Chapter 4

Marriage and Domestic Life

A daughter is wealth belonging to another (Kālidāsa, Ṣākuntalam 4.25)

The importance of the Kathāsaritsāgara as a social document lies in the light it throws on how the public and private spheres came to be constituted in the society which it depicts. The role that marriage, as a rite of passage, plays in constituting the private sphere can never be underestimated. Ruth Vanitha in “Wedding of Two Souls: Same-Sex Marriage and Hindu Traditions” remarks: “Death, parenthood and marriage-each is a rite of passage” (120). The Sanskrit approximation for a rite of passage is the term saṁskāra, which involves an action that imparts fitness by removing sins and generating fresh qualities. Marriage is “the most important of all saṁskāras” writes Kane in the History of Dharmaśāstra (2: 427). According to Śabara, the commentator of Jaimini’s Pūrvaśāstra, who lived during the early centuries of the Christian era, saṁskāras are that “which being effected makes a certain thing or person fit for a certain purpose” (Kane 2: 190). Kane characterizes marriage as “a composite rite comprising several subordinate elements which have to be done in a certain order.” The last of these is seeing the constellation of the seven sages which brings about the status of a woman as a person’s wife (2: 429).
Kane has compiled a list of the different stages involved in the *saṃskāra* of marriage after consulting the various *Grhya Sūtras*. The list comprises thirty-nine items, beginning with *Vadhūvara-guṇapaṇīkāsa* (“examining the suitability of the bride and the groom”) and ending with *Devakotthāpana* and *Maṇḍapodvāsana* which is taking leave of the deities that had been invoked before the ceremonies began and taking down the *pandal*. Once the suitability of the bride and the groom is established, *Vaṛapreṣaṇa* (“sending persons to negotiate for the hand of the girl”) is set in motion. This results in *Vāgdāna* or *Vān-ṇīścaya* (“settling the marriage”), followed by *Maṇḍapa-karāṇa* (“erecting the *pandal* where the ceremonies are to be performed”) and *Nāṇī-śṛaddha* and *Puṇyāhvācana* (“uttering auspicious words”). The next step *Vadhūgrhāgamana* involved the groom visiting the bride’s house and his reception there, called *Madhuparka*. *Snāpana, Paridhāpana* and *Saṁnahana* are rituals which required the bride to bathe, put on new clothes and gird herself with a string or rope of *darbha*. This was followed by *Samañjana* or anointing the bride and the bride-groom. After performing *Pratisarabandha*, a ritual which involved the tying of an amulet on the bride’s hand, *Vadhūvara-nīskramaṇa* (“coming out into the *pandal* of the bride and the groom from the inner part of the house”) took place. *Parasparasamīksana* required them to look at each other. *Kanyādāna*, gifting the bride, was followed by *Agnisthāpana and Homa* (“establishing the fire and offering of oblations into the fire”). Then taking hold of the bride’s hand (*Pāṇigrahaṇa*) the groom
performed Ājayahoma, offering of fried grain into fire. This was followed by Agnipariṇayana in which the bride-groom leads the bride round the fire. Aśmārohaṇa, has the bride treading on a mill stone. The couple then took Saptapadi or seven steps together. The others sprinkled holy water on their heads during Mūrdhābhiṣeka. This was followed by a couple of richly symbolic rituals like Suryoḍīkṣana (“making the bride look toward the sun”) and Hṛdayasparśa (“touching the bride’s heart with a mantra”). But before the bride could enter the groom’s house (Grhapraveśa), Prekṣakānumantraṇa (“addressing the spectators with reference to the newly married bride”) had to be performed and the āchārya had to be propitiated with gifts during Dakṣinādāna. A ritual sacrifice called Grhapraveśāṇīya homa was performed upon entering the groom’s house. At night on the day of marriage during Dhruvārundhāṃ-darśana the stars Dhruva, the Pole star and Arundhāṃ were pointed out to the bride. The couple offered cooked food to Agni in Āgneya sthālipāka. They were also required to observe Triṛatavrata and Caturthikarma on the third and fourth night after marriage respectively. During Śimāntapūjana the bride-groom and his party were honoured on their arrival at the bride’s village. Śiva and his consort Gaurī were propitiated during Gaurī-Hara-pūja. So was Indrāṇī, the consort of Lord Indra during Indrāṇī-pūja. Taila-haridrāropana (“applying turmeric powder to the bride-groom’s body from what is left after the bride’s body has been so treated”) and Ārdrākṣatāropana (“mutual showering of wet unbroken rice grains by the bride
and the bridegroom”) were then performed, to be followed by Maṅgalaśūtra-bandhana (“tying a string having golden and other beads on it round the neck of the bride”). During Uttāṇyapāṇta-bandhana turmeric pieces and betel nut were tied to the end of the upper garments of both and the garments were tied into a knot. Just before winding up, gifts were presented to the groom’s mother (2: 531-38). Kane hastens to add that “in connection with the rites of marriage it is necessary to observe that the greatest divergence prevailed from very ancient times” (2: 527).

We find many of these rituals being performed by the characters in our stories. Marriage has always enjoyed an important place in the life of the people of India irrespective of caste differences. This holds true even to the present day. Even in the society that we come across in the Kathāsaritśāgara we find that great importance is attached to the question of marriage of both men and women. King Udayana is anxious to find a wife equal to him “in birth and personal appearance” (OS 1: 122). Śrutasena, a king of Deccan is worried because he has not obtained a suitable match (OS 3: 109). King Puṣkaraśāka is also concerned about finding a suitable match (OS 6: 15). King Mahāṣena is worried because he does not have a worthy sword and “a wife of a good family” (OS 1: 125). The reason for marriage as stated in the story of Aśokakara is a desire to perpetuate one’s race (OS 4: 141). The purpose of marriage, according to the Rgveda, was to enable a man, by becoming a householder, to perform sacrifices to the Gods and to procreate sons (4: 403;
Refusal to get married is a serious offence. It can even lead to one being cursed by one’s parents as depicted in the story of Aśokamālā, who is cursed by her father Aśokakara because of her refusal to get married (OS 4: 142).

In her introduction to *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*, Patricia Uberoi remarks: “Whatever the other changes in India society, matchmaking still remains the prerogative of family elders, not of the two persons involved” (36). Finding a suitable match for a daughter is the cause of great concern for the parents in these stories also. King Hemaprabha speaks about his daughter Ratnaprabhā: “a daughter is a great misery in the three worlds, . . . for this Ratnaprabhā, though modest, learned, young and beautiful, afflicts me because she has not obtained a husband” (OS 3: 165). A rākṣasi mother Viddyuchchhikā is also anxious “that her daughter grown up to fresh womanhood” gets married to an eligible man (OS 2: 206). King ParopaKarāin remarks about his daughter Kanakarekāhā:

A grown up daughter cannot be kept in one’s house, accordingly Kanakarekāhā troubles my heart with anxiety about a suitable marriage for her. For a maiden of good family who does not obtain a proper position is like a song out of tune; when heard of by the ears even of one unconnected with her causes distress. But a daughter who through folly is made over to one not
suitable is like learning imparted to one not fit to receive it, and
cannot tend to glory or merit, but only to regret. (OS 2: 171-72)

There were different types of marriage and several factors were taken
into account before choosing a suitable partner. They were looks, descent and
wealth. It was customary for the girl’s father to give a lot of gifts and property
at the time of marriage. Although the Kathāsaritsāgara deals with all aspects
of society it mainly deals with royal families, both semi-divine and human
which would have evoked sympathy from Somadeva’s royal audience. Hence
we can gather an idea primarily about the life of royalty though we get
glimpses of life of the common man also.

Let us first consider the question of choosing a suitable bridegroom and
the qualifications that make a very desirable bridegroom. The sūtras share
common views regarding the desirable qualities of a bridegroom but their
order seems to be slightly different in each of them. The Āpastamba Grhyā
Sūtra (800-400 BC) remarks “the accomplishments of a bridegroom are that
he must be endowed with good family, a good character, auspicious
characteristics, learning and good health” (Kane 2: 429). Baudhāyana Dharma
Sūtra (600-300 BC) gives more importance to the good qualities of the groom.
This view is echoed by Kalidāsa’s Anasūya who remarks: “It is the paramount
consideration in the mind of a parent to give a young daughter in marriage to
a groom endowed with all noble qualities” (Abhijñānasākuntalam 4. Prelude,
But Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Śūtra (800-400 BC) and law givers like Manu regard a good family as the most important consideration (Kane 2: 430).

This difference of opinion exists even among the characters in the Kathāsaritsāgara. “Of desirable qualities in a suitor, youth, good looks, noble birth, good disposition and wealth, youth is of greatest importance; high birth and so on, is of subordinate importance,” says Somaprabhā to Kalingaseṇā (OS 3: 65). Kalingaseṇā too “longs for a handsome husband” (OS 3: 65). Śaśāṅkavaṇī feels “a good-looking husband, even though poor, is to be preferred to an ugly one, though he be emperor over the whole earth” (OS 7: 176). Rākṣasi Rūpaśikha marries Prince Śrīnagabhuja for “beauty, birth, character and age” (OS 3: 224). But this is the opinion of young women. Similarly a parent often tries to arrange the marriage of his child with someone equally or more beautiful than him. The desire for a beautiful match for his son involves a father in a deception. The importance of good looks is expressed in the story of the old bṛāhmaṇa who describes his ugly son as handsome to another bṛāhmaṇa Ratnadatta so that he would agree to give the hand of his daughter Rūpavaṇī in marriage. He even gets Keśata to marry her on his son’s behalf and asks him to hand her over later (OS 9: 52). But curiously we find no instance in which a girl finds impossible to get married due to her ugliness. Princesses even tend to forget the differences in varṇa and are willing to marry someone belonging to a lower varṇa having been won over by their looks and qualities. Kurangī, the daughter of King Prasenajit is captivated by the “great courage
and striking looks of a young chaṇḍāla” and marries him (OS 8: 113). But it is stated that he is not a caṇḍāla by birth, but born to the God of fire and a brāhmaṇa girl- a way of giving divine sanction to such marriages.

