Chapter 5

Life of Women

Marriage is the only fruit of a daughter’s birth (Tawney, Ocean 3: 291).

In the Kathāsaritsāgara whether a woman is married or has chosen the profession of a courtesan, thereby electing to offer her body to the customer who is willing to pay the price, determines her identity. Within the family her powers of reproduction as a procreator and outside it, her capacity to provide sexual entertainment defines her. Manu states that on the wife alone depend duties like: “. . . (the due performance of) religious rites, faithful service, highest conjugal happiness and heavenly bliss for the ancestors and oneself” (sic) (332). Patriarchy has laid down a code of conduct for the wife and the courtesan and they function within limits set by the society. A courtesan is, by definition, greedy and cannot form lasting relationships. A wife, on the other hand, is meant to be eternally faithful to her husband. Surprisingly, the majority of the wives that we come across in these stories are only too eager to form extra marital alliances. This seems to endorse the notion that women are by nature fickle but a close reading reveals faithful courtesans and wives while fidelity to the wife is the rarest of rare cases when it comes to men. Thus patriarchal double standards are exposed.
Naming or categorising is a function allotted to the male members of medieval Indian society. Fathers name their children. In the *Kathāsaritsāgara* we come across instances of a king, a minister and a brāhmaṇa naming their sons (*OS* 8: 181; 6: 105). Irrespective of caste or gender differences the right to name the child belonged to the father. Princesses Kalingasena, Madanamancūkā, Alankāravaṇī, Mandaravāṇī, Karpurikī, Udayavaṇī and Guṇavaṇī were named after their fathers Kalingadatta, Madanavega, Alankaraśīla, Mandaradeva, Karpūraka, Udayatunga, Guṇasaśāgara respectively (*OS* 3: 27; 3: 135; 4: 123; 7: 139; 3: 291; 6: 73; 9: 50). The daughter of the merchant Ratnadatta, Ratnavī was also named after him (*OS* 7: 35). The sole instance where a daughter is named after her mother is Princess Kanakarekha who was named after her mother Kanakaprabhā and not her father King ParopaKarīn (*OS* 2: 171).

Names of characters in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* are self explanatory. Women’s names point to their physical attributes and sexual desirability. Heroines are named Madanamanjārī, Madanasundārī, Madanarekha, Anangaraṇī, Anangaprabhā, Surataprabhā, Suratamanjārī, Tejasvāṇī etc which hint at their physical beauty or their sexual utility or prowess (*OS* 9: 12; 9: 48; 1: 226; 4: 144; 4: 149; 6: 10; 8: 105; 2: 55).

Women are also noted for their beauty and sexual desirability. In the *Kathāsaritsāgara* many such electrifying beauties are mentioned. Unmādiṇī possesses such maddening beauty that the king’s advisors decide to lie to him...
rather than allow him to fall a prey to her beauty by marrying her (OS 7: 66-67). Courtesans are also likewise named. Ṛupinikā is beautiful, Kāma Manjañī is lascivious, Makaradanṣṭra and Makarakāñī are lethal like crocodiles, Kalakahārī is madam contentious and Srigālīka is vily as a fox (OS 1: 138; 1: 139; 5: 13; 2: 159). Kadalīgarbha was born out of a plantain flower and hence named so and Kālarañtrī (“dark night”) as the name implies is a witch (OS 3: 97; 2: 99). By naming women this way their position is greatly limited. 

Marriage is the turning point in the life of a woman in medieval society. Her life can be divided into two stages: before marriage in her paternal home, and after marriage, which is life in the home of her husband with his family. It is very rarely that we find a woman going back to her natal home after marriage. The queens Vāsavadattā and Padmāvañī visit the kingdom of their parents only once after marriage and that too in connection with King Udayana’s conquests. Moreover women who visit their natal home and stay there for some time are showed as forming amorous connections with strangers. An example is the merchant’s daughter who takes a paramour when living in her father’s house (OS 6: 187). Hence we can assume that married women were not encouraged to visit their natal homes. There is very little reference to the life of women before marriage in these stories. But this does not mean that they were unloved.
Importance of Daughters

There is a general preference for male children in medieval society. People are seen propitiating gods to beget sons. The birth of a son was an occasion of joy for the noble as well as the common man and feasts were given to mark the occasion. We find kings giving feasts and showering riches on account of the birth of sons and so does a brähmana (OS 4: 163; 4: 215; 4: 220). Though sons were greatly valued and people performed austerities to beget one, daughters also brought joy and delight to parents. Kings like Ādityasena of Ujjayinī, Devasena of Pauṇḍravardhana, the vidyādhara kings Sphaṭikayaśas and Padmakūṭa all were very happy at the birth of their daughters (OS 2: 55; 5: 32; 2: 69; 5: 26). They valued them more than their own lives. Sphaṭikayaśas had five sons as well as a daughter who was the youngest which made her very dear to her father. Devasena of Pauṇḍravardhana named his daughter Duḥkhalabdhiḥ because she was “obtained with difficulty” (OS 2: 69). King Vīradeva of Avanti had a daughter born by the grace of Śiva and he loved her tenderly (OS 7: 2). Princess Kalingasena gave pleasure to the eyes of her father (OS 3: 27). The merchant Ratnadatta also obtained his daughter Ratnavatī “by propitiating deities” (OS 7: 35). Another merchant’s daughter Kirtisenā was “dearer to him than life” (OS 3: 44). Kalingasena was also happy at the birth of her daughter and made “great rejoicings more than she would have made at the birth of a son” (OS 3: 132). King Hemaprabha propitiated Śiva for a son. By the grace of god he
obtained both a son and a daughter Ratnaprabha and he was “as much delighted at the birth of his daughter as he was at the birth of his son” (OS 3: 165). King Mahāvaṁśa obtained a daughter by propitiating Gaurī (OS 4: 144). Karpūrika was also a gift of Śiva to her father the King Karpuśaka who was blessed that a daughter “superior to a son” will be born to him (OS 3: 291). Vidyadhari Mṛgaṅkavati’s father, though he had many sons was so fond of his daughter that he would never take food when she was not present (OS 7: 22).

