The condition of women in ancient India

Bruno Cariou on June 29, 2013 by Elements of Racial Education

A. - The woman among the aborigines.

I. - The family.

India is a vast country, which, since the origin of human societies, has been occupied by many races, succeeding one another, mixing with each other, superimposing one on another. I cannot, in a single lesson, review all these human alluviums, nor limit myself to speaking of the last one, of the Aryan intrusion. I will therefore divide this great subject into two parts: in the first, I will deal with the condition of women among inferior races and of various origins, to which a common name has been given, that of aborigines of India; then I will talk about women in Aryan India. The contemporary aborigines are the remains of ancient pre-Aryan populations, today almost extinct, and belonging, some to the Tamil race, others to the Mongolian races, others to the Aryans;but all these small ethnic groups of aborigines, generally relegated to mountain ranges or to difficult access, have a common character: that of being still today immobilized at more or less lower stages of sociological evolution. From the point of view of social origins, their study is therefore particularly interesting. However, this study confirms, in every respect, a capital fact, which, for many years, I have endeavored to bring to light, namely: that the primary cell of societies has not been the family, as we have it. understand today, but a larger group, whose members, linked to each other by a confused consanguinity, lived in a community regime and at the same time closely united: this primitive group is the clan, which very often, for lack of understand it,travelers and observers confused with the tribe.

These primary clans still persist today among some aborigines of India. The Garos, for example, are grouped into Maharis or Matherhoods. The internal organization of these Garo clans is quite interesting. As their very name suggests, they are maternal clans, that is to say that the filiation is uterine. Moreover, they are exogamic, that is to say that a man cannot take a wife in his own clan; he must choose it from one of the Maharis with which his own has, from time immemorial, used to unite; from where one can conclude, without great temerity, that these clans were formerly in regime of community marriage. In a little while I will say in what curious way the Garos understand and practice marriage.

We do not have such precise information on all the aboriginal clans of India; but we know, roughly speaking, that the yuangs, for example, are divided into exogamous and polygamous groups, improperly called "tribes". We are also told that the Muniparis are divided into four "families" (obviously clans) which do not intermarry. Likewise the Bhiciyas are divided into four distinct clans, etc. All these clans are exogamous; all are still in the maternal filiation, to such an extent that some of them, all perhaps, completely ignore the paternal consanguinity. Thus, among the Khasias and the Kocchs, no kinship between father and son is recognized. This kinship was no longer accepted among the Sinhalese of Ceylon, of whom I shall have to speak again shortly. But the uterine filiation,only recognized, has various economic and even political consequences. Among the Koch (or Kocch), when a man gets married, not only will he live in the clan to which his wife's mother belongs, but he obeys this mother and her daughter. For the same reason, when a Koch woman dies, her personal property is divided among her daughters and among them only. Among the Limbous, your daughters remain in their mother's clan and they belong to her. Sons can become the property of their father; but on condition that the latter pays their mother a certain price, that is to say, buys them: that done, the sons join the paternal clan. Among the aborigines living in monarchical tribes, but still under the regime of maternal filiation, power, on the death of the chief (Rajah), passes to the son of the sister,who received a husband chosen by the assembled people, but still taken from certain families.

Taken together with analogous facts, observable in the contemporary primitives of the various great human races, these archaic forms of consanguinity, of kinship, contribute to constitute a precious bundle of facts and demonstrations which shed light on the sociological origins. Sociology has often been criticized and still sometimes is reproached for not having been able to formulate authentic general laws based on precise observations. Now, in this universal existence of the consanguineous and community clan, at the origin of all societies; then in the evolution of this primary clan and its subsequent dissociation into first uterine, then paternal families, it is impossible not to see the elements of a law, as certain and comprehensive as certain laws of the natural sciences properly so called.

II. - The wedding.

Among the aborigines of India, the modes of marriage naturally vary, according to whether the clan is more or less primitive, especially according to whether one is in maternal or paternal descent, etc. Among the Garos, whom I mentioned earlier, and who have kept the organization in maternal clans (Maharis) with uterine descent, etc., it is the girls who choose their husbands themselves, but conforming to certain rules. Thus a man's sister must marry a man belonging to his sister-in-law's house; the son of a man can only marry a daughter of his father's sister; her daughter can marry the son of her paternal aunt; but then the latter will reside with his father-in-law and, on the latter's death, he succeeds him, as owner and at the same time husband of his wife.A Garo's wife is therefore often old enough to be his mother and is in reality his stepmother and aunt. As I have just said, it is always, among the Garos, the girl who proposes the marriage; if it happened to a young man to make the advances, the fact would be regarded as insulting for the clan of the girl and it would result, for the clan of the man, the obligation to redeem the fault committed by libations and a pig sacrifice.

