



GAUTAM SMRITI

Gautam's Smriti not only contains the preaching pertaining to the duties of a man in all the four stages of his life (Varnashram), prevention of his sins and atonement for them but they are also more logical as compared to Manu Smriti. He has also described about the duties of a man during distress time and decreased the number of consecrations from sixteen to fourteen.

For the benefit of the common man, the supreme jurist Gautam has described about the following in his Smriti-

- a. Right conduct. (achar dharm)
- b. Celibacy (Brahmacharya Dharm)
- c. Duties of a householder (Grihasthya Dharm)
- d. Duties during distress time. (Apad Dharm)
- e. Description of various consecrations (Sanskar Varnan)
- f. Duties (Kartavya Vidhan)
- g. Occupations of different castes (Jaati Vritti)
- h. Duties of the king (Raj Dharm)
- i. Various types of impurities (Ashouch pratipadan)
- j. Certain time when the scripture cannot be studied (Anadhyaya)
- k. Atonement of sins and its methods (Chandrayan Vrata)
- l. Distribution of wealth among the sons (Sampatti Vibhag).

The preceptor Gautam has made it clear in the very beginning of his Smriti that with the due passage of time, the following of the virtues had been laxed during the creation period of the Smriti as compared to the period when Vedas were created.

1. **CODES OF CONDUCT:**

Just like in the Manu Smriti, the religious text of the Satya Yuga that is the codes of conduct have been given due importance in Gautam Smriti.

a. **TONSURE CEREMONY:**

According to this Smriti the tonsure ceremony in Treta Yuga was to be done as per the instructions given in the Vedas. It says:

b. **SACRED THREAD CEREMONY OF A BRAHMIN CHILD:**

“ The sacred thread ceremony of a Brahmin child should be done in his first, fifth, eighth or ninth year inclusive of conception period.” The performance of this ceremony is like a second birth for a Brahmin. His initiation with the sacred thread makes him a preceptor later on in his life.

c. **TONSURE CEREMONY AND SACRED THREAD CEREMONY OF A KSHATRIYA AND VAISHYA:**

According to the Gautam Smriti, the thread ceremony for the Kshatriyas and Vaishyas should be performed in the eleventh and twelfth year of the child respectively.

Regarding the bestowal of Savitri mantra which is chanted during the performance of the sacred thread ceremony Sage Gautam says: “ If the sacred thread ceremony of the Brahmin is not performed before the age of sixteen, that of Kshatriyas before the age of twenty two and that of Vaishyas little more than that, the bestowal of ‘Savitri mantra’ becomes impure and as a result meaningless.”

2. **CELIBACY (BRAHMACHARA) :**

Shedding light on the importance of celibacy, Gautam says- “ A celibate should maintain his chastity, collect fuel for fire, ask for alms, speak the truth and rinse his mouth with water before the commencement of every religious ceremony.”

3. HOUSEHOLDER'S DUTIES :

Describing about the importance of householder's life, Gautam has established many easy and at the same time some tough advises. He says: " A householder should indulge himself in the study of the Vedas doing oblations to the deities (Devayagya), deceased ancestors (pitra yagya), be hospitable to people (manushya yagya), feed the inferior creatures and animals (bhoot yagya) and perform oblations to deceased sages (Rishi Yagya) daily.

It is well known that a man makes his life successful by satisfying the deities with the help of worships etc, the deceased ancestors with the help of 'Tarpan', the living beings by feeding them, the people by being hospitable to them and the sages by conducting himself as per the instructions of the Vedas.

Keeping in mind the laxity on the part of the householder in following the above mentioned oblations, Gautam had given relaxation to him by allowing him to perform only four of the six oblations. He says: " Out of all the six oblations (yagya), a householder should perform 'deva', 'pitra', 'manushya' and 'swadhyaya'."

Gautam has allowed the householder to select the following people for feeding in the given order- " First of all a visitor should be fed, then a child, a patient, a pregnant woman, a married woman, an old man and at last the servants respectively."

a. DUTIES OF HOUSEHOLDER:

Some of the duties of a householder, mentioned in Gautam Smriti are as follows-

- To show respect to the teacher.
- It has also been advised to show respect to the relatives of his teacher.
- Regarding the mode of making salutation to the superiors, Gautam says a householder should get up from his seat as soon as he sees a superior person arriving. An ascetic, father-in-law, uncle, maternal uncle etc. are all superior. Even an elder person belonging to a low caste should be given due respect.
-

b. BASIC ELEMENTS OF A HOUSEHOLDER'S LIFE:

Describing about the basic elements of a householder's life, Gautam says: " Wealth, relatives (brothers etc), occupation, caste, knowledge and life-span (age) are the basic elements important in a householder's life, the former being less important than the latter in the respective order.