The only instance where we find a father grieving at the birth of a daughter is that of King Kalingadatta, who is aggrieved because he had longed for a son, “for a son being embodied joy, is far superior to a daughter that is but a lump of grief” (OS 3: 18). But a wise man advises him that “daughters are better even than sons, and produce happiness in this world and the next”. He tells the king that sons who hanker after their kingdom “eat up their fathers like crabs” (OS 3: 23). He continues: “how can one obtain from a son the same fruit in the next world as one obtains from the marriage of a daughter” (OS 3: 24). Even sons can be a cause of grief. It is said that “numerous sons are people who have committed many sins in a previous existence, and are born to poor people in order that they may suffer for them” (OS 2: 135). A king and a queen who swoon, being “smitten by thunderbolt of grief” for their dead daughter is proof of their love for their daughter (OS 4: 148). That daughters are “carefully brought up” is evident (OS 2: 180). Princess Paṭali is “preserved like a jewel” (OS 1: 23). Daughters
are often given the important duty of looking after guests. Princess Kunā is entrusted with the task of attending upon the hermit Durvāsa by her father (OS 2: 24). Sage Mankaṇaka also entrusts his daughter with the duty offering arghya to his guest (OS 3: 95).

**The Wife**

The beauty of women is held as the reason for men’s straying. The story of Sūryaprabha is an example. He is engaged in a hoary battle to gain supremacy over the vidyādhara kingdom. Still he finds time to get married time and again to various beauties. The pressure of war does not deter him from amorous pursuits. But one night, the sadness of losing his dear ones in battle prompts him to retire in solitude rejecting the society of his wives. This makes one of his wives to remark that “if he were to obtain a new beauty he would that instant forget his grief” (OS 4: 73). This leads to a discussion among his wives about the insatiable desire of their husband for new wives. Manovāṇī, one of the wives offers an explanation:

The good qualities of lovely women are different, varying with their native land, their beauty, their age, their gestures and their accomplishments; no one woman possesses all good qualities. The women of Karnāta, of Laṭā, of Saurāshtra and Madhyadeśa please by the peculiar behaviour of their various countries. Some fair ones captivate by their faces like an autumn moon, others by their breasts full and firm like golden
ewers, and others by their limbs, charming from their beauty.

One has limbs yellow as gold, another is dark like a priyangu, another, being red and white, captivates the eyes as soon as seen. One is of budding beauty, another of full-developed youth, another is agreeable on account of her maturity, and distinguished by increasing coquetry. One looks lovely when smiling, another is charming even in anger, another charms with gait resembling that of an elephant, another with swan like motion. One, when she prattles, irrigates the ears with nectar; another is naturally beautiful when she looks at one with graceful contraction of the eye-brows. One charms by dancing, another pleases by singing, and another fair one attracts by being able to play on the lyre and other instruments. One is distinguished for good temper, another is remarkable for artfulness, another enjoys good fortune from being able to understand her husband’s mind. But to sum up, others possess other particular merits; so every lovely woman has some peculiar good point, but of all the women in the three worlds none possesses all possible virtues. So kings, having made up their minds to experience all kinds of fascinations, though they have captured many wives for themselves, are forever seizing new ones. (OS 4: 73-74)
Manovati’s explanation mirrors patriarchal justification and endorsement of men’s sexual appetite and desire for variety. It is in conformity with the dominant patriarchal discourse. She is thoroughly conditioned to the service of patriarchy in practice in the medieval society.

**The Adulteress**

Where man is the ruler, male as well as family honour is linked to premarital virginity and sex is sanctioned only within marriage or concubinage. A woman who has sex with a man other than her husband is termed an adulteress and she has to face the dire consequences of her actions. The punishment includes banishment, cutting off of ears and nose etc. Ramprasad Das Gupta regards adultery as “an offence against morality and family life or rather against matrimonial rights” (157). He notes that lawgivers like Manu, Viṣṇu, Bṛhaspati and Kātyāyana prescribe death penalty for women while Yājñavalkyā and Kauṭilya, lay down that such a woman shall have her ears and nose cut off (159).

An example is found in the story of Kālāratri, wife of the brāhmaṇa Viṣṇusvāmin, who lusted after his young disciple Sundaraka. As he refused to oblige her, he was tortured repeatedly. To take revenge, she tore her own clothes and complained to her husband about Sundaraka’s misbehaviour and he was mercilessly beaten. But Kālāratri confesses her evil plans before the king who orders to cut off her ears. As she evades punishment by disappearing the king banishes her from the kingdom (OS 2: 110-11).
Devaḍasa, the merchant of Paṭaliputra is cuckolded by his wife. The king allows Devaḍasa to cut off her nose and to marry another (OS 2: 86-88). In the story of Yaśodhaṇa, Lakṣmīdhara and the Two Wives of the Water Spirit the second wife of the Water Spirit is punished by having her nose cut off for adultery (OS 5: 123). In the story of the woman who falsely accused her husband of murdering a bhilla, the king orders that her ears and nose be cut off for her wickedness (OS 5: 82). In the story of Jimūtaṇāhana we find a woman who plotted with her relatives to murder her husband being banished by the king of Vatsa along with her wicked relatives. The king also gives the husband “much treasure sufficient for another marriage” (OS 2: 157-58). A king orders the execution of a husband who is believed to have bitten off his wife’s nose. When he is proved to be innocent the King banishes the wicked wife and also cuts off her ears. He punishes the father-in-law who was an accomplice to this crime by confiscating all his property (OS 6: 189).

The punishment meted out to the male partner of the adulterous woman does not involve corporal punishment. The paramour of Devaḍasa’s wife is punished with loss of all his property (OS 2: 86-88). But the punishment for wicked men who try to take advantage of virtuous married women is more severe. In the story of Devasmiṇa, four wicked merchants plan to take advantage of Devasmiṇa, a devoted wife when her husband was away on a journey. They are aided by a cunning Buddhist female ascetic. But the evil doers are punished with branding of a dog’s foot made of iron in the
forehead while their cunning accomplice, the false ascetic has her ears and nose cut off. When the matter is taken to court the King declares the four mischief makers to be Devasmiṭa’s slaves and they are released only after a large amount of money is paid to her. The King also collects a fine from them and it is remitted to the royal treasury (OS 1: 158-64). It is interesting to note that the female ascetic had to suffer the loss of her nose and ears while the evil doers suffer branding. In fact the accomplice is punished more severely than the culprits because she is a female. Here the heroine herself takes the law unto her hands. When it is questioned in the court of law her action is sanctioned by the King who further imposes a fine on the culprits. The fine collected by the king is not given to the aggrieved party but is remitted into the royal treasury. This is also an aspect of medieval law. Another instance similar to this is found in the story of Upakośa who punishes her suitors by clever artifice. The king deprives them of all their living and banishes them from the country (OS 1: 36).