The primitives, still having only nations insufficient on consanguinity, often contract unions which would scandalize us. Thus, among the Reddies of India, we readily marry a young girl, aged 16 to 20, to a boy aged 5 to 6; after which the bride goes to live intimately with another man, an uncle or a maternal cousin sometimes with the father of her young husband. The children which can result from these waiting unions are attributed to the putative young husband, who himself, when grown up, will in turn have children attributable to another aspiring husband. Likewise, for us incestuous marriages, for example, between brother and sister, father and daughter, seem very lawful for those concerned, provided that the brother and sister are of different mothers,in clans where no kinship between father and daughter is recognized.

But as soon as paternal filiation is established, it usually has several constant consequences: first marriage by purchase; for then the father sells his daughter; in the second place, a ceremonial simulating and recalling an abduction, what has been called marriage by capture; finally, and quite often, in India, there is a practice which consists in sacrificing certain animals and in drawing a red line with their blood on the girl's forehead. Sometimes this bloody ceremony is reduced to drawing a line with some substance on the bride's forehead. The meaning of the simulated ceremonial struggle to retain the bride is obvious: this mimicry recalls the real and violent abduction of the past; it symbolizes it. The red line, and sometimes bloody, can have the same meaning and mean to the woman that she is booty that has cost blood,a property acquired by arms.

Individual polygamy also goes hand in hand with paternal filiation and especially with patriarchy. But we find, among the primitives of India, a rarer form of marriage, polyandry, usually fraternal and which, as I have already had occasion to say, may be due, where it exists, either to scarcity of female sex, or simply a one-sided survival, resulting from an old collective marriage between groups of brothers and groups of sisters.

This second interpretation is based on incontestable facts, in particular on the polygamous polyandry of the Todas du Nilguerry. There, when a man takes a wife, she becomes at the same time the common wife of his brothers, as the latter reach the age of man; for the eldest is the first to marry, and, on the other hand, these fraternal husbands also become husbands of the sisters of their common spouse as they become marriageable. If, by misfortune, a man does not have a brother, he must associate in marriage with other men; for otherwise he would die celibate. This polyandry, but usually unilateral, also existed in Ceylon and it persisted quite recently in India, near the sources of the Jumma. Missionaries reported it again in other parts of India,by noting that the husbands shared the maintenance of their only wife: one was in charge of dressing her, the other of providing her with rice, etc. etc.

To exhaust this subject, I will say a few words about the most famous and curious form of polyandry known, that of the Naïrs of Malabar. The Naïrs are by no means savages; they also represent an aristocratic and warrior caste; but, among them, maternal filiation has been preserved and land ownership belongs, administratively at least, to women. Each of these marries 5 to 12 husbands, who do not live with her, but whose wife she is successively, for ten days for each. For their part, these part-husbands are free to participate in several other conjugal societies. Naturally, the children, resulting from these strange unions, do not know their father: they are only the children of their mother. - Consequently,the inheritance of men goes to the children of their sisters, to their nephews, with whom they have a relationship of paternal affection as well as the rights and duties of a father. For the family of the polyandric woman, the husbands are only strangers and, on the other hand, the mothers or the elder sisters administer the property of the families, to which the men belong.

This polyandry of the Nairs is of a very particular kind; it coexists well with the uterine filiation system; but there is nothing more fraternal about it; it rather recalls the primitive polyandry of the Arabs and their mot'a marriage. Whatever the origin, this mode of polyandry has the result of maintaining in force the system of uterine filiation, the only one possible with it, and of placing the administration of property in female hands, moreover without anything. which can be called matriarchy. Indeed, so far we have yet to find any example of real, genuine matriarchy, and it does seem that Bachofen's matriarchal theory is at odds with experience. (1) After this instructive preamble, we will now be able to approach the study of Aryan India, starting with its origins:by the Vedic Aryas.