The ancient law givers lay down several criteria for marrying a girl. Bhāradvāja Grhya Sūtra says that there are four compelling reasons for marrying a particular girl and they are wealth, beauty, intelligence and family. If all four cannot be secured, wealth may be neglected as the least important of all; then beauty may be neglected if there is intelligence and good family, but there is a difference of view as to the latter two, some preferring intelligence to family and others family to intelligence. Mānava Grhya Sūtra adds a fifth inducement for marriage, viz. vidiyā or learning notes Kane (2: 433). We find parents giving the first priority to high birth though good looks and youth are among the qualities desired. King Prasenajit, though old is selected by Kalingasena’s father because of “sufficiently noble lineage” (OS 3: 65). Even King Praṭāpamukuta feels that his attendant, the brāhmaṇa Aśokadatta is fit to marry his daughter princess Madanalekha “in birth, in learning, in truthfulness and beauty” and he comments: “In a bridegroom these qualities are to be looked for, not fortune that vanishes in a moment” (OS 2: 203).

The common practice is that of the bridegroom’s father asking for the hand of the bride in marriage. Here too we find the importance of equal family status. This is practised by people of all social classes. Bṛāhmaṇas also take
care to marry someone equal to them in rank. Bṛahmaṇa Vasudatta’s father made him marry “a wife from a family equal in rank to his own” (OS 6: 152). Washerman Dhavala’s marriage to Madanasundaṇī is arranged because they “are equal in family, wealth and occupation” (OS 6: 204). A merchant on seeing the handsome merchant youth Dhanadatta asks “about his descent” and gives his daughter Ratnāvalī to him “with a dower” (OS 6: 184). Prince of Paṭaliputra marries a princess “of equal birth” (OS 6: 183). Merchant Dhanadatta gets his daughter married to another merchant Samudragupta (OS 6: 186). If two families are connected marriage is not possible. “It is not a decent thing to do to marry a known kinswoman; but if there are compelling circumstances a man may marry a nonagnatic cousin descended from a common ancestor of a remoter than the third ascendant generation”: observes T. N. Madan (294-95). Hence an Asura king offers his daughter Kalavā to Śuryaprabha as a “congratulatory tribute” to his father Sunītha because she cannot be given to Sunītha as “she belongs to the same family” (OS 4: 30). Any honour paid to the son accrues to the father (OS 4: 31).

A proposal of marriage does not necessarily entail acceptance. The girl’s parents may reject a proposal from the groom’s side. King Vikramāditya and Mrgāṅkadatta are both refused and they use brute strength and strategems to force the marriage by attacking the stronghold of the girl’s father’s (OS 9: 70; 6). Similarly a bṛahmaṇa forces a kṣatriya to give him his daughter. Ašokamālā, the daughter of a kṣatriya had to get married to an ugly bṛahmaṇa because her
father was afraid of causing his the latter’s death. But such a marriage contracted against the will of the girl proves to be a failure when she abandons the husband and runs off with two kṣatriyas one after the other (OS 4: 140).

Even the King Yaśaḥketu had to give his daughter Śaśiprabhā to a brāhmaṇa for fear of angering him (OS 7: 47). In a story the king himself is brought in to decide the question of marriage. Merchant Guhasena asks merchant Dharmagupta for the hand of his daughter for his son but he refuses. The king is bribed with a jewel and the head of the armed forces is commissioned to surround the house with troops and finally Guhasena becomes successful in getting her in marriage from her father (OS 2: 40). In all these cases the refusal of the bride’s family is somehow forcibly overcome. With the exception of Unmādiṇī the offer of a woman by her family is never refused by a man or his family (OS 3: 111).

Not all marriages are arranged according to the wishes of the groom’s father. There are instances in which the groom expresses his desire to marry a girl of his own choice. Even in those cases he informs his father through his mother who intercedes to fulfil his desires. Washerman Dhavala sees Śuddhapaṭa’s daughter Madanasundarā, who had come to Gauḍīthīrtha for bathing. He expresses his desire to his mother, who presents it before his father. His father asks Madanasundarā’s father for her hand as they belonged to families of equal status and the marriage takes place (OS 6: 204). Vararuci takes the aid of Upakoṣā’s confidante to express his heart’s desire who in turn
discloses it to her mother. The mother talks to her father who discusses with his brother and he approves the match and Upakośā is bestowed upon Vararuci “by her father with all due ceremonies” (OS 1: 31).

Usually the proposal for marriage comes from the groom’s side. Book I of the Rajatarāṅgiṇī records that many proposals came from various kings for the Cola princess Raṇarambā out of which the proposal of King Raṇāditya of Kashmir was accepted (1: 110). Many kings send ambassadors seeking Kalingasena’s hand and out of them King Prasenajit’s proposal is selected by her father (OS 3: 65). The king of Tamralipī sends an ambassador to the island of Laṅkā to ask for the hand of the king’s daughter (OS 6: 211). King Kanakavarṣa sends an ambassador to King Devasakti of Vidarbha to ask for the hand of his daughter Madanasundaṇī who reflects: “I must give away this daughter of mine to someone, and this King Kanakavarṣa has been described as my equal, and he asks for her, so I will give her to him” (OS 4: 208). The king asks her father, the hermit for Kadāligaṅgarbha’s hand (OS 3: 98). King Vimala asks for the hand of King Surasena’s daughter through an envoy (OS 4: 225). King Mahāsena sends an ambassador to Hansadvīpa, to ask for the daughter of King Mandaradeva for his son (OS 7: 140). We do not find the girl’s father sending proposals for his own daughter. Princess Anangaraṇī receives proposals of marriage from many kings (OS 4: 144). King Chanda Mahāsena wants Udayana to marry his daughter but his prestige prohibits him from sending the proposal directly (OS 1: 123). But in rare instances we find the father offering his
daughter as in the story of Unmādiṇī. The merchant offers his beautiful
dughter Unmādiṇī to the king but he does not marry her as the bṛāhmaṇas
declare that she has inauspicious marks on her body. This reveals the
importance attached to having auspicious marks. She is then married to the
Prime minister and he requests the King to take her as his wife but he refuses
and dies pining for her (OS 3: 111). The merchant Guṇavarman also offers his
dughter Tejasvā to King Ādityasena who marries her. This can be taken as an
eexample in cases where the groom enjoys a far higher social status than the
bride. For example Unmādiṇī and Tejasvā are only daughters of merchants
while they are offered to kings. In the case of marriage proposals of two
people of equal social standing the first step is always taken by the groom’s
side. Three bṛāhmaṇa suitors come to ask for the hand of Mandarava, the
daughter of the bṛāhmaṇa Agnisvāmin (OS 6: 179). A kṣatriya from Ujjayinī
comes to Viśāla and asks her father who is also a kṣatriya, Madirava’s hand in
marriage (OS 8: 5). Bṛāhmaṇa Viḍūshaka marries the princess but it is arranged
by the king himself (OS 2: 55). This is possible only because the bride is socially
superior to the groom. Impressed with his extraordinary qualities the
bṛāhmaṇa Agnidatta offers his daughter Sundarī to Guṇaśarman (OS 4: 101).
But that is because he had taken refuge there from the oppression of the king.
Hence he was not in the position to initiate the proceedings of marriage.
Betrothal

The word of the father once given could not be broken in the question of marriage. Hence the hermit Ashṭavakra cannot give his daughter Ṣavitṛi to Angiras because she was already betrothed to someone else (OS 8: 22). The merchant girl Madanasena, refuses the proposal of Dharmadatta because she has already been betrothed by her father to another merchant Samudradatta (OS 7: 5). This shows how important a father’s word is.

Conditions for Getting Married

There are instances in which certain conditions are put forth by the girl to her parents regarding her husband. King Vīradeva’s daughter Anangarā remarks that she “must be given in marriage to a good-looking young man, who is a perfect master of one art” (OS 4: 144). Princess Kanakarekha lays a condition that she must be given only to a bṛahmaṇa or kṣatriya who has seen the Golden City (OS 2: 173). Bṛahmaṇa Harisvamin’s daughter Somaprabha made her mother give the message to her father that she is to be given in marriage to “a man possessed of heroism and knowledge or magic power” (OS 6: 200). Princess Gandharvadattā resolves that she shall marry “whoever is so well skilled in music that he can play on the lyre, and sing perfectly in three scales a song in praise of Viṣṇu” (OS 8: 29).

Maidens Offering Themselves

In some cases we find maidens offering themselves to men of their own choice. The men thus approached are bound by duty to marry them but its
consequences are often disastrous. A maiden Mātridatta, the daughter of a rich merchant came to select the King Śrutasena as her husband. He marries her for fear of committing unrighteousness. Mātridatta enters fire with the king who dies of a broken heart at the death of his beloved wife, Vidyuddyoṭā (OS 3: 112). Desirous of marrying Udayana, Kalingasena comes to his kingdom after abandoning her father’s home. But he does not take her as his wife thinking “there cannot be, . . . much sin in abandoning one who had come to select me as her husband” (OS 3: 113).

Svayamvara or Selecting One’s Husband

We come across svayamvara or the practice of the bride selecting her husband only in two instances in these stories. The first is that of Damayantī’s svayamvara (OS 4: 238). The second instance is in the story of King Viḍradeva who asks his daughter Anangaraṇī to “select her own husband” (svayamvara) but she refuses out of modesty (OS 7: 3). In Damayantī svayamvara, King Bhima, her father performs her marriage ceremony after she places the garland of selection on Nala (OS 4: 239). Book 1 of the Rājatarāṅgiṇī mentions that the Yadavas (Vṛṣṇis) were invited by Gāndhāras on the banks of the Indus to an approaching svayamvara (1: 13). The Princess of Prāgiyotis, Aṃrtaprabhā also selected her husband through a svayamvara. She garlanded Prince Meghavahana in the presence of the kings who had assembled there (1: 69).
Marriage by Treachery

Everything is fair in love and war. Hence men and women, both semi-divine and mortal go to great lengths and even resort to disguise to marry their loved ones. Kalingasena is married by a *vidyādhara*, who disguises himself as Udayana and they are married in ġāṇḍharva style (*OS* 3: 121). A *vidyādhari*, Lalitalochara disguises herself as Narāvāhanadatta’s wife Madanamancuka but he later marries her in ġāṇḍharva style (*OS* 6: 2). Prabhāva also manages to go through the ceremony of marriage with Narāvāhanadatta by artifice (*OS* 8: 34). Vegavā took Madanamanchukā’s shape and makes Narāvāhanadatta marry her again under the pretext of having forgotten to perform a ceremony (*OS* 8: 25).