As a general rule in ancient India an individual was not allowed to take the law into his own hand; but there were cases when he was permitted to do so, and to go by what Ramprasad Das Gupta says in Crime and Punishment in Ancient India there were even times when he was encouraged to do so by the law (46). Devaḍāsa himself cuts off the nose of his adulterous wife and another cuckolded husband also follows the same course of action (OS 2: 88; 5: 123). Such behaviour enjoyed some amount of social sanction.
There are times when the husband shows his magnanimity towards the adulterous wife by letting her get away without punishment. For example a man restrains himself from punishing his adulterous wife and friend and says that he will kill them if he sees them again. He marries another and lives happily (OS 5: 41). But the point that erring wives are not worthy of such generosity is driven home in the story of the wife who ran away with a bhilla. The husband asks her to return but he cuts off the bhilla’s head (OS 5: 81). The venomous wife tries to accuse her husband falsely. Ultimately truth prevails and the king orders the ears and nose of the faithless wife to be cut off (OS 5: 82). The implied message is that the wayward wife should not be given a second chance. In spite of committing the same crime, women would receive in most cases a punishment different from that of men. The solitary instance where the wife and paramour receive the same fate is in the story of the snake god where he punishes them both by reducing them to ashes (OS 5: 151).

To turn into stone is a sort of capital punishment given to a woman. The single reference to this type of punishment is the story of Ahalyā (OS 2: 45-46). She was turned into stone by her husband Gautama for her illicit relationship with Indra. In the story given in the Kathāsaritsāgara, Ahalyā was a willing partner to Indra in this crime. Indra is also cursed by Gautama that his body shall be covered with “representations of female pudenda” (OS 2: 46). The same story given in the epic Ramāyaṇa portrays Ahalyā as an
innocent being duped by Indra who assumed the guise of her husband Gautama. Sasanka Sekhar Parui feels that this instance where the woman is punished even though she is innocent is representative of the attitude to women during the days of the epic. This may have appeared unjust to the author of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* and to justify the punishment meted out to her she was represented as a woman of loose morals. Hence Parui concludes:

Ahalyā was punished in the epic age for a crime despite her unawareness of it, whereas giving such punishment to an apparently innocent woman like Ahalyā was perhaps considered unjust in the succeeding ages: eg the age of the *Kathāsaritsāgara*. The author of the *Kathāsaritsāgara* it seems, was of the view that punishment should be given to a woman only when convincing proof of her involvement in a crime could be established beyond doubt. (363)

Other types of punishments given to women guilty of adultery include severing of all relationship with them. Thus King Ratnādhipati avoided “all communications” with his eighty thousand unchaste wives, and “ordered that henceforth they should have nothing but food and raiment” (*OS* 3: 172). A bhilla chief spares the life of his unchaste wife and renouncing her society banishes her to a distance from his court (*OS* 6: 58).

But in a polygamous society the notion of a man being unfaithful to a woman does not exist. The reproductive function of the female body, which is
motherhood, is given prime importance in licit relationships. So it is glorified within the bonds of marriage. But female sexuality is viewed as something dangerous that has to be controlled and regulated. Deviant women always posed a threat to dominant patriarchal modes of thought. Hence Queen Aśokavatī who hankers after Guṇaśarman, the bṛahmaṇa and Kālaṛatri the witch who lusts after her husband’s disciple are despicable examples of deviant womanhood (OS 4: 88; 2: 110). Unnamed fears about the fickle mind of even so-called virtuous women permeate patriarchal society and there are many stories about them. The assumption is that women are fickle by nature and that they cannot remain constant at any cost. They can go to any great length to take a lover. A bṛahmaṇa’s wife takes a cowherd as a lover and introduces him into her house disguised as a woman (OS 5: 148). A leper is made the paramour of a merchant’s wife locked in a cellar (OS 5: 149). Even a virtuous queen like Kalyāṇavatī falls prey to inherent fickleness when she falls in love with a common man. But she recovers her senses before she walks “the primrose way to the everlasting bonfire” (Mac.2.3.18). She says to her confidante: “Curse on my unstable mind, or rather curse on women, who are like flies that leave camphor and haste to impurity!” (OS 5: 24) “It is possible that once in a way a man may be so wicked. But females are, as a rule, always such everywhere” answers King Trivikramasena to a question put forward by the Veṭāla as to who is the worst, male or female (OS 6: 190). Such a broad generalised condemnation is recurrent in ancient texts. There are two polar images of
women, one, angelic, chaste and obedient and the other, deceitful and treacherous. By formulating two such opposing ideals the patriarchal society is trying to mould women into the desirable category of the chaste, obedient angel while trying to exclude and ward off the bad woman.

Idioms like “though a husband is wicked, a good wife does not alter her feelings towards him” and “Good women have no pleasure of their own; to them their husband’s pleasure is pleasure” are used to endorse the ideal (OS 6: 186; 3: 221). The sentiment of Manu is echoed here. Manu says “though destitute of virtue, or seeking pleasure (elsewhere), or devoid of good qualities, (yet) a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife” (Bühler 196). Good women are a rarity while bad women flourish aplenty. Gomukha laments:

The creator first created recklessness, and then women in imitation of it; by nature nothing is too bad for them to do. Surely this being they call woman is created of nectar and poison, for when she is attached to one she is nectar and when estranged she is indeed poison. Who can see through a woman with loving face secretly planning crime? A wicked woman is like a lotus-bed with its flowers expanded and an alligator concealed in it. But now and then there falls from heaven, urging on a host of virtues, a good woman that brings praise to her husband, like the pure light of the sun. But another, of evil augury, attached to
strangers, no free from inordinate desires, wicked, bearing the
guile of aversion, slays her husband like a female snake. (OS 3: 141)

The message that a woman cannot be controlled anywhere is
drummed into the collective psyche in the story of King Ratnaadhipati whose
eighty thousand wives prove to be unchaste like all the women in his kingdom
except for the servant maid Silavati (OS 3: 172). The king then marries her
sister thinking that at least she would prove to be virtuous and keeps her
confined in an uninhabited island guarded by women. But all these
precautions are of no avail and when she too proves to be unfaithful, the king
cries out “can one fetter the whirlwind in one’s arms?” (OS 3: 176).