B. - Aryan India.

I. - The woman in the Rig-Véda.

The Vedic Aryas, whose descendants founded Brahmanic society and religion on the Indian peninsula, had reached, at the time when they composed the songs of the Rig-Veda, a state of civilization comparable to that of the most developed among the present-day aborigines; but they are much less known to us than the latter, since, in order to judge them, especially to appreciate the condition of their wives, we are reduced to commenting on and interpreting the very vague texts of their hymns. I will in no way imitate our modern amateurs of Vedism, who, by dint of excogitation and imagination, have reconstituted, they believe, the picture of ancient Vedic society. Some poor sociological information, however, can be drawn from the Vedic texts.

In the Vedic Pantheon, the main gods have women: Indra, Indrani; Agni, Agnayi; Asvins, Asvini; Varuna, Yarunàni, etc. ; but these wives of the gods are not worshiped, like their divine husbands. Yet there is a great goddess, Aurora, woman of the Sun, and daughter of the atmosphere, who inspired the most graceful chants of the Rig-Véda; then comes Prithivi, the earth, "the only wide one", the mother of all things, who, by marrying with Heaven (Dyaus), engendered various other Deities. The Vedic Aryas therefore did not deny their divine characters the female sex. Likewise, although the small Vedic world already lived in a patriarchal regime, the wife was there, no more than her husband, excluded from religious ceremonies; only she was admitted there especially as the mother of a son: "The privilege of the woman,says a Vedic verse, is to share with her husband the honors of sacrifice. The ally of Rita, the wife of Indra, "the mother of a son", deserves the tributes. Indra is superior to everything. - Was the Vedic marriage monogamous? The fact is hardly probable; because the texts often speak to us of captives raided and given in the present. From certain verses one can even infer the existence of polygamy. Thus the ten fingers, which make the sacred liquor, the soma, are called "the wives of God" (Rig-Véda, sect. VII, sect. VIII, hymm 26) Despite the paucity of precise information, the Rig-Véda gives the idea of ​​a family analogous to the Homeric family, where the existence of a legitimate matron did not exclude that of concubines. The Vedic family would be, according to the hymns, a restricted family, like ours:father and mother; the son and the daughter, who are brother and sister; Grand parents ; uncles and aunts are the only designated parents. The husband's name is pati, pîtar, master, owner. As generator, it has another name, that of genitor, and to designate it completely, we associate the two designations; it is calledpitâ-ganitâ , father genitor ( pater genitor ).

According to these notions, laboriously extracted from the texts, there would have been no trace of maternal filiation among the Vedic Aryas and yet these traces have been found in modern India. A missionary of the last century tells us, in fact, that in India, the children of two brothers or those of two sisters are declared brothers among themselves "by the custom of all the castes"; but the brother's children and those of the sister are only first cousins. In short, the small Vedic society had already gone beyond the primary forms of the family and marriage, those which still persist today among certain contemporary aborigines. But the Vedic Arya were the ancestors of the Brahmanic populations; the evolution of the latter could not therefore be less advanced than theirs. Their family is indeed patriarchal.

II - The Brahmanic family

For the Brahmanic Hindus, having at least one son is a religious duty and one of the closest: "By a son," says a verse of the Code of Manu, a man gains the celestial worlds; through the son of a son he obtains immortality, through the son of this grandson he rises to the dwelling of the sun. The eldest son, this first-born, essential to reach the celestial worlds, performs religious ceremonies; but he is also the manager of the family property and, if he shows himself to be an incapable administrator, he is replaced.

Not to have a son is such a great misfortune that the legislator has sought and found the means to counter it; he even imagined two. The first is to charge his daughter to give birth to a son who, by express intention, will be the son of the father, who needs it. To accomplish this miracle, the father just has to say: "That the male child, says the Code of Manou, that she will bring into the world become mine and perform the funeral ceremony in my honor (this is the big business). ). "-" The son of a man, continues Manou's text, is like himself, and a daughter, in charge of the designated office, is like a son ... She is one and the same soul with her father. This son obtained by proxy inherits from his maternal grandfather and, in the funeral ceremony, he has to offer two cakes, one to his own father, according to the flesh;the other to his maternal grandfather.