Matchmakers

Sometimes bards, female ascetics and painters who roam distant lands act as matchmakers between royal families. The bard Manorathasiddhi is instrumental in the marriage of Kamaḷakara and Haṃśavaḷi while the intervention of the female ascetic Kāṭyāyaṇī, and the painter Roladeva bring about the marriages of Maṇḍaravaḷi-Sundarasena and Kanakavarṣa-Madanasundaṇi respectively (*OS* 6: 41; 7: 137; 4: 204).

Gāṇḍharva Marriage

“The gāṇḍharva marriage is the best of all marriages in the world” (*OS* 4: 32). The *gāṇḍharva* form of marriage in which the bride and the groom does away with all the accepted ceremonies associated with marriage is socially
accepted though in some cases they go through the marriage ceremony again. The bride and the groom may unite in a *gāndharva* form of marriage but more prestige is given to the ceremony in which the groom receives the bride from her father’s hand. Bhīmaḥāta marries Haṃsāvālī in a *gāndharva* ceremony but goes to the court the next day to ask the king her father for her hand (*OS* 6: 157). Udayana elopes with Vāsavatā but Chaṇḍamaḥāśena, her father sends a message that her brother Gopālaka will arrive in his court to celebrate his sister’s marriage with appropriate ceremonies (*OS* 1: 182). This confirms the belief that such a marriage celebrated with the approval of family is given greater prestige than the *gāndharva* form. It is interesting to note that though the King Udayana marries Bandhumā in a *gāndharva* ceremony this marriage is not solemnised with ceremonies as in the case of Vāsavatā (*OS* 1: 187). Vāsavatā remains his chief queen. The *gāndharva* seems to be a very popular form of marriage among young men and women. Devadatta and Śri, Manaḥśvāmin and Śasiprabhā, Indīvarasena and Khaḍgadanshṭrā, Yaśaḥketu and Mrigāṅkavālī, Madanavega and Kalingasena are some of the couples who get married in this manner (*OS* 1: 88; 7: 44; 3: 269; 7: 21; 3: 121). We do not get a description about the rites involved in this type of marriage. The validity of *gāndharva* marriages is affirmed by the words of King Duḥṣanta who tells Śakuntala that her father, the hermit Kaṇva is well versed in law and that

Many are the daughters of sages,

married by the Gāndharva rite, we hear;
and once married, felicitated

with joyful acceptance by their fathers. (Śakuntalam 3.28)

But it was definitely inferior to the marriage conducted according to the rites prescribed by the law givers in which the groom receives the bride’s hand from her father. As an example we can quote Yaugandhaṅayana who admonishes Udayana for that “impropriety” when Udayana plans to get Naravāhanadatta married to Madanamāncūkā in a gāndharva ceremony (OS 3: 146). A yakṣa and a hermit girl were cursed for marrying by gāndharva “for doing what is right in your own eyes” (OS 1: 68). The inferiority of gāndharva is evident in the words of King Trivikramasena who expresses the opinion that a lawful wife is one given by the father in a lawful way. In deciding the question of ownership of the wife between two men; one, who married her by gāndharva, and another who married her according to the lawful rites, he says the man who married her by gāndharva rite did so in an “underhand way, like a thief, . . . a thief has no lawful title to the possessions of another” (OS 7: 48).

Importance of Formal Marriage

Kauṭilya avers that “among the wives the one who has gone through all the necessary religious ceremonies has seniority over that of the other lady married according to other methods like gāndharva” (2: 443). The importance of solemnising the marriage with appropriate ceremonies is stressed in the story of Śaṅkavaṅī who is willingly carried off by Mrṅgāṅkadatta. Her father calls them back to “celebrate marriage with appropriate ceremonies” as “he
does not wish his daughter to be married in an irregular manner” (OS 7: 181-83). Sūryaprabha carries off several princesses and make them his wives (OS 4: 4). The kings whose daughters had been abducted by Sūryaprabha send messages to his father to come to their kingdom in order that “they may make a friendship based upon the due performance of marriage rites and hospitality” (OS 4: 5). He then goes to their kingdoms and receives the brides in the appropriate manner with “due ceremonies” along with their dowry (OS 4: 1-13). Brāhmaṇa Śaktideva marries again the four vidyādhari sisters, bestowed by their father though he had married them before in their mortal form (OS 2: 239). The legal validity of a marriage conducted in a hurry by pouring water on the hand of the groom and the custom of producing a son “by appointment” is established in the story of the thief (OS 7: 86; 7: 79). A mother marries her daughter to an impaled thief for a thousand pieces of gold as he wants to make sure that he will have a son to perform his rites after death. The girl then begets a child by a brāhmaṇa who spends one night in return for some money. In a curious turn of fate the child is then brought up by the king as his adopted son (OS 7: 83). So, he has three fathers but it is established that the thief who married his mother is his rightful father rather than his biological and adopted fathers, the brāhmaṇa and the king.

**Marriage Ceremonies**

We can gain some ideas regarding the marriage ceremonies which were followed during that age from the description of Vasavadatta’s marriage
to Udayana and from Narāvahanadatta’s marriage to Madanamancuṅa. There are references to astrologers fixing an auspicious date for marriage (OS 7: 186). Astrologers fix a time for marriage after finding out the star under which the bride is born (OS 7: 142). After fixing the marriage the freedom of the bride is restricted. A kṣatriya maiden Madiṅavati, upon her marriage being fixed is shut up in her father’s house, and prevented from roaming about at will (OS 8: 6). We see in the Kathāsaritasāgara a bride worshipping Kāma on the day of her marriage and she is preceded by the “usual auspicious band of music” (OS 8: 10-11). Sometimes weddings were conducted at night. Kamaṅkara’s wedding takes place at night and he arrives with a train of elephants, horses and footmen (OS 6: 47). The royal marriage is celebrated like a festival and “cymbals clang” in its honour. “Minstrels and dancing-girls came with hymns, music, dances and songs” (OS 3: 148). On the day of the marriage, the processional entry of the bridegroom’s friends, heralded by the sound of drums is noted (OS 8: 6). We come across the custom of the bride’s father welcoming the groom’s procession (OS 4: 209). A special platform was built for marriage and there was music too. The chamber prepared for marriage is full of women whose husbands were still alive (OS 2: 27). It is mentioned that an “altar-platform” was ready at Rūpavāṃ’s house and “was made to resound with the music of various instruments” during the marriage (OS 9: 56). The description of a kṣatriya wedding is as follows: “one corner was
full of singing female slaves, another of professional mimes, and a third was occupied by brahmans waiting for the auspicious moment” (OS 8: 13).

There was also the ceremony of the groom receiving the bride’s hand and then the couple walked round the sacred fire. Thus the king of Vatsa “received the hand of Vāsavadatta” and then “she walked round the fire, keeping it to the right” (OS 1: 183). In Naravāhanadatta- Madanamancukā marriage, they ascend the altar platform and “circumambulated the fire keeping it on the right” (OS 3: 147). The presence of fire is attested by the story of Śrīngabhuja’s marriage to Rūpāśikā which is solemnised “in the presence of fire” (OS 3: 229). Dowry is bestowed after the couple circumambulate the sacred fire. Accordingly Kalingaseṇā honours her son-in-law with “heaps of gold studded with jewels”. It was also customary for the groom’s family to distribute gifts and so Udayana “distributes gold” (OS 3: 147). Śaśāṅkavā’s private property is given to her before marriage while dowry is given at the marriage altar. Her brother Suṣeṇa gives her away (OS 7: 186). Handfuls of parched grain are thrown into the fire (OS 7: 188).

Mr̥gānkadatta- Śaśāṅkavā’s marriage is followed by a feast and a wine party where everyone “eaten and drunk well, enjoyed music and dancing (OS 7: 188). To celebrate a prince’s marriage prisoners were released from prison (OS 7: 160).
Giving Away a Bride in Marriage: *Kanyādāna*

*Kanyādāna* or giving away the bride in marriage was a very important part of the ceremony. The right to perform this was given to the girl’s father or to the brother when he was instructed to do so by the father. Kane notes that according to the *Viṣṇu Dharma Śūtra* the order of persons who has this right of guardianship is the father, the paternal grandfather, a brother, a kinsman, a maternal grandfather and the mother. In the absence of any of these a girl may perform *svayaṁvara*. The law giver Narada changes the order as father, brother (with father’s consent), paternal grandfather, maternal uncle, agnates, cognates and mother and then only comes *svayaṁvara*. The mother has been put low in such an order probably because of the dependent status assigned to women and because she cannot personally perform *kanyādāna* but has to get it done through some male relative. But there are no rules in ancient *smṛtis* as to who is to arrange the marriage of males (2: 501-02). We find this role being performed by the father or the brother in the stories under consideration.