The Courtesan

While women in general are unfaithful and fickle, greed is added to her
attributes if she happens to be a courtesan. “Providence has created in this
world that fair and frail type of woman, the courtesan, to steal the wealth and
life of rich young men, blinded with the intoxication of youth” (OS 5: 5). The
stories which caution against the wiles of the courtesan are many. It is said: “a
courtesan desires wealth, and not even if she feels love does she becomes
attached without it, for when providence framed suitors he bestowed greed
on these women” (OS 3: 209). Some of the courtesans enjoyed a royal lifestyle.
The courtesan Kumudika has a hundred elephants, two myriad of horses and a
house full of jewels and entertains the king and ministers with baths and
luxuries (OS 5: 16). The courtesan Madanamāla lives in a mansion “that resembled the palace of a king” which was guarded with twenty thousand footmen equipped with all kinds of weapons. Apart from them she also had ten thousand warriors and her palace was divided into seven zones. One was adorned with many long lines of horses; another had troops of elephants, while others had attendants, bards, treasure houses crowding them. She enjoys the society of the King and honours him with “costly baths, flowers, perfumes, garments and ornaments” (OS 3: 207-08). She drinks with him and is so faithful to King Vikramāditya that she keeps way even from the king of the land by certain stratagems. The king thinks of the courtesan even though he has many wives (OS 3: 212). She has a charitable disposition and gives away wealth to bṛāhmaṇas (OS 3: 213). King Vikramāditya is so won over by her character that he takes courtesan Madanamāla to his own city and “remain in happiness” but it is worth taking note that he does not marry her (OS 3: 217). We come across another faithful courtesan who pleases the king to release her lover, a bṛāhmaṇa who had been thrown into prison (OS 5: 18).

They also had to perform duties in the temple. Hence the courtesan Rūpiṇikā goes to the temple at the time of worship to perform her duty (OS 1: 139). Enjoying the company of a courtesan was a luxury only kings or wealthy merchants could afford. A courtesan demanded a fee of five hundred gold dinārs everyday (OS 7: 80). The merchant Iśvaravarman gives twenty five lakhs of gold and jewels to a courtesan in two days and in two months he gave two
crores (OS 5: 9). The amount that he sets aside everyday for expenses is indicative of his lifestyle; “three hundred  dinārs for eating and drinking; a hundred for betel and other expenses; a hundred for bawd’s mother; a hundred to brāhmaṇas and four hundred to the courtesan” (OS 5: 13). The numerous references to courtesans in connection with descriptions of festivals in The Nīlamata Purāṇa indicate that prostitution was freely allowed. “The Nīlamata does not decry the courtesans. The prominent ones of them, on the other hand, are enjoined upon to visit the king on his coronation day and take due part in the ceremonies- a fact proving evidently their high political status” (Kumari 1: 94).

Dhūrtaviṭasaṁvāda, a Bhana play written towards the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century by Iśvaradatta makes a comparison between the courtesan and a woman more ordinary by employing the analogy of a chariot and a bullock cart (Kaul 264). Incidentally, a Bhana is a dramatic presentation in one act by a single actor in monologue form in which he assumes the role of a Dhūrta or Viṭa (Varadpande 173). What is interesting in this analogy is that both, while being useful to man in that they serve the basic purpose of transportation, differ in the style and comfort quotient.

Sexuality that is authorised by society enjoys a privileged position. Gaṇikās were an indispensable part of ancient Indian society. They possessed admirable qualities. In the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa the terms gaṇikā and veśya are both used to designate a prostitute. Gaṇikās, according to these
epics, were held in high esteem (Sternbach, “Legal” 27). Vātsyāyana mentions a list of sixty-four subsidiary branches of learning in chapter 3 of the first book of Kāmasūtra (Tripathi 95-97). Sternbach classifies the sixty-four arts into eleven main groups, that is general education, domestic science, toilet, dressing, music and dancing, fine arts, physical culture, games, art of entertaining, professional training and pet animals (“Legal” 29). According to Vātsyāyana, a courtesan who is endowed with good character, beauty, and certain qualities and who distinguishes herself in these arts, receives the title of a ganikā and achieves a high position among the people. She is approached with a request to teach these arts to princes and princesses. Vātsyāyana also encourages any woman who desires to captivate her husband even if he is maintaining a harem of thousands of women to learn these arts (95). He adds that “such a woman (if by misfortune) is separated from her husband or is in dire straits or is forced to go to another country, she can live happily by means of these arts” (97). We find several heroines of the epics making use of this advice.

**Ganikā: Her Space in Society**

Kauṭilya considers the ganikā to be a kind of government servant and talks about superintendents who took care of them. The duties of the ganikā mentioned by him in the Arthaśāstra were waiting at the door, assisting in the play of dice, and supplying betel for chewing, carrying the royal umbrella, the golden pitcher, the fan, stools or footrests and attending to the comforts of
the king seated on his royal throne and helping him ascend the chariot (Unni 1:334). This proves that the profession of a *ganīkā* enjoyed social sanction and had some amount of prestige associated with it.

A lot of effort went into the making of a *ganīkā*. Tawney quotes extensively from Daṇḍin’s *Daśakumāraśīrī* of the sixth century to show how all female accomplishments were to be found in a courtesan. The courtesan’s mother remarks:

> From the earliest childhood I have bestowed the greatest care upon her, doing everything in my power to promote her health and beauty. As soon as she was old enough I had her carefully instructed in the arts of dancing, acting, playing on musical instruments, singing, painting, preparing perfumes and flowers, in writing and conversation and even to some extent in grammar, logic and philosophy. She was taught to play various games with skill and dexterity, how to dress well and show herself off to the greatest advantage in public; I hired persons to go about praising her skill and beauty, and to applaud her when she performed in public and I did many things to promote her success and to secure for her liberal remuneration. (OS 1:235)

Sanskrit literary works abound in instances of daughters of prostitutes who became prostitutes themselves. In fact the instance cited above is a classic example. The statement in Damodaragupta’s *Kuttanimāta*, that “only
daughters are praiseworthy; shame upon those who rejoice in the birth of a son” (qtd. in Sternbach, “Legal” 31) goes against the patriarchal grain of medieval Indian society.