So things work out well as long as one has a married daughter; but a married man may not have children at all. It is then the height of misfortune. To remedy this, the ingenious legislator has yet devised a very simple process. The expedient is simply to have the wife, hitherto sterile, after having properly authorized it, by a brother of the husband or another relative. The means can even be used with a widow without children. A verse of the Code of Manou forbids the parent designated for this office to procreate more than one son in this way; but commentators, more far-sighted, thought that the aim would be achieved even more surely, if the woman or the widow without children, according to the rites, engendered a second son for the intention of the deceased. Perhaps

must we see, in this very particular custom, an altered survival of an ancient fraternal marriage. We find, moreover, a much more striking survival of fraternal marriage in the Mahabhârata. I hear about the story of the young Draupadi "with the eyes of blue lotus" married simultaneously to the five Pandous brothers and glorifying them, while Bavana, her hateful captor, carries her through the air. Draupadi is the model polyandric wife: she is rigorously faithful to her five husbands whom she adores and admires without any preference. In the same poem of the Mahabharata, one finds even better in fact ancient customs; know the tradition of a period of promiscuity, perhaps of collective marriage between clans. The poet tells us that in those distant times the duty of women was to be unfaithful, but in their caste:"Females of all classes are common ... Like cows, such are women: each has its caste". Finally, the Bayadères of India, which one raises in the temples for the dance, the music and the prostitution, can also represent a very old survival. Even today, even in Pondicherry, they are forbidden to marry and indeed Indian tradition mentions a town populated, it is said, by courtesans, the town of Vesali, where marriage was prohibited.they are forbidden to marry and indeed Indian tradition mentions a town populated, it is said, by courtesans, the town of Vesali, where marriage was prohibited.They are forbidden to marry and indeed Indian tradition mentions a town populated, it is said, by courtesans, the town of Vesali, where marriage was prohibited.

III. - Marriage in Brahmanic India

If one referred to the Code of Manou, all the populations of present-day India would have a regulated and uniform marriage. We know that this is not so and that Brahmanism has failed to standardize the enormous and varied population of India; but he nevertheless imposed on him a dominant legislation, to which the upper castes, at least, tried to conform their marriage and their family life. We must therefore draw from the Code of Manou an abridged description of Brahmanic marriage.

But this Code itself tells us about eight modes of marriage: 1 ° the mode of Brahma, where the father gives a Brahmin his daughter adorned with a beautiful dress and ornaments; 2 ° the divine mode, when the father grants his daughter, dressed for the occasion, to the priest who officiates; 3 ° the mode of the saints, when one gives to the father, not as a gratuity, but for a religious sacrifice, a cow and a bull; 4 ° the mode of creatures where the father quite simply marries his daughter, giving her and her husband moral advice; 5 ° the marriage of bad geniuses, when the future makes presents to the parents, in ordinary language, buys the daughter; 6 ° the marriage of celestial musicians, that is to say the marriage of love; the marriage of giants, that is to say by kidnapping; 8 ° finally the marriage of vampires, that is to say the marriage by seduction without scruples.

This last mode is necessarily concluded without paternal consent, like kidnapping; other unions are made with the consent of the father and this is, according to the Code, an essential condition; since the father, master of his daughter, has the right to marry her at will; but above all he has a narrow duty to marry her and it is reprehensible if he does not fulfill this duty in due time. He even has to do it, when the girl is still very young and, if he waits for the marriageable age, the suitor no longer owes her any gratuity; because "the father has lost all authority by delaying the moment of becoming a mother for his daughter". The regular age is indicated by the Dildo; it is eight years if the husband is 24 years old, and 12 years if the husband is 30 years old. We understand that with these young brides, the father can easily make substitutions of person.But, if he notices it, Manon's Code wants the purchaser to receive the two sisters, the real and the false betrothed, for the sole price of the first: the rapacious father is therefore punished by where he has peach. In this case, he even sinned twice; for the sacred code absolutely prohibits the sale of a daughter in marriage: a father should not receive anything in exchange for his daughter; however, "any gratification, small or considerable, reigns by a father in marrying his daughter, constitutes a sale"."Any gratuity, small or considerable, reigns by a father in marrying his daughter, constitutes a sale"."Any gratuity, small or considerable, reigns by a father in marrying his daughter, constitutes a sale".