4. DUTIES DURING DISTRESS :

Gautam has allowed a householder some laxity regarding his adherence to his own religion in distress. He says- " If the situation demands, Brahmin should follow the religion (duties) of a Kshatriya and, if this change has not been beneficial, he may even try to follow the occupation a Vaishya."

But while allowing the Brahmins to do business during distress time he also put some condition- "Taste (grain, vegetable etc.) should be bartered with taste and animal should be exchanged with animal but he should never deal in the business of salt, sesame and food (grains) which are unworthy of eating". But if the situation is so grave that his survival is threatened, there is no binding on him, he may do what he deems fit.

5. CONSECRATIONS AND CEREMONIES :

According to sage Gautam, the human welfare depends upon the appropriate 'karmas' of all the four castes. Sage Gautam has mentioned about the fourteen consecrations in place of originally sixteen ones. "

Naming the fourteen consecrations, he says-

- 1) Conception. (garbhandhan)
- 2) Milk ceremony performed on the third month. (Punsawan)
- 3) Vedic rites performed in the sixth month of pregnancy. (Seemantonayan)
- 4) Ceremony performed on the birth of a child. (Jaat Karm)
- 5) Naming ceremony. (Naam karan)
- 6) The ceremony of giving a child cooked food for the first time. (Annaprashan)
- 7) Tonsure ceremony. (Mundan)
- 8) Sacred thread ceremony. (Upanayan)
- 9) Study of the four Vedas.
- 10) Marriage ceremony.
- 11) Five oblations (Deities, dead ancestors, human beings, living creatures (animals) and revered sages.
- 12) Eight Parvan Shraadh. (Shravani, Agrahayani chaitra etc)
- 13) Seven types of Havi (things offered to the fire) oblation like Agnihotra darsh etc.
- 14) Seven types of Soma-yagya like agnishtoma etc.

Besides these fourteen consecrations, sage Gautam believes that eight self-qualities are most essential for a man. He says-

EIGHT SELF-QUALITIES :

According to sage Gautam, the eight natural qualities of a man are as follows: : “ Kindness, not to be envious of other’s success, not to find faults in other’s qualities, purity, neutrality, good wishes for others, magnanimous and not being greedy are the eight natural self qualities of a man.”

‘Gautam’ stresses upon the importance of these self-qualities by saying that even if a man has accomplished all the fourteen consecrations but if he does not possess these eight self-qualities, he will not be able to attain unification with the supreme almighty.

6. DUTIES

a. DAILY BATH :

Gautam has instructed the householder to maintain purity and cleanliness in his life as far as possible because he feels that a man who is pure and clean represents God. He says- “ The householder, after having intercourse with his wife must take a bath and then observe the different austerities and resolutions according to the instructions given in the scriptures of ethics. He should be clean and pure, apply fragrance on his body everyday and if money is no problem, he should not wear dirty and old clothes.”

b. GROWING BEARD :

Sage Gautam has left the choice of growing a beard to the householder.

c. RESPECT TO THE DEITIES:

Gautam Smriti prohibits spreading one’s legs towards the deities. According to Gautam, a man should never excrete in front of the following deities- Vayu, Surya, Agni, Brahmin, jal (water) and cow.

d. PURITY:

Sage Gautam is of the opinion that “One should not waste time to purify him after copulation.” He also says- “One should not have intercourse with a weak or non-desirous woman, a man should also not have intercourse with a woman who is in her periods and not even embrace her.”

e. TRAVELS AND VOYAGES:

Regarding travels and voyages Gautam says- “If there is any doubt in his mind, a man should not board a boat. Here sage Gautam tries to point out the importance of life and feels that it should be protected by all means.

f. **RULES REGARDING EXCRETION:**

Gautam Smriti instructs about the directions which a man should face while excreting- "A man should excrete facing north during the day time and during dawn, dusk and night he should squat facing the south."

g. **NOT TO ASPIRE FOR DESIGNATIONS:**

Sage Gautam has advised against having any kind of aspiration for designations, authority and power. He says- "A man should not aspire for designations and authority."

h. **INSTRUCTIONS FOR DINING:**

Gautam Smriti sheds light on the correct methods of dining. He says- "A man must not eat by keeping the food stuffs on his lap. By all means, one should sit comfortably while dining."

i. **SEEKING HELP FROM VIRTUOUS PERSON:**

According to sage Gautam, a man should only go to a virtuous person to seek help to overcome his destitution and for the protection of the wealth.

j. **NATURE AND QUALITIES OF A HOUSEHOLDER :**

Describing about the qualities of an ideal householder sage Gautam says that he is always engaged in virtuosity and treads on the path of truth, follows the character of virtuous people, is civilized by the accomplishment of consecrations always engaged in self-study of the scriptures (Vedas), always remains immersed in the study of the Vedas.