The Ganīkā: Differing Perceptions

Shonaleekha Kaul avers that the ganīkā appears to represent “a combination of the cultural/intellectual with the sexual.” This combination is publicly praiseworthy and respectable in the city. She goes on to observe that:

addition of the cultural seems to have an at once emancipating and enhancing effect on the perception of sexual pleasure and of the stigmatized profession based on it . . . the ganīkā represents the harnessing of the concerns of civilization and culture in the service of the instincts of nature and vice versa. Culture seems to negotiate nature (sexual desire) into a form that is socially acceptable. (265)

The ganīkā is perceived as mercenary and deceptive, yet desirable and sought after. She is coveted, but only covertly. She is culturally accomplished and celebrated but socially degraded. Kaul detects a connection between “the two limbs of the paradoxes. She is desirable (among other reasons) because she is available commercially and therefore freely to any who can afford her” (268).

In the types of the ganīkā and the kulastri that we come across in medieval Sanskrit texts irony is at play. The courtesan who is a public woman
is not accused of chasing after men while the *kulastrī* is always to be guarded against any misconduct. *Dhūrtaviṭasamvāda* states: “males not being easily accessible to them, married women may run after anyone, whoever he might be. But courtesans do not hanker after all men” (qtd. in Kaul 270). Kaul remarks that the suggested freedom of the courtesan and desperation of the wife implies “that a sexuality degraded by commercialization and commodification may exercise a greater say than one that is privileged and protected” (270). It is patriarchal irony that is visibly played out.

Sanskrit literature is full of the powerful recurrent motif of women beholding any special or mundane affair of the city, which usually takes place on the royal road, through the windows, balconies, and terraces of their houses (*OS 2: 49*). They are invariably shown crowding these narrow openings. While they can be a part of such happenings only from the limited space of their houses, the courtesans are actively taking part in it. They are on the royal road dancing, that is right in the middle of all action. The *kulastrī* is denied the opportunity of public exposure to ensure her state of being right less while the courtesan has free access to public spaces and events but she has to pay the price of exposure as her basic right of privacy is undermined. She encounters moral stigma and reproach. The outer world is played up against the inner world. The woman occupying the inside of the house, the protected space, as well as the public woman placed on the outside is equally without rights. Kaul writes:
A spatial manifestation of the patriarchal value system is the antahpura or inner chambers, also signified by . . . the inner quadrangle, of the family residence. It was regarded as the domestic sanctum sanctorum to which the ‘outer’ world—with its corrupting (liberating/subverting?) influences—was not allowed. . . However in a necessary corollary, while the inner world must not be accessed by the outer, it may not access the outer world either. (sic)(271)

But this distinction of the inside and the outside is breached by daring women. Kāvyas contain many instances of high-born women indulging in illicit love relationships with outsiders deep within the bedroom or high atop the terrace or the antahpurah edifice, or flirting with and seducing men on the streets from their terraces. “The protected space was thus frequently breached and sub-spaces liberated using the very qualities of seclusion and isolation to subvert the sequestration that these were meant to effect” (Kaul 271).

Deva-dāśī - Handmaid of the Gods

The courtesan Rūpinīkā is described as going to the temple at the time of worship to perform her duty (OS 1: 139). It is evident that she combined the profession of a prostitute and a temple servant whose duty consisted chiefly in dancing, fanning the idol and keeping the temple clean. She was a ḍeva-dāśī or as Penzer describes, a “Handmaid of the God” (OS 1: 231). We also come
across another dancing girl in a temple. The merchant, Iśvaravarman spends all his money on her (OS 5: 7-9). Kauṭilya’s *Arthaśāstra* puts the dancer, musician, and the prostitute on the same level (Unni 1: 338). The courtesans were sometimes used as secret agents and some acquired much wealth. Courtesans Madanamāla and Kumudikā are examples (OS 3: 217; 5: 18). Alberuni comments:

No Brahman or priest would suffer in their idol-temples the women who sing, dance, and play. The kings make them an attraction for their cities, a bait of pleasure for their subjects, for no other but financial reasons. By the revenues which they derive from the business both as fine and taxes, they want to recover the expenses which their treasury has to spend on the army. (2: 157)

Penzer writes that the evidences of sacred prostitution increase after the twelfth century and that it gained prevalence in the North, Central and South India (OS 1:237). Viney Kumar feels that the custom of temple virgins might have been introduced to India as a result of the contact with the Greeks. He ascribes the reason for this practice gaining popularity in South India to the fact that while the temples in North India were badly plundered by Muslim invasions, the South Indian temples escaped the fate or suffered very little in comparison. As a result the “North Indian temples could not afford the luxury of temple virgins” (395).
Ashvini Agarwal comments that the custom of keeping devadāsis or dancing girls in temples was “the common feature throughout the early medieval India and Kashmir was no exception”. Sometimes hundreds of dancing girls were attached to a single temple and sometimes “these dancing girls were taken by Kings or even private people in their harems as concubines or mistresses” (204). Kalhaṇa gives an account of how King Harṣa favoured a dancing girl, Sahajā attached to a temple. The very same girl was later seen by Utkarṣa on a dancing stage in a temple and he took her into his seraglio (1: 335-36). Jayamaṁ, who later became the chief queen of Uccala, was an adopted daughter of unknown origin of a dancing girl of the family of a female dancer. She remained the mistress of Uccala, then of Ananda and again of Uccala (1: 381). These examples prove that these women were freely available to anyone who wanted them. In the story of Unmaṁi her husband offers the king that he will repudiate her to the temple so that the king can have her for himself (OS 3: 111). This offers evidence that temple women could be enjoyed by any man.

The use of a simile in The Nīlamata Purāṇa “comparing Kaśmira with a temple, due to the presence of tender ladies, indicates the popularity of ‘devadāsis’ or temple dancers as then alone the hearers or readers of the Nīlamata could have recognised the ideas underlying the simile” (Kumari 1: 94). A significant and rather unusual point is that The Nīlamata Purāṇa attaches importance to “the singing and dancing of the courtesans and not to
the sexual intercourse with them, indicating thus less moral laxity among the people than what is shown in the works of Kalhaṇa, Ksemendra and Somadeva” (Kumari 1: 95). But Agarwal comments that prostitution in various forms was “practised in the garb of dancing girls degrading the prestige and status of women by all standards of social life” (204).

Poison Damsels

Yogakaraṇḍaka, the minister of King Brahmadatta employs the following methods against Udayana, the King of Vatsa: “He tainted, by means of poison and other deleterious substances, the trees, flowering creepers, water and grass all along the line of march. And he sent poison damsels as dancing-girls among the enemy’s host, and he also despatched nocturnal assassins into their midst” (OS 2: 91). References to such unscrupulous tactics of war are found in chapter 7 of The Laws of Manu, where the king is advised to shut his foe up in a town and “to sit encamped, harass his kingdom and continually spoil his grass, food, fuel and water” (247).