According to the instructions of Vāsavadatta’s father her brother Gopālaka gives her away and so does Śaśāṅkavaṭī’s brother Suṣeṇa (*OS* 1: 182; 7: 186). In another story a brother gives his sister in marriage to a friend (*OS* 6: 119). But most of the time it is the privilege of the father (*OS* 4: 208; 2: 203; 2: 55). In the story of Jimūtavāhana a brother offers his sister to him in marriage but the marriage takes place by the intervention of parents (*OS* 2: 140).
Dowry

It was customary for the bride’s parents to bestow gifts on the groom and his party at the time of marriage. Vasavadatta’s father sends a lot of riches to be bestowed on Udayana at the time of their marriage. It is written that “by means of the jewels brought by Gopālaka, and the gift of the Kings, the monarch of Vatsa became a real king of Kings” (OS 1: 184). Dowry is given at the marriage altar to the groom and to his family (OS 4: 6). The groom would also distribute gifts in return. Thus Udayana gifted Gopālaka “turbans of honour” and conferred appropriate distinctions on the Kings who had come to visit him (OS 1: 184). Ratnāvalī’s father, the merchant gives his daughter to the merchant youth Dhanadatta along “with a dower” (OS 6: 184). Hamśāvalī’s father, the King bestows much wealth on her. Her husband, Bhīmaṇabhata thus obtains “many elephants, horses and villages” (OS 6: 159). His father-in-law also gives him the kingdom of Laṭa, and “being childless and old” he retires to the forest (OS 6: 159). Thus the father-in-law’s property is passed on to the son-in-law. King Devasakti gave his daughter Madanasundarī in marriage to King Kanakavarsa, together with “all his wealth, retaining only his kingdom” (OS 4: 209). Bhojika, the brahmaṇa who gave his three daughters to the three brahmaṇa brothers in marriage bestowed all his wealth on them and goes to the Gaṅga to perform austerities (OS 1: 18-19). Vikramāditya’s father-in-law, the bhilla king promises to follow him “as his slave with twenty thousand
archers” and gives him a “hundred camels laden with pearls and musk” (OS 9: 48).

This relationship in which the father-in-law promises unconditional allegiance like a slave to the son-in-law is possible only in the situation in which the son-in-law is socially far above the former. But even in relationships between two people of equal social standing the wife’s family is always ready to be of service to the son-in-law when the need arises. When King Kanakavarṣa face political troubles, his father-in-law comes “along with his army” to aid him (OS 4: 218). Śrīdatta’s fathers-in-law, the Kings Bimbaka and Śūrasena also come to help him with their troops (OS 1: 119).

Age of Marriage

“In the Ṛgveda there are no clear statements about the exact age when girls were married. But there are indications that many girls were married at a sufficiently mature age (at least they were not married at the tender age of eight)” writes Kane (2: 439). The characters that we come across in the stories in the Kathāsaritsāgara seem to be young men and women at the time of their marriage. Aśokakara starts looking for a suitable son-in-law when his daughter “arrived at an adult age” (OS 4: 141). Vararuci had “emerged from the condition of childhood” (OS 1: 30) when he saw Upakoṣa. The merchant girl Madanasena is a young woman when Dharmadatta proposes to her (OS 7: 5). So is the hermit girl Indīvaraprabhā, daughter of Kaṇva and Menakā, when King Candrāvaloka asks her father to give her hand in marriage (OS 7: 89). Princess
Anangaraṇī had also “attained womanhood” when kings began to request her hand in marriage (OS 4: 144). Again, Patali is a young woman when Putraka marries her (OS 1: 23).

Kane writes that there was no special rule as to the age before which a man was obliged to marry. He could even remain celibate all his life. Accordingly we find a king of kirātas observing a vow of chastity (OS 6: 23).

A man was to marry after he had finished his Vedic studies; but the period of Vedic study was fluctuating (i.e. it could be 12, 24, 36, 48 years or as much time as was necessary to master one Veda or a portion of it). Usually twelve years were devoted to brahmacharya in ancient times and as upanayana ordinarily took place in the 8th year (for brahmaṇas) a man would ordinarily be 20 years old or more at the time of marriage. (Kane 2: 438)

It was even believed that if a woman died unmarried there was no hope of her achieving heaven (Kane 2: 443). But the Kathāsaritsāgara does not subscribe to this view. A brahmaṇa virgin is seen observing a vow of chastity (OS 6: 20).

After examining evidence from various Gṛhya Śūtras Kane states “so late as 1200 A. D. in several countries the marriageable age of girls must have been at least about 14” (2: 441). From about 600 BC to about the beginning of the Christian era it did not matter at all if a girl was married some years after she attained puberty. But by about AD 200 when the Yājnavalkyasūtrī was composed pre-puberty marriages had begun to be insisted. Kane attributes it
to the growing influence of Buddhism which had spread far and wide during these centuries. It had encouraged the institution of monks and nuns and there was laxity of morals among nuns. A further reason could be that girls had generally ceased to study anything, though some of them did study in the times of Pāṇini and Patañjali, and “so society did not like girls to remain doing nothing” (2: 443). Eventually it came to be believed that there was no hope of gaining heaven for a woman who died unmarried. In the first half of the twentieth century the Child Marriage Restraint Act XIX of 1929, as amended by Act of 1938 fixed the minimum age limit for girls at fourteen and persons getting their daughters married before the completion of that age were liable to be punished. This was not restricted to India alone. Child marriages were common in all countries of Europe. Even in England the age limit for boys and girls was recognised by law as fourteen and twelve until 1929, when the lowest marriageable age for both was fixed at sixteen. Moreover, the marriage of girls of tender years which took place was purely a sacrament. There was no question of consummation which took place only after puberty. “Sages condemned intercourse even with one’s wife before she attained puberty” (Kane 2: 446). But these rules about the proper age for the marriage of girls affected only brāhmaṇas. “The Saṃskāra-praśa express that there is no prohibition against marrying a girl who has passed the age of puberty for kṣatriyas and others” (Kane 2: 446). This could be the reason why the Kathāsaritsāgara, which depict royal society predominantly, abounds in
references to marriages of young men and women. There is only one instance where we come across child marriage. Agniśarman, a bṛāhmaṇa from Paṭaliputra married from the city of Vardhamāna but his rich father—in-law would not allow his wife to leave with him on the ground that she was a mere child. When she attained puberty Agniśarman’s parents sent him to fetch her. He went alone and was welcomed in his father-in-law’s house (OS 9: 75-76). A strong argument in favour of pre-puberty marriages is seen in the words of Princess Kanakarekḥā’s father who exclaims:

How can sin be sin avoided unless a daughter is given in marriage? And independence is not fit for a maiden who ought to be in dependence on relations. For a daughter in truth, is born for the sake of another and is kept for him. The house of her father is not a fit place for her except in childhood. For if a daughter reaches puberty unmarried her relations go to hell, and she is an outcaste, and her bridegroom is called the husband of an out caste. (OS 2: 172-73).

Inter-Caste Marriages

“That the inter-caste marriages were current as late as the medieval period of Indian history is evident from the concrete cases recorded in Sanskrit literature”: comments Rajbali Pandey (178). In the Kathāsaritśāgaras, we have a number of instances of inter-caste marriages. “A bṛāhmaṇa may take as wife a woman of any caste, a kṣatriya may marry a woman of his own caste or a
vaiśya or a śūdra woman, a vaiśya may marry a vaiśya or śūdra woman and a śūdra only a śūdra woman” (Kane 2: 448). Kane quotes from Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra, Śaṅkhayana Grhyasūtra, Manu, Viṣṇu Dharma Sūtra, Paraskara Grhyasūtra, Vasiṣṭha Dharma Sūtra to prove that some teachers allowed a dvija to marry a Śūdra woman but without vedic mantras (2: 448).

“Ancient smṛtis ungrudgingly recognised marriages between a bṛahmaṇa and a kṣatriya or a vaiśya girl. But opinion was not unanimous about the marriage of a dvijāti with a śūdra woman” (Kane 2: 449). This shows that such anuloma (“high caste man marrying a lower caste woman”) marriages were frequent till the ninth and tenth centuries but became rare later. He gives epigraphic evidences of marriage between bṛahmaṇas and kṣatriyas like Prabhavaṉa gupta, daughter of Candragupta II who lived in the first quarter of fifth century, becoming the chief queen of King Rudrasena II of Vākaṭaka line, a bṛahmaṇa (Kane 2: 449). Kane also records that Praṅhaṉa kings descended from a bṛahmaṇa Haricandra and his kṣatriya wife and the Ātpur inscription of Śaktikumāra of AD 977 states that the founder of the Guhila dynasty was a bṛahmaṇa Guhadatta, whose descendant Bhartṛpaṭṭa married a Rāṣṭraṅkūṭa princess (2: 450). Kane mentions that the Ghaṭotkaca Inscription of Yaśodharman and Viṣṇuvardhana contain the reference to Soma, a bṛahmaṇa who had both bṛahmaṇa and kṣatriya wives (2: 450). But this was not approved later. Kalhaṇa speaks with disapproval of the marriage of Loṭhiṅka, daughter of King Saṁgrāmarāja (1003-28) to Preman, the superintendent of
the Diddāmaṭha temple “who possessed wealth, courage and other good qualities”. He remarks that the king “allowed his royal dignity to be lowered by unequal matrimonial relations” in order “to secure assistance”. Kalhaṇa adds “How great is the distance between a princess fit for a king who is bent on universal conquest, and a bṛahman of small mind whose hand is wet with the water of presents?” (1: 268).

Mālavikāgnimitram of Kālidāsa shows that Agnimitra, a bṛahmaṇa married Mālavika, a kṣatriya princess. Kane notes that Medḥātithi, a commentator on Manu “suggest that about 900 A.D. at the latest marriages of bṛahmaṇas with kṣatriya and vaiśya girls took place rarely in his day, but not with Śudra women” (2: 451). Kane records that in British India in the first half of the twentieth century Allahabad High Court regarded all anuloma and pratiloma (“high caste girl marrying low caste man”) marriages as invalid though some other High Courts validated anuloma marriages solemnised under the Special Marriage Act of 1872 amended by Act XXX of 1923 (2: 452).