7. **OCCUPATIONS OF DIFFERENT CASTES :**

According to the views propounded in Gautam Smriti study of the Vedas, oblation and charity are the three activities in which all the three Dwij ('twice born') castes, that is, Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya should engage themselves.

a. **BRAHMIN :**

A Brahmin is entitled to preach various disciplines and discourses, help in performing the oblations and take donations. The occupation of the priest has greatest responsibility. He is the first person to bear the ill effects, if even the slightest fault creeps in the performance of rituals during religious ceremonies. Similarly a common man follows the instructions of a preacher. If his conduct has any flaw, he will not be held guilty for it. On the contrary the fault lies with the preacher.

b. KSHATRIYA :

According to sage Gautam, it is the duty of the Kshatriya to protect his subjects and to bring them on the path of virtuosity by his justifiable punishments if they have strayed off.

c. VAISHYA :

Sage Gautam is of the opinion that the Vaishyas should have any of the following as his occupation- Agriculture, commerce, animal husbandry and interest on loan. A Vaishya has also been instructed to give some part of his earnings to the state treasury as tax.

d. SHUDRA :

Sage Gautam as instructed the fourth caste i.e. Shudra to devote himself in the service of the others without being angry and by taking refuge in truth and purity. He can also have handicrafts as his occupation.

8. DUTIES OF A KING :

Regarding the duties of a king, the supreme learned sage Gautam believes that a king should be powerful as well as kind. He should constantly immerse himself in the study of the Vedas and logic science. He says- "A king should eagerly study the three Vedas- Rigveda, Samveda and Yajurveda. He should be eager to apply his mind in contemplation. He should have a pure heart and should have complete control over his sensual desires."

Sage Gautam has also instructed the king to be loving towards his subjects and treat them affectionately just like his own proteges. Sage Gautam feels that in the court the subjects should sit at a lower level than the throne of a king. Even a Brahmin has been instructed to do so.

Elaborating the duties of a king sage Gautam says that "He should protect all the castes and ashrams (four stages of life) justifiably." Sage Gautam is of the opinion that since a king is the part of the divinity hence he is the supreme man on earth. A king should not be neglected, rather, he should be given full respect. According to Gautam Smriti, a king should select a Brahmin as his royal priest, who is learned and of good character. A king who rules according to the advice of such a Brahmin enjoys prosperity and never suffers adversities.

Sage Gautam feels that if a king is inclined towards religiousness and virtuosity then his subjects automatically follow him. Sage Gautam also says that it is the duty of the king to see to it that his subjects get proper employment and occupations.

9. VARIOUS TYPES OF IMPURITIES (ASAOUCH) :

According to sage Gautam, a death in the family causes impurity for the members. He says- "For a Brahmin the impurity caused by death remains for ten days, for a Kshatriya, it remains for twelve days, for a Vaishya, it remains for fifteen days and for a Shudra, it remains for a month."

Further sage Gautam has stated that if there occurs another 'impurity' (death in a family) during the earlier phase of impurity, a man should purify himself only after the completion of the phase of second impurity.

- a. **IMPURITY CAUSED BY DEATH OF A FRIEND** :Gautam says that death of a friend causes impurity for one day.
- b. **IMPURITY CAUSED BY DEATH OF ONE'S PRECEPTOR HIS WIFE OR HIS SON** :Impurity caused by the death of one's preceptor remains for three days. This also applies to his wife's or his son's death.
- c. **IMPURITIES CAUSED BY THE TOUCH** :

If a person accidentally touches a woman who has recently given birth to a child, then he should sprinkle water on him and also on his clothes to purify himself.

- d. **IMPURITY CAUSED BY A DEATH IN THE KING'S FAMILY** : A king gets instantly purified of his impurity so that his administrative is affected.
- e. **'NON-STUDY' PERIODS (ANADHAY)** :

During a period of time when the study of the Vedas has been prohibited is called Anadhay. According to sage Gautam, Rigveda and Yajurveda should not be studied during the following times- " During the night, when a sound is made by a moving arrow, Shehnai (clarinet), Muraj (Drum), thundering clouds and crying are heard."