In fact, however, the sacred law, that of Manou, seems to have totally failed, in wanting to prevent marriage by purchase. Since the most remote times, it is customary in India to pay the father a certain sum, the day or the day after the marriage of his daughter. It was first of all a gift, part to the father, part to the woman in the nuptial fire, as the Hindu jurisconsults say, something like the Germanic Morgengabe. Then the donation

voluntary became simply the price of an open sale, but, in large part, spent by the father on jewelry for the bride. In India, says an old missionary, "getting married and buying a wife is the same thing." It is even commonly said to "buy a wife" to get married. But the price to pay is not the only obstacle to marriage, although it is attributed the existence, by economy, of polyandry in northern India. There are also other impediments, namely: the suitability of the caste and the existence of various conditions required among the spouses. In India, the ideal marriage is marriage in the caste to which one belongs. However, Manou does not absolutely prohibit unions between higher castes; one can, according to the Code, marry a woman of a lower caste than one's own,but never a woman of a higher caste. Above all, it is strictly forbidden for a man of the Brahmanic and warrior castes, the Brahmin and the Kchatriya, to take as his first wife a woman belonging to a servile caste. The expression "first wife" implies the existence of a regulated cohabitation. The Brahmin, who does not marry a woman of his class, and introduces a Sudra into his bed, commits a sort of sacrilege "and descends to hellish abode". The lips of a woman suddenly pollute; his breath defiles; the Brahmin, who has a child, has committed a crime without possible expiation. The Brahmin is, in essence, a superior being; even a woman having her period, a eunuch, a dog, a pig, a rooster, especially a woman born of a sudra and a Brahmin, should not see a Brahmin eating.Over the centuries these rules of misalliance have become even worse. The union, going down, between the first three castes, which was allowed at the time of the legislator Manou, is now prohibited and other restrictions still hamper marriages. May a man never marry before his older brother. “Such a marriage precipitates into hell (2) not only the spouses, but also the priest who married them. Finally, a Brahmin should only marry a girl provided with the following suitable signs: 'She must be well made, have the graceful gait of a swan or a young elephant; a light down must cover his body; may her hair be fine, her teeth small, and her limbs charmingly soft. Does she have reddish hair? That we beware of marrying her and in the same way,whether it is named after a constellation or a river or a bird or a serpent, etc. All this set of conditions, more or less reasonable, is not made to facilitate marriage, which, on the other hand, does not provide a woman with a fate worthy of envy.

Once in a state of marriage, while she is still a child or so and without having been consulted, the young bride lives in a state of complete subjection. She must never eat with her husband. Neither can she be freed from marital authority: she cannot, says Manou, either by sale or by abandonment. A husband who talks familiarly with his wife would discredit himself, and women themselves are so well trained in this humble condition that they would despise a husband who treated them as equals. Woman is essentially an unclean being. When she gives birth, the house she lives in, and everyone in it, also becomes unclean and for ten days. If a husband leaves his wife, she must patiently wait for her return, spinning or exercising an honest profession,if the absentee left him nothing. This wait must last eight years, if the husband has left for religious reasons; six years, if his journey was for science or fame; only three years if he has undertaken a pleasure trip. At the end of these graduated periods, the abandoned wife has the right not to remarry but to go and join her legitimate master. - Even more, the very death of this master does not give freedom to the Brahmanic woman and above all does not give her a fate worthy of envy.- Even more, the very death of this master does not give freedom to the Brahmanic woman and above all does not give her a fate worthy of envy.- Even more, the very death of this master does not give freedom to the Brahmanic woman and above all does not give her a fate worthy of envy.

IV. - Widowhood, Divorce.

A. Widowhood. - In India, as elsewhere, marriage is dissolved by death, by repudiation or divorce, finally by adultery. - In Brahmanic India, the state of emptiness is held to be an unnatural state; we attach to it an idea of ​​discredit; but the duties which result from it are very different for men and women. Widows are often very young girls, even children, officially married by their fathers, but their conjugal union has not been practically achieved; because, for girls, the marriage age is very low. According to Manou, the Brahmanic father must marry his daughter, even before the age of eight, which is legal. If he neglects to fulfill this duty, the marital girl will have to be patient for another three years; after which she will choose a husband of her own rank for herself.A little jewel called a tali is attached to the neck of little girls thus married ”by their father. If, while awaiting the consummation of the marriage, the designated husband dies, the tali is taken from his little wife, from the expectant wife; but then the young widow can no longer marry.

The levirate, probable survival of an old fraternal marriage, is, according to the Code of Manou, obligatory even after the death of a fiancé. This fraternal duty was essential whenever the husband had died childless; for it was important to arouse a fictitious posterity to him.

