

## **Hinduism On Pre/Extra Marital Relationships**

**Please Note:** - The information given below is extremely controversial but we had to present this as well... We didn't want you the reader to have selective information... If the below upsets you then please move to another section on this website... And please note we have not compiled this article to upset anyone. Jai Hind.

Although India derives its original name (Bharat) from the Bharata Maharaja who was born out of a premarital relationship between Shakuntala, a beautiful maiden, daughter of sage Kanva, and Dushyanta a King, Hinduism neither approves free sex nor condones premarital sex. This has been the situation from the earlier times and not much has changed as far as the social attitude is concerned.

In the great epic Mahabharata, Queen Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, begets a son (Karna) from the Sun-god (Suryadeva) before her marriage to Maharaja Pandu. She suffers for the rest of her life for this transgression. Fearing condemnation from her family, she deserts the new born baby who eventually grows up to become a great hero and an arch enemy of the Pandavas and participates in the Mahabharata (the great Indian) war against his own brothers.



Queen Kunti and Suryadeva...

The kathas of Shakuntala-devi and Queen Kunti amply illustrate the fact that Hindu society has been sensitive to the problems of premarital relationships but never approved them. In ancient times premarital sex was not an issue because the girls were mostly married before they reached puberty and sent to their husbands' homes where they would grow up under the careful attention of the elders of the families. Besides girls were not allowed to study or go outside freely on their own.

But today the situation is different. For many Hindus the influence of western education and culture is a matter of great concern. Whether they live abroad or in India, premarital sex is not just taboo but a great sacrilege in many Hindu families who are committed to Hindu way of life. For parents it would be a great calamity if their children are found involved in a premarital relationships. If the matter becomes public, life would be really difficult for the whole family. Parents therefore closely follow the activities of their children as they reach adolescence.

Segregation between the sexes in schools and colleges in the Indian subcontinent is also very common. The system of dating between a boy and a girl was foreign to our Hindu tradition and not approved. Since normal communication and friendship between a boy and a girl is hindered by social taboos, the two sexes live in two different worlds and suffer from a great communication gap.

Financial pressures often drive some poor girls into prostitution and night clubs. Their percentage is comparatively very less and they come mostly from poor families and broken homes, with little parental controls. These are exceptions rather than a norm.

### **Extramarital relationships**



**Current Trends:** Hinduism does not favour extramarital relationships. People who get caught in such relationships have to deal with a lot of social ridicule and public

disgrace. Especially in case of women the consequences are much worse. Hindus believe that marriage is a sacred relationship. Breaching the sacred commitments is a sacrilege and bad karma.

**The Traditional View:** Hindu law books are very severe against adultery, not only for moral reasons but also for social reasons. They consider that it would lead to confusion of castes, degradation of family values and social disorder. In ancient times women from upper castes were barred from moving in society freely.

The ancient Hindu law books (like the Manu Samhita) distinguished adulterous relationships involving married women from those involving free women. The former attracted a higher punishment. The law books also treated differently acts of adultery involving different caste women. The higher the caste of the woman and lower the caste of man, the greater was the severity of punishment.

The Ancient Hindu society was not free from the problem of adultery. Hinduism has a number of incidences illustrating the manner in which the deva's and devi's themselves often indulged in adulterous thoughts and actions. The Vatsyana's Kamasutra explains how to seduce different types of women. Women like Amrapali and Vasanthasena were public women with refined personalities, enjoying a status of their own. The nobility and the royalty till recently maintained large harems purely for carnal pleasures. Temporary relationships, contractual arrangements, relationship with housemaids, use of free women for seeking favours from the influential and streets of pleasure houses populated by women trained in the art and craft of love were also very much prevalent in ancient Indian society.

### **The Scriptural Evidence**

The following excerpts from different scriptures show how the problem of adultery was regarded in ancient times.

#### **Bhagavad Gita 1.41-43**

When irreligion is prominent in the family, O Krsna, the women of the family become corrupt, and from the degradation of womanhood, O descendant of Vrsni, comes unwanted progeny.

When there is increase of unwanted population, a hellish situation is created both for the family and for those who destroy the family tradition. In such corrupt families, there is no offering of oblations of food and water to the ancestors.

Due to the evil deeds of the destroyers of family tradition, all kinds of community projects and family welfare activities are devastated.

#### **Vishnu Purana 3.11**

A man should not think incontinently of another's wife, much less address her to that end; for such a man will be reborn in a future life as a creeping insect. He who commits adultery is punished both here and hereafter; for his days in this world are cut short, and when dead he falls into hell.

## Manusmriti: Chapter 8

353. For by (adultery) is caused a mixture of the castes (varna) among men; thence (follows) sin, which cuts up even the roots and causes the destruction of everything.

354. A man formerly accused of (such) offences, who secretly converses with another man's wife, shall pay the first (or lowest) fine.

355. But a man, not before accused, who (thus) speaks with (a woman) for some (reasonable) cause, shall not incur any guilt, since in him there is no transgression.

356. He who addresses the wife of another man at a Tirtha, outside the village, in a forest, or at the confluence of rivers, suffer (the punishment for) adulterous acts (samgrahana).