The most important Sanskrit work where the poison damsel is featured is Mudrārākṣasa of Viśākhadatta. This play, written about seventh century, deals with the events in connection with Candragupta Maurya’s ascension to the throne of Paṭaliputra. After he ascended the throne several attempts were made on his life which was successfully thwarted by his trusted minister Čaṇakya. One among the many methods employed to murder him was by using a poison damsel whose first embrace would be deadly. Čaṇakya very
cleverly passed the girl to an enemy king who died in her embrace thereby
rescuing his king. Penzer mentions a work in Latin which was translated from
Arabic entitled *Secretum Secretorum, De Secretis Secretorum or De Regimine
Principum* which is supposed to have been authored by Aristotle though it is
not reckoned among his genuine works. It appeared roughly about the time
that Somadeva wrote. It is a collection of the most important and secret
communications sent by Aristotle to Alexander the Great when he was too
aged to attend his pupil in person. In the text Aristotle warns Alexander
against deadly poisons and entrusting the care of his body to women. An
incident in which the King of India had presented a poison damsel to
Alexander and how the calamity had been averted by Aristotle is mentioned.
Otherwise she would have killed him “by her embrace and her perspiration”
(*OS 2*: 291). A mere look or breath of the damsel can be fatal and so can
intercourse with her.

Luther. S. Luedtke is of the opinion that the legend of the poison damsel
originated in India before the Christian era and travelled westwards slowly
(182). Penzer also concludes that the motif of the poison-damsel originated in
India in a very early period before the Christian era.

The poison-damsel herself has no existence in actual fact, but is
merely the creation of the story teller, who derived the idea
from what he saw around him. First of all he was acquainted
with poisonous herbs and knew something of the uses to which
they were put, but he was still more familiar with the ways of the Snake-charmer and the methods of his gradual inoculation. He could not help being fully aware of the fatal results of the bite of the cobra and krait, and the reverence and fear of the Snake throughout India was everywhere evident. Thus there was plenty of material for the creation of the poison-damsel. (OS 2: 313)

_Saï- Widow Burning_

The practice of burning the widow with the corpse of the husband is believed to be an ancient Indo-Germanic custom which is based on the belief that the life after death is a reflection of this life. Hence the deceased must be provided with all that had been dear to him, or all that is necessary for his comfort in the next world. This was a custom widely practised by the Scandinavians, Greeks, ancient Egyptians and the Chinese. In China betrothals were considered to be as binding as marriage itself and there are many instances of suicide on the death of the fiancé. The practice of self-immolation of widows is not a custom peculiar to medieval Indian society. Its origins can be traced to ancient Greeks, Germans, Slavs and other races but “was generally confined to the princes and nobles” writes Kane in the _History of Dharmaśastra_ (2: 625).

It can be assumed that this practice arose in India a few centuries before Christ as there is no Vedic passage referring to it. Of the _Dharma Šūtras_ only _Viṣṇu Dharma Šūtra_ (AD 100-300) contains a reference which asks the
widow to observe celibacy or ascend the funeral pyre (qtd. by Kane 2: 626).

Altekar notes that the *smriti* writers of the tenth and eleventh century do not hold *sārī* “as ideal for the widow. They allow it only as a second alternative and regard ascetic life as preferable to it” (*Position* 123). He also records that though Medhāthiti, Manu’s commentator admits that though *sārī* has been mentioned by *Āṅgirassmṛiti* “it has no authoritative value” while Viṇāṭa prohibits the custom. Devanabhatta, a twelfth century writer from South India “maintains that the *sārī* custom is only a very inferior variety of Dharma and is not to be recommended at all” (*Position* 124). The poet Śaṇa (AD 625) also offers “most vehement, determined and rational opposition to this inhuman custom” (Altekar, *Position* 124). Though the *Mahābhārata* mentions several widows, only Mādri is seen immolating herself with Paṇdu, her husband. It is absent even in the *Ramāyaṇa*. Scholars feel that this was sanctioned in later days as its popularity could not be suppressed. It is hence concluded that the practice was confined to royal families and that it was rare. Alberuni records that if a wife loses her husband by death, she cannot marry again. She has to choose between two things, either to remain a widow as long as she lives or to burn herself; and the latter is preferred, because as a widow she is ill treated as long as she lives. As regards the wives of the Kings, they are burnt, “whether they wish it or not, by which they desire to prevent any of them by chance committing something unworthy of the illustrious husband”. An
exception is made only for women of advanced years and for those who have children; for the son is the responsible protector of his mother. (2: 155)

Altekar comments that: “The Padmapurāṇa extols the custom to the sky, but expressly prohibits it to Brāhmaṇa women. It declares that any person, who will be guilty of helping a Brāhmaṇa widow to the funeral pyre, will be guilty of the dreadful and unatonable sin of the murder of a Brāhmaṇa (brahmahatyā)” (Position 128). Kane notes that it was earlier forbidden to brāhmaṇa widows. But these texts were later explained as saṭṭi being forbidden to brāhmaṇa widows on a pyre different from that of her husband. She can only burn herself along with him. The burning of brāhmaṇa widows began later (2: 627).

The burning of a widow on the death of her husband is called sahamarāṇa or sahagamana or anvārohaṇa when she ascends the funeral pyre of her husband and is burnt along with his corpse, but anumarāṇa occurs when, after her husband is cremated elsewhere and she learns of his death, the widow resolves upon death and is burnt along with the husband’s ashes or his sandals or even without any of his mementoes. We find instances of both sahamarāṇa and anumarāṇa in the Kathāsaritsāgara. Chanḍamahāsena’s wife Queen An̄garavā is burns herself with her dead husband (OS 8: 100). Examples of anumarāṇa are Upakoṣa, a brāhmaṇa lady who “committed her body to flames” on hearing about her husband’s death and another queen who followed the same path (OS 1: 54; 5: 17).
This sentiment goes a bit further in the *Kathāsaritśāgara* which recounts an instance of a woman dying with the thief whom she fell in love with at first sight. Love works in mysterious ways. Getting married is not necessary for burning oneself along with your lover. A case in point is that of the merchant’s daughter who fell in love with an impaled thief and who entered fire along with his body (*OS* 8: 120). A similar instance also occurs in another story where a merchant’s daughter having selected the thief about to be impaled to fall in love with at first sight goes to the burning ground and ascends his funeral pyre even without marrying him (*OS* 7: 38). What is interesting is that she is extolled as virtuous.