Ordinarily and although the state of emptiness entailed general contempt, a virtuous woman not only never had to remarry, but she had to impose an ascetic regime on herself; he had to lose weight by living "on flowers, roots and pure fruit, without ever even pronouncing the name of another man."

The widow who, yielding to the desire to have children, is unfaithful to her deceased husband, will, according to the Code, be despised in this lower world and, in the next, excluded from the heavenly sojourn where her husband awaits her. .

In the upper castes of the Brahmans and Kchatriyas, widows obviously constituted a great embarrassment, which one had tried to avoid, by persuading them to burn themselves alive at the stake of their husbands. By this glorious suicide, they escaped a scorned, almost abject existence, and a commemorative mausoleum deified them after their death. Some widows burned themselves out of vanity, only to distinguish themselves from the common people. Yet it is especially in the warrior caste that these suicides by fire were common; they were rare in the Brahmanic caste. The custom of suttis is of very ancient origin; it already existed in the time of Alexander and has only been abolished today, not without difficulty, by the English government. After the death of a great prince it was not a single woman,but a whole harem ascending to the funeral pyre. In the last century, in the principality of Marava, two princes having died, leaving, one 17 wives, the other 13, all burned themselves with their husbands, except one, who, being pregnant, had to wait for her deliverance, to be able to imitate his widowhood companions. - But the moral obligations of idleness were very different according to the sex. For men, all rigorous duties disappear. The Code of Manou only prescribes them to burn, according to the rites, the body of their deceased wife, then to light the nuptial fire a second time, in ordinary language to remarry as soon as possible.except one, who, being pregnant, had to wait for her deliverance, to be able to imitate her widowhood companions. - But the moral obligations of idleness were very different according to the sex. For men, all rigorous duties disappear. The Manou Code only prescribes them to burn, according to the rites, the body of their dead wife, then to light the nuptial fire a second time, in ordinary language to remarry as soon as possible.except one, who, being pregnant, had to wait for her deliverance, to be able to imitate her widowhood companions. - But the moral obligations of idleness were very different according to the sex. For men, all rigorous duties disappear. The Manou Code only prescribes them to burn, according to the rites, the body of their dead wife, then to light the nuptial fire a second time, in ordinary language to remarry as soon as possible.in ordinary language to remarry as soon as possible.in ordinary language to remarry as soon as possible.

Some very high ranking widows were exempt from suicide; even they had the duty to outlive their husbands, for example, the widows of princes who died leaving a young son. Then the mother, who was to be "the principal wife of the harem", was regent and ruled under the name of her infant son. - We saw earlier that the custom of widows suicide was special to the upper castes of Brahmanic India. In

the lower classes, the widows did not burn themselves and even the laws regulating the succession sometimes made them a rather favorable situation. In Bengal, for example, the childless widow had the lifetime enjoyment of her husband's property. If the deceased had left male children, these succeeded in the first place; then the widow came to the succession with the collateral; but, as distinguished marriages were often sterile, the result was that women owned a large part of the landholdings for life. However, we have noticed that it was especially in Bengal that the English found the custom of suttis in force, and the coexistence of these two facts led to the supposition that one, the first, could be the cause of the second: we burned widows gladly,because they were annoying owners, of whom it was advantageous to get rid of. The glaring iniquity with which Brahminic law treats widows is found when it comes to divorce or rather repudiation.

In fact, there does not seem to have been a divorce for women in India; but the husband largely had the right of repudiation. First of all, the Manou Code makes it a duty for a man to leave his wife, even regularly married, if, after marriage, he discovers in her disastrous marks or diseases or defilements. If his wife shows him aversion, let him endure her for a year; then that he appropriates all the goods of the cantankerous wife, except what is strictly necessary for her to subsist and to clothe herself; that done, that he ceases to live with her. But the husband has the right to replace a wife, literally to suspend her from her functions, for many reasons. A sterile woman, for example, must be replaced in the eighth year; the one in which all the children died, the tenth;the one who gives birth only to daughters, the eleventh; the one who speaks bitterly, on the spot. In the same way the husband must replace a wife who gets drunk, the one who has bad morals, the one who

perpetually contradicts, the one who is afflicted with an incurable disease, the one who has a wicked character, the one who dissipates his good. The replacement of the woman is not repudiation, but indeed only the setting aside of the unworthy, as one can infer from the following article: the woman, replaced legally, who angrily abandons the house of her husband, must immediately be detained or repudiated in the presence of the reunited family. The replacement was therefore a simple, in some way disciplinary measure, which the husband had to take from his private authority; but to incarcerate or drive out a woman, the consent of the marital family was doubtless necessary.