Vedas should also not be studied when the sounds made by a jackal, a dog or a donkey is heard. Study of Vedas is also prohibited during a snowfall, sight of a red rainbow and during a calamity. Sage Gautam has prohibited the study of Samveda during an earthquake, sight of a meteor and comet, on the death of a king, dark moon day, on the day of purnima, in the month of Karthik, Phalgun and Ashad.

- f. **ATONEMENT OF SINS AND ITS METHODS (CHANDRAYAN VRAT)** - The sage Gautam has instructed to observe fasting of Vapan, during the period of 'Chandrayan-vrat'.

In this 'Krichchra' fasting, one has to observe a fast for the whole day and it is broken at the end of the day with 'panchagavya' (a mixture of milk curd, ghee, cow dung and cow's urine). This fasting continues for one

month. 'Vapan' means the commencement of fast i.e. the resolution one makes to continue this fasting for one month. Various rites are performed (tarpan, Gritahom and the gathering of fuels for the oblation) along with the chanting of Vedic 'Richas'(hymns).

Only ghee is offered to the sacrificial fire. In the end 'Havan' is completed by offering other kinds of fuels. At the time of breaking the fast, rice-flour, oat-flour, green vegetables, milk, curd. Ghee and fruits etc. is used as diet.

METHOD OF OBSERVING FAST :

On the first day of the fast, which begins on the day of full moon, only one morsel of food is eaten. The number of morsels are increased on successive days (i.e. two morsels on second day, three morsels on the third day and so on).

On the day of no moon, which is the fifteenth day, fifteen morsels of food are taken. From the next day onward the number of morsels is decreased by one everyday for fourteen days and a fast is observed on the day of full moon .

Sage Gautam says in his Phalshruti that observance of this Chandrayan fast for one month gives immense benefit and virtues by liberating the performer from all the sins committed in the past. It also liberates the sins of a man's twenty-one generations (ten generations of past, his present generation and ten future generations). Sage Gautam is also of the opinion that if this Chandrayan Vrat is continued for a year a man himself attains to the 'Chandraloka'. In today's circumstances this fast has become extinct because of its strict and severe rules.

10. DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH AMONG SONS :

The great sage Gautam has accepted the provision of distribution of wealth, among the sons after the demise of their father to maintain amicable atmosphere in the family. Sage Gautam says- " After the demise of father, the son should enjoy all his splendours and wealth."

Sage Gautam understood very well that if the wealth is not distributed properly among the sons after the death of their father, it leads to quarrels and enmity among them. Further he declares that the eldest son should get fifth part of his father's total wealth. He has also instructed that if there are quadruped animals in the family, the younger ones should get one each. The number of bullocks given to the eldest son should be more than that given to the younger sons.

Sage Gautam is of the opinion that if the deceased man had been survived by more than one wife, his wealth should be equally distributed between them and consequently among each of their sons. Sage Gautam also says that if a man had no sons, he can give his wealth not only to his adopted son but also to his adopted daughter. According to Gautam Smriti there are many classes of sons

and hence each of them should get appropriate share in the distribution of wealth. -

- a. **AOURAS**- Legitimate child begotten by wife who is of one's own tribe.
- b. **KSHETRAJ**- Son begotten by one's wife with the help of other man than husband but by his permission.
- c. **DATTAK**- Adopted son.
- d. **KRITIM**- Artificial son who has all the qualities of an ideal son.
- e. **GUDHA**- Son born in the home but the identity of parents remains obscure.
- f. **UPAVIDDHA**- Son abandoned by his real parents but raised by foster parents.

Sage Gautam says that in each of the categories, the son should get an equal share of his father's wealth. Again Sage Gautam says that a son begotten from the following should be given one fourth of the total wealth.

- g. **KANINA** :Son begotten by one's daughter out of wedlock.
- h. **SAHODHA**: Son begotten after having sexual intercourse with a pregnant woman.
- i. **PAOUNARBHAV**: Son begotten by an abandoned wife or widow with the help of another man.
- j. **GRANDSON**: Daughter's son.
- k. **ANAATH**: An Orphan.
- l. **KRITAK**: Son begotten after paying a price.
- m. **SAGOTRIYA**:Relative of same tribe.

Further sage Gautam opines that in absence of any category of the above mentioned sons. A Brahmin who has sons from his 'Kshatriya' wife should give the major share to the eldest among them. Similarly if there are sons from a Vaishya wife, the eldest son among them should be given the major share.

Sage Gautam also hated and abhorred injustice. He has clearly said that if a son, begotten from the wife who hailed from the same caste, is unjust in behaviour towards his parents, does not deserve to receive any share from his father's wealth. So it is quite clear that the codes formulated by sage Gautam during the era of Treta went into every detail of human life and were considered as a sacred scripture during that particular era.