“A Bṛahman may take four, a Kshatriya three, a Vaiśya two wives, and a Śudra one. Every man of a caste may marry a woman of his own caste or one of the castes or caste below his; but nobody is allowed to marry a woman of a caste superior to his own” writes Alberuni regarding marriage (2: 155-56). This attitude is echoed by the princess Anangarāḥ when four suitors, śudra, vaiśya, kṣatriya and bṛahmaṇa come to ask for her hand (OS 4: 144). Rejecting the śudra and vaiśya suitors the princess remarks “How can I give myself to them
when I am a kshatriya woman?” She rejects the kṣatriya who is equal to her in birth on the ground that “he is a poor man and lives by service, selling his life”. The brāhmaṇa is also rejected as he is ugly and as he has rejected the Vedas (OS 4: 146). But it is remarkable that the people of the lower varṇās came forward to ask for her hand quoting their special abilities and that the king himself considered the possibility of such an alliance.

Most cases of inter-caste marriages in the Kathasaratśāgarā take place by gāndharva and is found among kṣatriyas and brāhmaṇas but such marriages arranged by the elders in the family are also seen. The following are a few examples. The king of Alaka had two wives. The first was the daughter of his minister while the second one was “of royal race” (OS 3: 263). Devadatta, a brāhmaṇa marries princess Śri by gāndharva (OS 1: 88). Manaḥsvāmin, the brāhmaṇa marries Princess Śasiprabhā by gāndharva (OS 7: 44). Brāhmaṇa Śrīdatta marries a śavara chief’s daughter by gāndharva (OS 1: 116). He also marries King Śurasena’s daughter and King Bimbaka’s daughter (OS 1: 119). Prince Indivarasena marries Khāḍgadanshṭrā by gāndharva (OS 3: 269). He takes his two rākṣasi wives back to his native land and his parents welcome them happily (OS 3: 273). Guṇādhya’s mother is a brāhmaṇa lady who is married by the gāndharva rite to a nāga prince, who is also a brāhmaṇa after getting to know “his lineage and name” (OS 1: 61). The prince of Varānasī marries Pādmāvaṭī, the daughter of an ivory carver by gāndharva (OS 6: 173). King Yaśaḥketu of Anga married Mrgāṅkavaṭī, a vidyādhari by gāndharva (OS 7:
Ekākikeśarin, the king of bhillas has a daughter Madanasundarī, born of a kṣatriya wife and he offers her to King Vikramāditya who marries her “with due ceremonies” (OS 9: 48). He also married Surūpa, the daughter of a nāga from Paṇala, but came back alone. He married and returned with Taravallī, the daughter of a gandharva King (OS 9: 49). This kind of marriage is found among members of the other varṇas also. A prince marries a merchant girl by gāndharva (OS 2: 5). A bṛāhmaṇa’s son marries the daughter of a female slave (OS 3: 134). Rajbali Pandey comments that “the sentiments of such a pact leave no doubt that such marriages were regarded still desirable” (178). Ushā, daughter of an asura marries Aniruddha by gāndharva (OS 3: 82).
Niścayadatta, a merchant’s son marries a vidyādhari by gāndharva but such a marriage was bound to be unsuccessful and later she chooses another vidyādhara as her husband (OS 3: 196-98). A king’s brother-in-law gives his daughter in marriage to the bṛāhmaṇa minister’s son (OS 7: 45).
Anangaprabhā, a vidyādhari takes suitors belonging to all strata of society like a king, teacher of dancing, gambler, merchant, fisherman chief, kṣatriya youth. The king even makes her his principal wife but her conduct is explained as having been the result of a curse (OS 4: 160-64). Though it is held that marriage below rank is a fault, in one of the stories a king arranges the marriage of his son to a merchant’s daughter for monetary benefits (OS 2: 129). In cases where one of the partners belongs to a lower varṇa such an
alliance is explained with the story of a previous birth. A fisherman is able to marry a princess by divine sanction (OS 8: 117). A brāhmaṇa is seen marrying a fisherwoman but it is the result of a previous birth (OS 2: 228). King Pālaka sends messengers to ask for the hand of a caṇḍāla’s daughter and the marriage takes place. But in the case of such unions it is established that they are pre-ordained (OS 8: 120-21).

**Political Marriage**

Marriages are contracted to build political alliances between those of greater political strength and those of lesser strength. The giving of a bride in such a case usually signifies the acceptance of the bride’s family into an alliance with the groom in which the groom plays the dominant role. Marriage is an accepted means of gaining political domination. It is a means of extending political power for royals. Naravāhanadatta increases his political power not by conquest of foreign lands but by forming matrimonial alliances with the daughters of other kings. Prince Naravāhandatta has many women bestowed upon him because he is destined to be the emperor of vidyādharas (OS 8: 45). *Vidyādharā* King Amitagati gives his daughter to Naravāhandatta as “a present” (OS 8: 52). Another prince gives his sister as a present to emperor Naravāhandatta (OS 8: 66). When Naravāhandatta does finally win the crown, his army is entirely made up of the armies recruited from his fathers-in-law and the brothers of his various wives. Upon winning the war he marries the daughters and sisters of his enemies who give them to him in order to
demonstrate their submission to him. The marriage of Udayana with princess Padmāvātī of Magadha was effected for counteracting the possible obstacles from the king of Magadha in the conquest of quarters that King Udayana was planning to undertake (OS 2: 3). This was a way of making sure that “as a marriage connection, he will not attack them in the rear, but will become their ally” (OS 2: 3). At the time of marriage the King of Magadha took a solemn vow promising neutrality in the coming campaign of Udayana (OS 2: 28). There is even a negotiation termed “giving of a daughter” (OS 2: 47).

**Marriage by Capture**

King Camarabāla of Hastināpurā took Yaśolekha, head queen of the defeated king as an inmate of his harem on the ground that she was captured according to the custom of the kṣatriyas. She is described as a happy partner to the new king (OS 4: 200). Similarly Volume 4 of The Ocean of Story has Prince Śūryaprabha carrying off several princesses and making them wives but their parents insist that he marry them formally. Another king conquers the earth and carries off the daughters of other kings and is said to have had eighty thousand wives (OS 3: 169). This proves that all kinds of marriages were practised by kṣatriyas.

**The Venue of the Marriage Ceremony**

The wedding ceremony is usually conducted in the home of the person who gives away the bride. But for other reasons it is conducted elsewhere. Mṛgānkadatta has to hold to the ceremony in his house as he had abducted
the bride from her father’s house. A wife of King Vikramāditya is sent to him by her father the king of Kaṇṭāhadvīpa on a ship “with her retinue and wealth” (OS 9: 50). King Candraśekhara also sends him his daughter because he wishes to show his respect to King Vikramāditya by not asking him to come the long distance to see him (OS 9: 51). Naravāhandatta’s marriage to Madanamancukā is celebrated in his home because it is also the home of his bride and her mother (OS 3:148).

A prince may go to his wedding accompanied by his soldiers, retinue, elephants and horses. Prince Suryaprabha is accompanied by his father, and his ministers, as well as his father’s ministers, his retinue, and the fathers of the women whom he had married before (OS 4). This is one of the rare instances where the royal father accompanies the groom to his wedding. Although Udayana witnesses several of his son’s marriages, it is always in his court. He does not travel to the court of another king. The prince’s party is not always large. Naravāhandatta goes to some of his weddings accompanied by only by his father’s and his own advisors. Sometimes he is accompanied by his favourite advisor Gomukha alone. Although wedding parties are dominated by men, the mother of the groom may sometimes accompany the groom. Where the royal bride is sent to the groom she is always accompanied by her retinue (OS 9: 50).
Living Arrangements of the Newly Married Couple after the Wedding

The custom often practised is that the groom stays at the bride’s house with her for seven days after the marriage. He then leaves for his own country with her and they spend their life there. Dhanadatta lives in his father-in-law’s house but leaves for his native land with his wife after some time (OS 6: 184). Śridarśana, the brāhmaṇa after marrying the king’s daughter goes back with his wife to his native land (OS 6: 129). Śuryaprabha brings back his wives and their dowry to his native land (OS 4: 13). Even among common people we find a husband and wife staying in a separate house away from the father-in-law (OS 2: 182). Vikramāditya lives in his father-in-law, the bhilla king’s house for seven days and then leaves for his native land with his bride (OS 9: 48).

Bhīmaḥata governs Lāṭa, the kingdom which had been given by his father-in-law but he later goes back to claim his father’s kingdom Rādha, which had been wrongfully claimed by his younger brother after the death of his father. He rules his ancestral realm with his queen and gives Lāṭa to his friend (OS 6: 159). He prefers his own property to dowry. Aśokadatta stays with his rākshasi wife for some time enjoying her wealth but later returns to his native land (OS 2: 206). Śrīnagbhujā also returns to his native land Vardhamāna after some time (OS 3: 229). Kanakavarṣa also remains in the kingdom of King Devasakti after marrying Madanasundariṇī for seven days before returning to his native land (OS 4: 209). The only exception to this rule is the merchant Arthadatta
who out of fondness for his only daughter Anangamanjari, would not let her leave his house after marriage and kept her there with her husband (OS 7: 98).

In a relationship where the wife is semi-divine and the husband is a mortal the wife has to abandon her semi-divine status for the success of a marriage. Yaśaḥketu marries Mrğānkavā, a vidyādhari and she is artfully taken by the king to his mortal world where she loses her science and becomes a mortal (OS 7: 25). Vidyādhari Bhadrā offers herself to bṛāhmaṇa Viḍūshaka who marries her by gāndharva (OS 2: 66). The vidyādharas are unhappy with this alliance. At last she gives up her semi-divine status to live with him. It is worthy to note how a semi divine-mortal marriage becomes successful when the wife is absorbed into the husband’s lifestyle. A study in contrast is vidyādhara Madanavega who marries Kalingasena and leaves her as soon as she becomes pregnant though he provides for her maintenance. She being a mortal cannot be taken to his land. King Vikramāditya married and returned with Tārāvālī, the daughter of a gandharva King, another instance of semi divine-mortal marriage where wife has to leave her divine abode to start a family with her mortal husband (OS 9: 49). Interestingly when some men like Narāvahanadatta and Sūryaprabha marry vidyādhari women, it results in their acquiring the sciences from their wives. They are then elevated to a semi-divine status. Bṛāhmaṇa Śaktideva also marries four vidyādhari sisters when they were in their mortal form. He too becomes a vidyādhara later (OS 2: 239).
Polyandry

Unlike polygamy which seems to be the order of the day among the royal classes, the marriage of Draupadī is the only instance of polyandrous marriage which we come across in these stories (OS 2: 13). But a story in the Mahābhārata is used to explain that the relationship was strictly not polyandrous. Penzer notes that the practice of polyandry was non-Aryan and that the Aryans regarded it with dis-favour. It was certainly non-Vedic and was strongly opposed by the brāhmaṇas. But it was not denounced in the sūtras.