357. Offering presents (to a woman), romping (with her), touching her ornaments and dress, sitting with her on a bed, all (these acts) are considered adulterous acts (samgrahana).

358. If one touches a woman in a place (which ought) not (to be touched) or allows (oneself to be touched in such a spot), all (such acts done) with mutual consent are declared (to be) adulterous (samgrahana).

359. A man who is not a Brahmana ought to suffer death for adultery (samgrahana); for the wives of all the four castes even must always be carefully guarded.

360. Mendicants, bards, men who have performed the initiatory ceremony of a Vedic sacrifice, and artisans are not prohibited from speaking to married women.

361. Let no man converse with the wives of others after he has been forbidden (to do so); but he who converses (with them), in spite of a prohibition, shall be fined one\_suvarna.

362. This rule does not apply to the wives of actors and singers, nor (of) those who live on (the intrigues of) their own (wives); for such men send their wives (to others) or, concealing themselves, allow them to hold criminal intercourse.

363. Yet he who secretly converses with such women, or with female slaves kept by one (master), and with female ascetics, shall be compelled to pay a small fine.

364. He who violates an unwilling maiden shall instantly suffer corporal punishment; but a man who enjoys a willing maiden shall not suffer corporal punishment, if (his caste be) the same (as hers).

365. From a maiden who makes advances to a (man of) high (caste), he shall not take any fine; but her, who courts a (man of) low (caste), let him force to live confined in her house.

366. A (man of) low (caste) who makes love to a maiden (of) the highest (caste) shall suffer corporal punishment; he who addresses a maiden (on) equal (caste) shall pay the nuptial fee, if her father desires it.

367. But if any man through insolence forcibly contaminates a maiden, two of his fingers shall be instantly cut off, and he shall pay a fine of six hundred (panas).

368. A man (of) equal (caste) who defiles a willing maiden shall not suffer the amputation of his fingers, but shall pay a fine of two hundred (panas) in order to deter him from a repetition (of the offence).

369. A damsel who pollutes (another) damsel must be fined two hundred (panas), pay the double of her (nuptial) fee, and receive ten (lashes with a) rod.
370. But a woman who pollutes a damsel shall instantly have (her head) shaved or two fingers cut off, and be made to ride (through the town) on a donkey.
371. If a wife, proud of the greatness of her relatives or (her own) excellence, violates the duty which she owes to her lord, the king shall cause her to be devoured by dogs in a place frequented by many.
372. Let him cause the male offender to be burnt on a red-hot iron bed; they shall put logs under it, (until) the sinner is burned (to death).
373. On a man (once) convicted, who is (again) accused within a year, a double fine (must be inflicted); even thus (must the fine be doubled) for (repeated) intercourse with a Vratya and a Kandali.
374. A Sudra who has intercourse with a woman of a twice-born caste (varna), guarded or unguarded, (shall be punished in the following manner): if she was unguarded, he loses the part (offending) and all his property; if she was guarded, everything (even his life).
375. (For intercourse with a guarded Brahmana a Vaisya shall forfeit all his property after imprisonment for a year; a Kshatriya shall be fined one thousand (panas) and be shaved with the urine (of an ass).
376. If a Vaisya or a Kshatriya has connexion with an unguarded Brahmana, let him fine the Vaisya five hundred (panas) and the Kshatriya one thousand.
377. But even these two, if they offend with a Brahmani (not only) guarded (but the wife of an eminent man), shall be punished like a Sudra or be burnt in a fire of dry grass.
378. A Brahmana who carnally knows a guarded Brahmani against her will, shall be fined one thousand (panas); but he shall be made to pay five hundred, if he had connexion with a willing one.
379. Tonsure (of the head) is ordained for a Brahmana (instead of) capital punishment; but (men of) other castes shall suffer capital punishment.
380. Let him never slay a Brahmana, though he have committed all (possible) crimes; let him banish such an (offender), leaving all his property (to him) and (his body) unharmed.
381. No greater crime is known on earth than slaying a Brahmana; a king, therefore, must not even conceive in his mind the thought of killing a Brahmana.
382. If a Vaisya approaches a guarded female of the Kshatriya caste, or a Kshatriya a (guarded) Vaisya woman, they both deserve the same punishment as in the case of an unguarded Brahmana female.
383. A Brahmana shall be compelled to pay a fine of one thousand (panas) if he has intercourse with guarded (females of) those two (castes); for (offending with) a (guarded) Sudra female a fine of one thousand (panas shall be inflicted) on a Kshatriya or a Vaisya.
384. For (intercourse with) an unguarded Kshatriya a fine of five hundred (panas shall fall) on a Vaisya; but (for the same offence) a Kshatriya shall be shaved with the urine (of a donkey) or (pay) the same fine.
385. A Brahmana who approaches unguarded females (of the) Kshatriya or

Vaisya (castes), or a Sudra female, shall be fined five hundred (panas); but (for intercourse with) a female (of the) lowest (castes), one thousand.

386. That king in whose town lives no thief, no adulterer, no defamer, no man guilty of violence, and no committer of assaults, attains the world of Sakra (Indra).

387. The suppression of those five in his dominions secures to a king paramount sovereignty among his peers and fame in the world.

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