The Manou Code is not, as we have just seen, precisely feminist in all that relates to widowhood and repudiation, but it is perhaps even more unfair (3) in the question of adultery. For Manou, adultery is a great crime, above all because it can alter the purity of the castes. For women, it is an inexcusable package. Whatever a husband may do, and whatever he may be, if he has no good quality and if he is unfaithful, fickle, his wife, if she is virtuous, must continue to revere him as a God. On the contrary, if a woman of high birth is guilty of adultery, let the king, guardian of morals, make her publicly devoured by dogs and that his accomplice be burned on an iron bed reddened by fire. For adulterous trade with a woman, the man is punished,but very differently according to his caste and that of his accomplice. The penalty also varies, depending on whether or not the woman was

guarded. A drudra, for example, a man of the last caste, who has had a criminal trade with a woman belonging to one of the three upper castes will undergo phallotomy and confiscation of everything he owns, if the woman does not was not guarded; otherwise, he will lose everything: life and property. For adultery with a guarded Brahmani, a Vaisya (merchant) loses all his property after having served a year in prison; a kchatriya pays a fine, has his head shaved and doused with donkey urine. But an adulterous Brahmin gets off with an ignominious tonsure in cases where the punishment of other castes is death; for “there is no greater iniquity in the world than to kill a Brahmin. The king must not even conceive of the idea ”.

On the proofs of adultery, one is not difficult: is adultery, whoever talks with the wife of another in a remote place; anyone who frolic with a woman, sends her flowers and perfumes, touches her finery or her clothes, etc. The code is full of good advice for the young novice, whose education a Brahmin directs and to whom the temptation of adultery might come. That he avoid pouring odoriferous oil on his director's wife; in general, he should beware of too familiar little cares, for example to arrange the hair of the woman, to serve her in the bath, to touch her feet while bowing down to greet her, etc. The female sex, it is claimed, is perfidious; it is in his nature to seek to corrupt men. A woman can lead the wise as well as the fool out of the right path.Never stay in a remote place with your sister, daughter, even mother. The sensual attraction is very powerful; he can train the wisest; we see that if the novice succumbs, it will not be for lack of warning.

V. - Social condition of women

In no country has woman been so completely subordinate and socially annihilated as in India. I have just quoted verses from Manon's Code where women are pointed out to men as one of the most dangerous beings. There are others who complete this judgment: “Manou shared with women the love of their bed, their seat and their adornment, concupiscence, anger, bad inclinations, the desire to play. evil, the evil ”. “If women were not watched, they would be the misfortune of both families (theirs and that of their husbands). This deeply vicious nature of the woman having been wanted in India by the divinity itself, it is quite useless to pretend to correct it. One can only take precautions against this essentially vicious being and constantly remind him of his unworthiness.Woman is only one thing; in war, it is a good catch just like objects, like animals, and, like them, it unquestionably becomes the property of its captor. In the household, a woman's role is simply to passively obey. It is up to her husband to make her observe the law and allow her innocent pleasures. Never let her mention this husband's name. Is she talking to him? it must be in the most respectful terms. She is never admitted to the honor of sitting at her table. On her, as on her servants, her children, her younger brother, her pupil. the husband has the right to corporal punishment; only the blows should only be struck on the posterior part of the body. Neither does a woman have the right to act according to her will: in childhood, she depends on her father; in his youth,from her husband ; widow, of her sons; in their absence, his closest paternal relatives; if necessary, of the sovereign: never a woman should govern herself as she pleases. As also happened in Greece under the regime of the patriarchate, one even contests the mother's consanguinity with her children: "The woman is considered by law as the field and the man as the seed". It is the exact counterpart of the primitive maternal filiation.It is the exact counterpart of the primitive maternal filiation.It is the exact counterpart of the primitive maternal filiation.