Polyandry was practised by the Tibetans and Dravidians. The Pandavas were kṣatriyas and they enjoyed the lowest forms of marriage sanctioned by Manu. Hence Penzer feels that they might have imitated the practises of the people they had conquered which explains the presence of such a rare kind of marriage (OS 2: 17). We come across a woman having two husbands at the same time in the story of King Trivikramasena. But unlike the case of Draupadī, Śaśiprabhā had married the first man by gandharva on her own accord while her father who was ignorant of this had bestowed her lawfully to another man. Thus it cannot be considered as an instance of polyandry. The ownership of the wife between the two men is decided in favour of the man who married her legally (OS 7: 48). Alberuni records that “the people inhabiting the mountains stretching from the region of Panchir into the neighbourhood of Kashmir live under the rule that several brothers have one wife in common” and that this system was found among “heathen Arabs too” (1: 108).
Monogamy

“For wives generally have many rivals when the husband is fortunate; a poor man would find it difficult to support one, much more to support many” (OS 4: 99). This holds true of the society depicted in the Kathāsaritsāgara as the rulers are almost always depicted as polygamous while instances of a common man having more than one wife is not infrequent. Though polygamy among kings seems to be the order of the day we also find monogamous kings like King Sahasrānika and Muktāphalaketu being praised (OS 1: 98). Muktāphalaketu even asks for a boon that “his mind may never be inclined to any lady but Padmāvaṭī” (OS 8: 175). Another notable instance is that of King Śrutasena who dies of a broken heart when he gets the news of his wife Vidyuḍḍyoṭā’s death (OS 3: 112). A gandharva is also seen as having only one wife (OS 3: 177). King Dvīpikarṇī, though he has no son, takes a vow of chastity after death of his wife (OS 1: 67).

Hierarchy of Wives

Duḥṣanta assures Anaśuṣyā that:

Though many a wife may grace our palace-courts

none but two shall ever be the glory

and mainstay of our race –the Earth

sea-girdled, and, this lady, your friend. (Sākuntalam 3.23)

It shows that the importance of one wife over the others was accepted among royal classes. It is evident that one wife, the chief queen, was more powerful
than the rest of the king’s harem. The royal women are organised
hierarchically according to the political roles they play. She is given precedence
over the others. Having many wives is accepted by the society but it is
enjoined that “it is a crime to desire the wife of another” (OS 3: 129).
Sometimes a group of friends make a pact to marry the same man. A maiden
asks her father to get twelve of her friends married to her husband for the
reason “I am not to be his only wife” (OS 4: 37). Śūryaprabha and Suñītha
marry a large number of women but they have a principal wife who is
favoured above the others (OS 4: 39-41; 4: 4). Prabala had twelve head wives
(OS 4: 65). A king had a hundred wives but one was dearer to him than his life
(OS 3: 218). Conspiracy of co-wives is frequently seen (OS 3: 219). Women are
exhorted to “be on guard against rival wives” (OS 3: 97). An exception to the
usual rivalry of co-wives is the story of bṛāhmaṇa Kamalagarbha who had two
wives. Three of them were so attached to one another that they entered fire
together; in old age (OS 6: 130). King Śridarśana also has two wives (OS 6: 129).

Divorce

Divorce is given on grounds of adultery and inability to fulfil primary
duties. An example is the case of the cowardly bṛāhmaṇa who abandons his
newly married bride when a mad elephant charges at them. Another person
saves her and she expresses her desire to live with her saviour abandoning her
cowardly husband. A decision is given in her favour by King Vikramasimha (OS
3: 16). Another example is the story of the greedy doorkeeper Arthalobha who
sends his wife Manapaṇa to another merchant for material gain. She is so
disgusted with his greed that she decides to accept the merchant as her
husband and he too accepts her as wife. Here too the king rules in her favour
(OS 3: 288). These prove that a woman could get divorced. A man was also
free to leave his wife and to marry another. In the story of Simhaparākrama he
leaves his quarrelsome wife Kalahakāri giving her one village and marries a
second wife (OS 2: 160). It is notable that he had to pay maintenance to her. In
the case of unfaithful women like the wife of Devaḍasa, the husband is allowed
to marry another woman (OS 2: 88). Here he did not even have to pay for her
maintenance. Even the vidyādhara Madanavega gives Kalingaseṇa a heap of
gold for maintenance when he leaves her to go to his divine abode (OS 3: 124).
There are also references to remarriage of widows.

**Family and Kinship**

Louis Renou defines the family “by community of residence and meals,
by the enjoyment of common property, and still more by participation in the
same rites” (56). He calls the family “a little society, in which the king is
represented by the head, whom the members willingly accept as their guru,
who represents it to the outer world, and (theoretically) disposes of its
persons and goods; he bears its patronymic (gotra), the juniors having the
right, while he is alive, only to a derived name” (56). In its full form the family
included the parents and the children except married daughters,
brothers and brothers in law, ascendants, descendants and
collaterals. To these must be added hangers-on, servants, 
students, workers and slaves. Since the head cannot be 
compelled to partition, and the sons, even if married, cannot be 
compelled to leave, what is called the patriarchal ‘joint family’ 
or ‘great family’ can attain to a great size, especially in view of 
early marriages, adoption and polygamy. (Renou 56)

An analysis of the stories in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* reveals the kinship 
patterns seen in society.

**Relationship between Husband and Wife**

A polygamous household is a common feature of royalty but is not 
restricted to them. There are instances of common men having more than 
one wife. A merchant has two wives and so does the brāhmaṇas Rudraśarman 
wife’s friends at her insistence (*OS* 9: 66). Brāhmaṇa Vidūshaka has five wives 
of different varṇas including a merchant’s daughter (*OS* 2: 72). We find a 
brāhmaṇa marrying his second wife with the consent of the first wife (*OS* 2: 
231). Book 5 of the *Rājatarāṅgini* has reference to the two wives of a poor 
man using the same vessel in turns to eat (*Stein* 1: 222). But it is not as 
common as among the royals for very practical reasons. The women of the 
royal seraglio are hierarchically arranged according to the political roles they 
play. Examples are Vāsavadatā and Madanamancuṅā who are the chief 
queens of Udayana and Narāvāhanadatta.
After marriage a woman is dominated by her husband’s personality. Whatever the husband does she must follow. The wife obeys even when the “virtuous” husband gives their children away to a brahmana and does not protest when he prepares to give her away. On the contrary, she applauds his generosity (OS 8: 129). In times of famine two brahma brothers leave their wives. The women take care of themselves and the child that one of them has, with great difficulty. But when the husbands come back later they are accepted without censure (OS 1: 21).

Blind faith in one’s husband is advocated though its folly is also revealed in some stories. A merchant woman’s husband kills her though she was excessively devoted to him (OS 6: 186). In the story of the miser who pretended to be dead because he did not want to share his food, the wife was so obedient to his instructions that he was burnt alive while she remained silent. He could have been saved if the wife had uttered a word. But such is blind obedience (OS 5: 165-67).

A wife should be concerned with all aspects of her husband’s life. Kuvalayavalī, a queen turns to witchcraft, cannibalism, human sacrifice in order to preserve her husband’s sway over the kingdom (OS 2: 99). When a husband goes to war, the wife performs austerities and she is even ready to abandon this world when the husband wants to become an ascetic. A queen and her daughter perform austerities for the welfare of their imprisoned father/husband (OS 8: 185). Vasavadattā after separation from King Udayana
feels that she must demonstrate her virtue before her husband can take her back. It is interesting to note that her husband has no intention of putting her through the test of chastity but she feels that it is her duty. A wife should always put her husband before her natal family. An example is Vegavaśī who is ready to fight her brother for the sake of her husband’s another wife (OS 8: 25). The notion of unfaithfulness to the wife does not exist in a polygamous society. Even Udayana has a liaison with an attendant Viśachiśa (OS 1: 187). He is bent on marrying Kalingasena for a while. In all these instances the wife, much against her will, does not demur.

The wife can take a husband to court if she is attacked physically or if she is not given maintenance. She cannot punish the husband herself but the husband has the right do so. A wife may lose her nose for having taken a lover. The punishment may vary as in the case of the brāhmaṇa Vāmadatta who changes his wife to a mare and kicks her seven times every day. When he becomes a vidyādhara he abandons her in the mare’s body (OS 6: 5-8).

Another type of punishment of women is by banishing her from the kingdom or by refraining from all physical contact with her. Kauṭilya states that “a woman shall have the right to claim maintenance for an unspecified period of time for as much food and clothing as is needed for her use” (2: 422).

Accordingly the king who stops all physical contacts with his unchaste wives gives them only clothing to cover their body and food to keep them alive (OS 3: 172). This goes to prove that husbands are in charge of all finances of the
household and wives are entirely dependent on them. A husband is lord and master of his wife’s property as is proved by the story of a dependent who rules as a king over the cities of his wife, an asura maiden after their marriage (OS 6: 216). The only stories in which married women are portrayed as supporting themselves, or even being allowed to support themselves, concern those women who have no kin and a child to support. Sometimes the state supports such women. A brāhmaṇa woman reduced to a state of poverty accompanied by two children takes refuge in the court of a king (OS 2: 128).