The Sanskrit word *sātī* is a feminine noun meaning “good, devout and true”. Several inducements were offered to a *sātī* which would definitely appeal to her like a promise of *swarga* for as many number of hairs in a human head, that is, thirty five million years. In addition such an act would purify her natal family as well as her husband’s family from all guilt or sin. Finally a memorial stone would be erected and her spirit venerated. Penzer suggests that “it was perhaps the extension of a royal custom, mentioned in the Epics, which gradually made the rule general, until later law and practice recommended *sātī* for all” (*OS* 4: 262).

Kane quotes several epigraphic references to the practice of *sātī*. The earliest record belongs to the Erran posthumous stone pillar inscriptions of Gopaṇa of AD 510 which records that his wife accompanied him on a
funeral pyre when he was killed in battle. The Nepal Inscription of AD 705 mentions the satī of Rajyavati, widow of Dharmadeva. He also mentions the Belaturu inscription of Śaka 979 during the time of Rajendradeva Cola where a “śudra woman Dekabbe, on hearing of her husband’s death, burnt herself in spite of the strong opposition of her parents who then erected a stone monument for her” (2: 629). Altekar feels that the great prevalence of satī in the valley of Kashmir is “probably due to its proximity to Central Asia, which was the home of the Scythians, among whom the custom was quite common (Position 127). Book 7 of the Ājararāṅgini gives a moving account of the queen Suryama, the patron of Somadeva, becoming a satī. Her actions are described in minute detail.

“She stood up, and as a Sā satī herself taking the stick, performed the office of doorkeeper for her husband while she had him adorned for the last (rites)”. She first ordered a hundred mounted soldiers to watch there over her grandson; then sent forth her husband placed on a litter. After having thus passed one night and half-a-day, the queen paid her reverence to Śiva and proceeded outside seated in a litter. When the people saw this sight they raised lamentations which “mixed with the vibrating sounds of the funeral music”. The hearse of the king was carried by princes. As the day was sinking the queen reached the burning-ground. The queen then asked for water from the Vitasī because “those who die with Vitasī water in their body, obtain for certain final deliverance, just like those who proclaim sacred learning”. When
she had drunk the water brought to her, and had sprinkled it over parts of her body, she cursed those evil doers who had destroyed the affection between parents and son. She the Saṭī, then took an oath in proper form, “pledging (her happiness in a) future life”. Having “thus attested the purity of her moral character, she leaped with a bright smile from the litter into the flaming fire” (1: 305-07).

In a patrilocal community a woman’s life is totally bound to her husband. Thus widows found life to be so difficult that most of them preferred to burn themselves along with their dead husbands and become Saṭī. Instances of bṛāhmaṇa wives entering fire are frequent (OS 6: 106; 3: 13). Even a woman coming back from an amorous tryst with her lover became Saṭī on seeing her husband dead, though her attendants try to dissuade her from such an action (OS 5: 19). This story in the Kathāsaritsāgara, proves the wide prevalence of the custom. In this way the listeners were taught the desirability of such a course of action. This is one method by which patriarchy was creeping into the consciousness of women and indoctrinating them about the necessity of putting an end to their own life because there is no life for a wife after her husband’s death. In one of the stories, the wife even waits patiently for an impaled man to die so as to ascend funeral pyre with him (OS 2: 202). This custom is not confined to bṛāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas and merchants alone. Women belonging to all walks of life practise it. We come across a female slave ascending the pyre when her
husband, a hired slave dies. As a result of which she is born in a royal family
(OS 3: 8). This is an incentive for women belonging to the lower social classes
that a better position is assured in the next birth if such a course is
undertaken.

Entering fire is a test to prove one’s innocence and it is also a means of
purifying guilt. Padmāvati is willing to enter fire to prove Vāsavadatta’s
innocence and we find a king and queen entering fire to purify the guilt of
killing their son (OS 2: 30; 2: 115). There are other circumstances when death
by fire is chosen. A merchant having lost his wealth decides to ascend a
funeral pyre (OS 3: 175). A vanquished king goes to the forest and his wives
contemplate suicide by entering fire. But Naraṇāhanadatta bestows upon
them dwelling places and gifts and treats them as sisters thereby making it
unnecessary for them to follow that path (OS 8: 82). This makes us doubt
whether economic and social uncertainty was the reason which prompted a
woman to take up self-destruction as a desirable course upon her husband’s
death. When her husband was imprisoned a queen and her daughter prepare
to enter fire and they worship fire before entering it (OS 8: 189). Mothers
entering fire along with their dead children are also seen frequently.
Viravara’s wife enters fire with the dead bodies of two children and so does
another mother along with her two dead children (OS 4: 179; 6: 196). Even
parents prepare to enter fire on absence of son’s news (OS 7: 158).
Manu does not advocate satī. From the accounts in the *Kathāsaritsāgara* we can surmise that though widows who burnt themselves were extolled, it was by no means compulsory. But the status of widows was very low. She was dependent on her sons or in their absence on her husband’s near relatives. The *Kathāsaritsāgara* has many instances of relatives turning against the widow and children after her husband’s death. Life was so hard that many preferred the noble path of satī.

It was customary for loyal servants to burn themselves along with their dead masters. A commander-in-chief entered fire along with the dead king (*OS* 7: 69). In another instance two of the wives and many followers jump into fire with the dead king (*OS* 6: 97). A courtesan also ascended a funeral pyre with her patron, the king (*OS* 5: 17). Book 7 of *Rājaratanaṅgiṇī* records that on King Kalaśa’s death, Mammanikā and six other wedded queens, as well as a concubine called Jayamaṇḍ, followed him (1: 235). Gaṅgadhara, Šakhibuddha and the litter-carrier Daṇḍaka along with the female servants Uddā, Noniṅka and Valgā followed Queen Sūryamaṇḍ in death when she became satī (1: 306). Sahajā, a dancing girl who became the concubine of Utkarṣa entered the funeral pyre with him. Kalhaṇa is all praise for her. Some other ladies of the seraglio also become satī (1: 335-36). In Book 7 we see that when the king killed Malla, his wife and her sister along with his mother immolate themselves in a fire kindled in their residence and his daughters-in-law also burn themselves (1: 382-83).
All these evidences do not mean that it was compulsory for a widow to ascend the funeral pyre along with her dead husband. A brahmaṇa woman who wanted to become sātī on the death of her husband was not permitted by her relations as she was pregnant (OS 2: 134). But the decision was left to the individual. We find a brahmaṇa’s wife entering fire with her dead husband though her son was small (OS 4: 96). In most cases widows preferred to follow their dead husbands because of the social prestige involved in it. But the Rajatarangini also mentions the widow queens Sugandhā and Diddā acting as regents on behalf of their minor sons (1: 217; 1: 251).

