic social life. Even adopted gotras have not been excluded from the scope of these rules.

The age-long survival of the rules of gotra exogamy is perhaps due to the belief in Risi-descent prevailing among different casta-groups, though in most cases the gotra affiliation seems to be adopted. Raghunandana exempts the Śūdras from the obligations, connected with gotra exogamy. But, in spite of his assertions, some of the Bengali castes, designated as Śūdra, do not settle questions of marriage without a reference to the gotra affiliation.

1 - Āśv. Śr. S. II. 6. 10; Nārāyaṇa comments, -- dvipraKarāṇam Vatsānām parasparam avivāhah.
2 - See p. 572, Udvāha-tattvam, Āṣṭāvimsāti-tattvāni, sec. on Udvāha-nirṇaya, -- asamānārsagotrajām iti brāhmaṇādi-varpa - traya-viṣayam iti . . . dvijāti-graḥanām sagotra-vaŗjane śūdra- vyāvrittyartham.
3 - See pp. 15 - 16, Samāja o vivāha, Atul Chandra Gupta.