As we have seen earlier, the husband and wife discuss a suitable match for their child. But we do not find the queen having a say in political decisions though the chief queen shares publically some of the king’s political power. During coronation the water of holy places is poured upon the head of Prince Mṛgānkadatta and his wife (OS 7: 191). The queen occupies half the throne. Madanamancuṅkā is anointed as queen consort of Naravāhandatta during his coronation (OS 8: 86). There are only limited situations where women become part of political decision making process or accompanying husbands to battle fields. Śūryaprabha’s mother attends the preliminary war meetings convened by her son (OS 4: 45). The merchant girl, Queen Tejasvaḷī is seen accompanying the king mounted on an elephant to the battle field (OS 2: 56).

The queen receives the power through her husband, not independently. Many of the wives are accepted for the political alliances generated by them. Within the antahpurah their main function is to bear children and to provide
entertainment for the husband. The antahpurah is the chief source of entertainment for the king. Whenever he wishes to relax, he goes to the antahpurah or to the quarters of his favourite wife. In the company of his wives, the prince drinks wine, indulges in light informal conversation and sleeps with one of his wives. He may go with them to gardens and engage in water sports. The picture is evident in King Kanakavarṣa who amuses himself in private “with looking at pictures, reclining his body on the lap of beautiful women, and taking in carelessly crooked fingers the prepared betel” (OS 4: 205). The ever present danger is that the prince may become so absorbed in the entertainment offered by the antahpurah that he may forget his duties.

Udayana does that after his marriage to Vasavadatā and this forced his ministers to devise a plot to separate him from her.

A royal woman must face the ever present challenge of being part of a polygamous unit. Her most intensive interactions are with her co-wives, many of whom are strangers with their own ambitions within the antahpurah. Faced with the potential of being alone with strangers who may be hostile, some women encourage their husbands to marry their friends hoping to offset in this manner some of the pain involved in being part of the antahpura. Mahallika forces Suryaprabha to marry twelve of her friends separated from whom she “shall not be happy even for one moment” (OS 4: 40). Within the antahpura we find two situations. One is an official hierarchy headed by the chief queen and the second is an unofficial hierarchy in which the husband
chooses his favourite from among his many wives. There are various criteria for becoming the chief queen. Vasavadattā is the daughter of Udayana’s powerful political ally, her husband’s first wife and the mother of his only child. Another king makes the daughter of a merchant his chief queen (OS 2: 56). Madanamancukā whose mother has a doubtful reputation and who has no political importance is made chief queen because of her beauty, and the declaration by gods that she is worthy of that position. Sūryaprabha is ordered by the goddess Durga to make Kamacūḍamaṇi his chief queen. Moreover she is the daughter of one of his most important political allies (OS 4: 116). King Satavahana himself anoints the queen who was the cause of his acquiring learning. She was “exalted at one bound above all the queens” (OS 1: 73).

Political importance, beauty and love of the king are different factors which promote a queen to the position of chief queen. As chief queen she is jointly crowned with her husband but she may not necessarily be the most favoured wife (OS 4: 121). Sūryaprabha’s ability to multiply his body allows him to sleep with all his wives at the same time, but he sleeps in his own body with Mahallikā, the woman he loves the most (OS 4: 40). This woman does not become the chief queen. In another instance, Madanasundarī is made the chief queen because King Kanakavarṣa loves her above all the rest of his wives and also because she is the mother of a son (OS 4: 218).

The differences in the roles of the chief queen and the favourite lie in political prestige. The chief queen has an official function within the
government while the mere favourite does not have such powers. The chief queen may have real independent power within the household. Queen Vāsavadattā imprisons her husband’s advisor when he has acted against her interest (OS 1: 188). There is no indication that the favourite occupies such direct power. But the favourite has a special position within the household. She may draw most of the king’s attention, becoming almost an obsession with him. He will sleep mostly with her enjoying such activities as eating special foods and drinking in her company. She is pampered. The favourite queen of King Hemaprabha is allowed to sit on a golden throne and traverse the sky in a lotus chariot when she becomes pregnant (OS 3: 164). Vāsavadattā has the power to force her husband to bow to her and plead for forgiveness when he has dallied too long with other women (OS 1: 187). The real power of the favourite lies in the favoured light in which her son may be seen when the time comes for the king to choose his successor.

The reaction of the other wives to the chief queen and the favourite range from solidarity to extreme jealousy and hostility. Ideally the members of the antahpurah should conceive each other as friends. Vegavaṭi’s mother describes her daughter as being Princess Madanamancu’s co-wife and friend (OS 8: 39). There is only one instance of a conversation between co-wives which is during the war Sūryaprabha waged (OS 4: 73). The women do often act towards each other with friendliness. When Sūryaprabha goes to fight a great battle the wives all come together to console each other. Vāsavadattā
makes a special effort to make Padmāvati feel comfortable though we know that Vasavadatā is their husband’s favourite. She is so successful in her efforts that Padmāvati tells her father that she is affectionately loved like a sister (OS 2: 88). Naravāhanadatta’s wives also try to make each other comfortable. Vegavati is welcomed by two other vidyādharī wives of Naravāhanadatta. One even describes herself as his favourite wife Madanamancukā’s “devoted servant” (OS 8: 26).

The king may try to make a certain amount of peace and friendship through non competition within the household. Both Suryaprabha and Naravāhanadatta teach their wives all vidyās necessary to become vidyādharas. This brings human wives to the same level as vidyādharī wives. Suryaprabha pays compliment to all other wives before going to bed with the new wife on the night of the marriage. He pays compliments to his head wives in the morning (OS 4: 118). Despite the king’s attempt at maintaining solidarity in the antahpurah jealousy breaks out when Udayana secretly takes another wife. Suryaprabha is playfully rejected by other wives when he takes a new wife (OS 4: 118). Udayana finally realises that he cannot marry the beautiful Kalingasena because his desire for her would eventually destroy his family and kingdom.

Although wives may taunt and rebuke their husbands they rarely plot against them as their position depends on the husband. Most of their plotting is against one another, motivated by jealousy for their position and ambition.
for their children. The statement that “women are naturally envious of their rivals” is proved by the story where the wife of a king eats the portion of the holy fruit meant to ensure the birth of a son without giving any to the second wife, thereby making her childless (OS 3: 263). The aggrieved queen turns envious and hatches a plan to kill her rival’s children. The king throws his wicked wife into a dungeon (OS 3: 266). The rivalry of stepbrothers goes a step further and is continued in the next birth also. In the story of King Ekalavya’s two sons by two wives, the younger son expels the elder from the throne. The elder propitiates Śiva who grants him the boon that they will be reborn as step brothers and that he will be able to avenge himself (OS 6: 142).

Hostilities when they break out can completely disrupt the household. The King Ṛtabhuja had a hundred wives but the Queen Guṇavārā was the dearest to him. To bring forth sons an elixir was prepared and given to all the hundred wives who consumed it without giving any to Guṇavārā. She only got what was left over but in spite of it brought forth a noble son who was the most talented. The other wives are silent for many years, but when their own sons are grown up enough to accept the responsibilities of the kingdom; they are joined by their sons to plot against the favourite and her son. One of the evil-minded queens, Ayaśolekha plots with all the others to spread the rumour that Guṇavārā was having an adulterous relationship with the superintendent of the harem. Through such lies and deception they succeed in having the favourite wife put in prison and her son is forced to flee from the kingdom (OS
Such a conflict is sufficient to destroy the household and the kingdom.

The hostilities among co-wives also occur in other non-royal families. A brāhmaṇa had two wives. One died in childbirth and so the surviving wife ill treats the son of the deceased (OS 1: 184). The daily duties of a non-royal wife are different from that of a royal wife. She is very often an only wife and has to share the home with her husband and his family. Her main competition within the household might be the husband’s mother. The non-royal wife must be able to manage the affairs of the household. She is asked to manage the affairs of the household of the husband’s elder brother also if they are living in an undivided household. Upavarṣa, the younger brother appoints his own wife to manage his elder brother’s house because the elder brother is stupid and poor (OS 1: 13). But even then the real authority within the household remains with the husband.

Parents and Children

The mode of greeting is that the son touches the feet of his parents and they embrace him. There are only a few instances of adoption in these stories. Devadarśana, a brāhmaṇa adopts a boy found at his doorstep as he had been instructed by the God of Fire to do so (OS 6: 105). A childless king, Dvīpikarṇi, is told by Śiva in a dream to adopt a child. He adopts a child as his wife died and he did not want sexual relations with women again (OS 1: 67-68). Another brāhmaṇa also adopts an orphan boy (OS 4: 222). The children whose adoptive
parents are from a different ājñāti are all recommended by gods which stops an investigation into the child’s origin. On the other hand the brāhmaṇa adopting a brāhmaṇa boy made intensive enquiries about him. The brāhmaṇa boy adopted by a royal advisor was separated from his parents during a journey. He is adopted without their formal permission. When his father eventually finds him the boy and his natural father remain silent because the royal advisor is rich and has political influence. Due to that influence the boy attracts the attention of the king who gives him his daughter and his throne. As the king the boy recognises his natural father and puts him in a position close to him. He does not abandon his adoptive father who continues to hold an important position in the government (OS 4: 222-28). In the Kathāsaritsāgara there is no instance of a woman adopting a child without the presence of her husband. A widower may however adopt a son. King Śatavahana’s adoptive father is an example (OS 1: 67-68). The story of the thief and the merchant girl demonstrates another method of gaining a son by adoption. For a thousand pieces of gold, a woman marries her daughter to an impaled thief who wants to ensure the birth of a son as “a sonless man does not inherit the world of bliss” (OS 7: 79). A brāhmaṇa spends a night with her for five hundred gold dinārs thereby impregnating her. She brings forth a son and is instructed by Śiva in a dream to leave the child at the king’s doorstep along with a thousand gold pieces. The king is also instructed to adopt the child as his own and he grows up to be the next king. When the time comes for
him to offer śraddha to his dead father three hands rise up from the holy water to accept it. The first hand is that of the thief, his mother’s husband, second belonged to his biological father the bṛāhmaṇa, and third is his adoptive father, the king. The right of the thief, according to niyoga, that is securing a son by appointment and the sanctity of marriage is upheld (OS 7: 78-83). Alberuni also mentions that “if a stranger has a child by a married woman, the child belongs to her husband, since the wife being, as it were, the soil in which the child has grown, is the property of the husband, always presupposing that the sowing, i.e. the cohabitation, takes place with his consent” (1: 107).