Widow Remarriage

That some women decided to get married again is evident in the story of the woman who takes eleven husbands in quick succession. The interesting fact is that she continues to live after death of all her eleven husbands and then at last decides to spend her life visiting holy places (OS 5: 185). The Princess of Pauṇḍravardhana is married two times and in both instances her husband dies on the night of marriage (OS 2: 69). A similar fate befalls the Princess of Karkotaka (OS 2: 74). A third instance is that of a widowed queen fleeing with her grown up daughter from wicked relations. A chief coaxes her with kind words into marrying his son. Somadeva makes a sympathetic statement: “What is an unprotected woman, fallen into calamity in a foreign land, to do?”(OS 7: 119). The fourth and last instance of widow remarriage is
that of a woman in Mālava called the “ten-slayer” on account of her having lost ten husbands one after the other. Her father was so ashamed that he would not let her take another husband but at last allows her one more chance when she promises “to take a vow” if he also dies. This suitor had lost ten wives himself. The villagers assemble and give consent to the marriage. But he too loses his life and the woman now becomes “eleven slayer.” She now chooses to live the life of an ascetic on the bank of Gāṅgā (OS 5: 184-85).

What is interesting is that the remarriage is allowed by the villagers. But we cannot take these few instances to conclude that widow remarriage was widely practised though we cannot rule out a few of them taking place.

According to Manu a widow “must never even mention the name of another man after her husband has died. Until death let her be patient (of hardships), self- controlled, and chaste, and strive (to fulfil) that most excellent duty which (is prescribed) for wives who have only one husband only” (sic) (197). Such a wife is promised heaven. She gains highest renown in this world, and in the next, a place near her husband. But a man whose wife dies before him may marry another after the funeral (198).

**Life of a Widow who Does not Remarry**

Their lot in life was quite tough especially the case of those who had to support young children. For example Vararuci’s mother, though she was the wife of a learned bṛahmaṇa, had to support herself and her son “by severe drudgery” after her husband died (OS 1: 11). Many times the greedy relatives
grab their wealth and the widow is forced to flee along with children. A merchant’s widowed mother had to take refuge in the house of her deceased husband’s friend’s house till she gave birth to her son. Then she had to rear him by “performing menial drudgery” (OS 1: 62).

**Homo-Social Bonding of Women**

The relationship that male friends share with each other is considerably different from the relationship of female friends. In the Kathāsaritsāgara close male bonding is apparent. Sahasrānīka-Yogandhara-Suprabhīka bonding gives way to Udayana-Yaugandharyāna- Rumanvat which is continued in Naravāhanadatta- Mārubhuti-Hariśikha triad. Male friends always have the best interest of their friend at heart and they use all means to bring about the success of their plans. They cleverly use women in the process to further their aims. Yaugandharāyanā and others decide to stage Vāsavadattā’s death so as to secure the strategic alliance of Udayana with Padmāvati. Vāsavadattā accepts the plan as it is drummed into her psyche that it is her duty. “It is care for a husband’s interests that entitles a king’s wife to the name of queen; by mere compliance with a husband’s whims the name of queen is not obtained” (OS 2: 37). Even her brother Gopaḷaka consents to the plan as it is for the greater good. He knew that it would cause his sister sorrow but “the mind of good men is ever fixed upon duty” (OS 2: 11). Thus male bonding uses females for achieving their end.
Another instance can be quoted as an example to this. Udayana secretly marries Bandhumā, a princess captured by Gopālaka and presented to Vāsavatā. The angry queen imprisons Vasantaka who had aided the king in this. But the King takes the aid of a female ascetic, Śankrityānanī, the queen’s friend who appeased her anger and made her present Bandhumā to the king herself, “for tender is the heart of virtuous wives” (OS 1: 188). Here also we find the bonding between females being used by males to their own advantage. The queen’s friend is used to bring her around into accepting the king’s new alliance. Women are their own enemies. They are oppressors of their own kind as well as agents to achieve the ends of men. Bandhumā who was under Vāsavatā’s protection cheated her. Vāsavatā’s own friend, the ascetic is also made use of to appease her anger.

The relationship between the daughter-in-law and the mother-in-law is an example of inverse female bonding. Mother-in-law is someone to be greatly feared by the daughter-in-law. According to Somaprabhā, a mother-in-law “eats the flesh of a daughter-in-law as a she-wolf does of a sheep” (OS 3: 43). The instance of Kirtisenā is a case in point. The mother of the husband was the mistress of the household in absence of the husband. The cruel mother-in-law of Kirtisenā forbids the slaves to attend on her, strips her, pulls her hair, and mangles her. She then throws her into a cellar and locks it feeding her only once a day in the evening with half a plate of rice (OS 3: 45). How far such stories reflect the actual life is proved from Kalhaṇa’s account of
mother-in-law and daughters-in-law relationship in Book 7 of the 
Rājarāṇī. Queen Sūryamaṇi also is said to have terrorised her daughters-
in-law by not permitting them to “make in their dress, ornaments and the 
rest that display which befitted them as a King’s young wives. She made the 
queens do the work of slave-girls, until they did not refuse (to do even) the 
smearing of the house-floor (with cow-dung, etc.)” (sic) (1: 289).

Friendship ties between friends sever when one of the friends are 
moved. Somaprabhā asks Kalingasena: “As long as you are not married I can 
continue to be your friend, but after your marriage how could I enter the 
house of your husband?” (OS 3: 43). So female bonding is not made possible. 
The only option to continue their relationship is to marry the same man. 
Hence five vidyādhari friends vow to marry Naravāhanadatta together. It is 
agreed that if one marries him separately, the rest must enter fire on account 
of violation of friendship (OS 8: 49). Similarly Mandaradevi, the daughter of 
the royal sage who is heavenly ordained to marry Naravāhanadatta makes 
him marry four of her friends also (OS 8: 84).