At each menstrual period, a woman is deemed unclean for 4 or 5 days, which he is prescribed to exceed separately. Everything she touches then becomes impure like her and, at the end of the period, she has the legal obligation to purify herself with baths and drinks. The Bayadères excepted, the woman receives, in India, no education. To know how to read would even be shameful for an honest woman. At most, women are trained to take

care of the household. Usually the husband, when he addresses his wife, uses a humiliating name, "slave", "servant"; on the contrary, the wife calls her husband "my master", "my lord", sometimes "my God".

Strabo already tells us, according to Greek travelers, that in India the Brahmans do not communicate their philosophical doctrines to their wives.

According to the Code of Manou, confirmed in this by the Greek Mégasthènes, of which Strabo recorded the information, the women, these beings so inferior, however play a considerable role in the palace of the kings. Manou wants a monarch to be served and surrounded only by women whom one will take care to search frequently, to see if they are not hiding, in the folds of their clothes, weapons or poison. These women of the court are responsible for fanning the prince and pouring perfumed oils or water with the greatest care on his august body. Strabo, that is to say, Megasthenes, generally confirms all these details. He adds that the women surrounding the king were bought from their parents;that they accompany the king to the hunt or to the war and that then they are mounted on horses or elephants and armed like Amazons but like Amazons previously trained.

Brahmanism thus imposed or allowed to impose on the women of India a fate of the most humble and even the most humiliating. Buddhism has not changed much in their social position; only he gave them the same religious ideal as men, that is to say, the hope of ever higher rebirths (4) and Nirvana for the last end. In this lower world, Buddhism also allowed women to enter religious orders. It is little; it is nevertheless something; because a dream to which one attaches the price, is worth even better than nothing.

However, in this low world, the Code of Manou attributes to women, with caste restrictions, a small share in the inheritance of a Brahmin husband. He also prescribes that the brothers, who inherit most of the heritage, give something to their unmarried mother sisters so that they can get married. This preference for sisters with mothers is a clear survival of the regime of maternal filiation. But, in general, the laws of India exherit women; for they are considered unfit to perform sacred rites. However, the wife can own the property which she has received by inheritance, purchase, partition, nuptial gift, and this property, when it exists, is inalienable for the husband. Finally, when their mother dies,unmarried uterine brothers and sisters also share the maternal inheritance. The woman is therefore sacrificed from the point of view of goods, as to all the others; for her, there is no fairness. She is no better treated in court where her testimony is not even accepted. The testimony of a single man, says the Code of Manou, is admissible in certain cases; that of a great number of women, even honest ones, is not so because of the inconstant spirit of their sex. The spirit of Brahmanic India, in relation to woman, has therefore been to regard her as an inferior being, at the same time dangerous, futile and sensually perverse.The testimony of a single man, says the Code of Manou, is admissible in certain cases; that of a great number of women, even honest ones, is not so because of the inconstant spirit of their sex. The spirit of Brahmanic India, in relation to woman, has therefore been to regard her as an inferior being, at the same time dangerous, futile and sensually perverse.The testimony of a single man, says the Code of Manou, is admissible in certain cases; that of a great number of women, even honest ones, is not because of the inconstant spirit of their sex. The spirit of Brahmanic India, in relation to woman, has therefore been to regard her as an inferior being, at the same time dangerous, futile and sensually perverse.

Charles Letourneau, The Condition of Women in Various Races and Civilizations , V. Giard & E. Brière, Paris, 1903, p. 382-406.

(1) The author here makes a false trial against Bachofen and in doing so only succeeds in showing that, like most sociologists and anthropologists who criticize the work of the Swiss jurist, often with unwelcome condescension, he has not read his work because, if he had read it, he would know that the term "matriarchy" does not appear in it. The two central concepts of this are maternal rights ( Mutterrecht ) and gynecocracy ( Gynaikokratie ), the government of women. (NDE.)

(2) The non-Aryan notion of "hell" as a place where the damned suffer eternal punishment is absent from the Rig-Veda ; she appears in the Atharva-Veda, influenced by the beliefs of the aborigines and their chthonic cults. (NDE.)

(3) What is deemed "unfair" by an individual barely sexually differentiated and imbued with democratic prejudices such as egalitarianism and, more precisely, gender equality is on the contrary fair and just from the point of view of traditional white view. (NDE.)

(4) As J. Evola showed in The Doctrine of Awakening , reincarnation is a notion specific to the popular forms of Buddhism which developed in the Indian subcontinent under the influence of conceptions aborigines having nothing to do with the Aryan spirit which informed primitive Buddhism. (NDE.)