The arrival of a son is an occasion for rejoicing especially for the father. Naming is a function allotted to the father. King Udayana gives his son a name chosen by gods. A father plays a major role in the son’s life as a tutor and mentor, while the mother is rarely mentioned.

**Relationship between Siblings**

Apart from a reference to four sisters living and growing up to womanhood in their father’s house, going together to bathe in the Gaṅgā, not much information regarding the life of girls in their paternal home till marriage can be found (OS 2: 221). It shows the institutional unimportance of such relationships. There are a large number of instances regarding the relationship among brothers. We have discussed the issue of the rivalry of step brothers in detail. Brothers living together can divide their property says Book 3 of
Arthaśāstra (2: 435). Accordingly we find two brāhmaṇa brothers dividing the property their father left to such an extent that they cut up the only female slave in the household. The king punishes them with confiscation of their property because they are brāhmaṇas and cannot be given corporal punishment (OS 5: 114). This story is proof of the fact that a slave was passed on from father to children. Another instance of division of property, royal grants and possessions is also found (OS 2: 96). According to the Arthaśāstra, if a man has no sons, his brothers or persons living with him can acquire his property (2: 435). Thus we find a brother inheriting the property of another brother (OS 5: 92). Very often brothers turn against each other when the question of wealth arises. We find one brother turning out another from their father’s kingdom (OS 6: 81). In another story of two brāhmaṇa brothers, when the elder loses all his wealth and asks the younger for help he refuses (OS 5: 95). In another instance two half brothers ask Naraśahanadatta to mediate in their dispute (OS 5: 197).

There is limited evidence regarding the life of siblings growing up together in their father’s house before the sister’s marriage (OS 4: 220). We find a sister dying of a broken heart at her brother’s death (OS 6: 195). After marriage the sister’s primary affiliation is towards her husband and we find Vegavāti fighting her brother Manasavega for the sake of her husband Naraśahanadatā (OS 8: 25). A sister is seen embracing and welcoming her brother who had come to invite her and husband to a festival (OS 6: 205).
Relationship of the Wife’s Family with the Son-in-Law

The mother-in-law has great regard for the son-in-law. We find Prithvīdevī standing up against her son Mānasavega for the sake of her son-in-law Narāvāhanadatta (OS 8: 39). Dhanavāti, his mother-in-law is Narāvāhanadatta’s strongest ally. In another story also the mother-in-law is favourable to her son-in-law and gives him many boons (OS 5: 6). In the relationship between the father-in-law and son-in-law, the latter occupies an advantageous position. He is always at the receiving end. The father-in-law gives him wealth and presents during the marriage ceremony as well as comes to his aid with wealth and troops whenever there is a difficulty or war. For example brothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, friends and other connections march for Śūryaprabha in war (OS 4: 51). King Nala goes back to his native land to challenge his brother who had usurped his throne with his father–in-law’s army (OS 4: 250). There is only one exception to this general rule. King of Raḍha married actor Āsaka’s daughter who performed a dramatic piece before him. The king fell in love with her and gave her father much wealth and introduced her into his harem. Later he married her (OS 6: 143). This is the one instance where we find the son-in-law giving wealth to the father-in-law. Usually it is the other way round.

Even among the common people the son-in-law can expect some kind of financial help from his father-in-law. A bṛāhmaṇa teacher, under pressure of famine sends his pupils to his father-in-law living in a distant land to ask for a
cow. The miserly fellow sends the cow but does not give food to the starving pupils who kill and eat the cow to appease their hunger (OS 3: 10). In another story a father takes his children and deposits them at his father-in-law’s house during famine (OS 4: 221). We find a villager going to his father-in-law’s house with a complimentary present of sweetmeats (OS 5: 145). An instance of genuine love for the parents-in-law is expressed in the story of King Udayana who weeps and falls senseless on the ground on receiving the news that his father-in-law king Chaṇḍamaḥāsenā and mother in law queen Angarāvaī had died. He gives the offering of water to both of them (OS 8: 100-01).

A man can always expect help from his wife’s family in times of difficulty. This right extends even in those cases where a woman is accepted as one’s sister as in the case of Upakośa. The king had accepted her as his sister and hence her husband Vararuci in the capacity of being the brother-in-law goes to ask the king for money to pay his teacher’s fee (OS 1: 37). Udayana gives a country each to the brothers of his wives Vāsavadattā and Padmāvātī (OS 2: 89). Vāsavadattā’s elder brother is brought to see his sister on the pretext that “his relations long to see him” (OS 2: 11). He puts the welfare of his sister’s husband before everything else and stays with them after entrusting his own kingdom to his younger brother.

**Relationship of Husband’s Parents with the Wife**

When the husband is absent for a long time, the wives are entrusted to the care of the mother-in-law. The asura King Suñītha returns after a long
separation and his mother entrusts him with his wives (OS 4: 29). The Kathāsaritsāgara abound in stories featuring cruel mothers-in-law (OS 3: 44; 3: 55). Queen Sūryamaṇī too ill treated her daughters-in-law says the Rājaratnagīrī (1: 289). Brāhmaṇa Vasudatta’s mother was “a great scold, implacable and very passionate” which forced his father to flee. His wife fled after her mother-in-law worried her incessantly. His relatives made him marry a second time but the mother-in-law troubled his second wife so much that she committed suicide. His third wife is a wooden doll and is set up in a different house. The mother-in-law who is unaware of this hurts herself and accuses her daughter-in-law of having injured her. She is shamed when the wooden doll is brought to light (OS 6: 152-53). But there are exceptions to the concept of the cruel mother-in-law as the story of Devasmithā amply demonstrates. She discusses her fears for the safety of her husband to her mother-in-law (OS 1: 161). There is limited interaction between the father-in-law and daughter-in-law. We see a daughter-in-law, father-in-law and mother-in-law deciding “to enter the fire” together because the son/husband has not returned for a long time (OS 9: 65).

Other Relationships

The elder brother comes to the aid of the widow of his younger brother. Śāntikara, King Udayana’s domestic priest, takes the wife of his deceased brother and children to his own house and provides for them (OS 2: 135). But in another story the wicked wives of elder brothers solicit the
virtuous younger brother (OS 3: 110). It is interesting to note that there is no instance of a brother soliciting a brother’s wife. His father’s brother helps Śrīdatta to recover his fortune (OS 1: 118). The son of a brāhmaṇa woman who became a sañī grows up in his uncle’s house reading the Vedas, books of knowledge, and treatises on accomplishments (OS 4: 96). The lot of poor relations is unenviable. They are not forsaken by their mother’s family but they have to suffer hardships. When the property of brāhmaṇa brothers was seized by their relations they go to seek the help of their maternal grandfather. As the latter was dead, their uncles take care of them but as they were paupers they are condemned by relatives (OS 7: 108-09). In another story, relations take away the land grant given to a brāhmaṇa. The poor brāhmaṇa boys go to their maternal uncle who welcomes them. As their wealth diminished they had to look after cattle (OS 8: 139). Two instances of relationship between the mother’s sister and sister’s daughter are seen in the Kathāsaritsāgara. One is in the story of Damayanī who is helped by her mother’s sister in times of difficulty (OS 4: 244). In another story a child is brought up by its mother’s sister on the death of both parents (OS 3: 8). A brother also comes to the aid of his sister’s daughter who is ship wrecked (OS 9: 51).

**Mother’s Paternal Home and Grand Parents**

Upakośa stays with her parents when Vararuci goes to the Himalayas (OS 1: 35). But queens very rarely go to their father’s house after marriage.
Examples are Vasavadatta and Padmavati who visit their paternal house only once during Udayana’s military conquests (OS 2: 93). Several stories point to the danger of leaving a wife alone in her paternal house. But in times of difficulty Damayanti sends her children to her father (OS 4: 242). Grandparents have a tender affection for their grandchildren. Two young princes were dearer than life to their grandparents (OS 8: 126). A king buys back with all his wealth his grandsons whom their father had sold to brahmans (OS 8: 130). A maternal grandfather helps the two princes who were banished by their father (OS 3: 265).

**Relatives**

The works of Kalhana and Somadeva demonstrate that the ties of solidarity are fragile. Ambition and desire for a greater share of the patrilineal property can often turn members of a family against each other. There are innumerable instances of envious relatives usurping the rights of princes after the death of the king and even kings are seen expelled by powerful relations banded together (OS 5: 23; 4: 193; 4: 199; 6: 25; 3: 69; 7: 51). King Dharma was ejected from the throne by his relations (OS 7: 116). Conspiracy of relatives against kings is also fairly common (OS 5: 15). Even father-son relationship is not free from avarice. Father and uncles plot to murder Putraka for wealth and royal power but the ministers put them to death as traitors (OS 1: 21-22). This desire for wealth is not peculiar to the ruling classes and is found in every strata of society. A brahmaṇa is robbed of his wealth by relations after the
death of his father and a similar fate befalls a merchant also (OS 8: 117; 3: 174). Cruel relatives seize the wealth of a deceased merchant forcing his widow and daughter to flee taking only their ornaments (OS 7: 78). A rājput with a retinue is also seen fleeing as he was oppressed by relations (OS 2: 178).

But everything is not always so grim. There are parents who think of committing suicide on hearing the news of their son’s death. Similarly a father contemplates suicide on getting the news of his daughter’s death too and these parents are dissuaded from their plans with great difficulty (OS 7: 149). A selfless man, Govindasvāmin decides to leave what little he had to relations and leaves with family to another land as he cannot bear to behold the misery of friends and relations during famine (OS 2: 196). A burden carrier gives up his profession and shares wealth with his relations when he receives an inexhaustible pitcher (OS 5: 4).

The work under consideration deals primarily with royalty, both human and semi-divine. But it also gives us a picture of the life of the people around royalty. Power and wealth were two factors which caused discontent among family members both royal and non-royal.