

- Family & marriage always played significant roles in determining the life & status of women throughout the world.
- Kinship rules, marriage laws & descent patterns are important criterion in the creation of women's life.
- When female gender is the distinguishing criterion, the descent principle is called matrilineal.
- In this the individual's relationship is to his mother and through her to other kinsmen, both male and female, but continuing only through females.
- Bachofen argued that human society began in a state of primitive promiscuity (आदिम स्वच्छंदता) in which there was really no social organization & no regulation of behavior or sex.
- Matriliney, the second stage of cultural evolution was associated with the invention of agriculture by women.
- Matrilineal descent (मातृवंशीय) reflected the cult of a female deity & depended directly on the religious mentality of women.
- Matrilineal system existed in Kerala even during the 19th and 20th centuries.
- One of the major matrilineal castes that had existed in Kerala was the Nayers.
- Nayers of Kerala have certainly been almost universally regarded as exotic and extraordinary by those who have visited them due to existence of a peculiar system of inheritance (उत्तराधिकार), i.e., the Marumakkathayam.
- Nayers had a peculiar system of marriage within the format of marumakkathayam and was structured by the then existing land relations.
- In this study the marriage system of Nayers has been subjected to a re-analysis to find out 'women' in Nayar marriage – her status, her roles, her sexual freedom, and her responsibilities.
- Women's roles, status, images and symbols are important while dealing with the matrilineal system of Kerala, because women were central to this system.
- This pre requires an overview of the existing knowledge regarding nayar marriage.
- Scholars belonging to these disciplines have analyzed Marumakkathayam and the Nair system of marriage.
- Europeans travelers and administrators were the first to study about this exotic system.
- Friar Jordanus of 14th century was the first European traveler to mention the existence of a peculiar system of inheritance in Kerala.
- Later on Francis Buchanan, Duarte Barbosa, William Logan etc. looked into this system and expressed their curiosity.

## CLASS NOTES

### MATRILINEAL SYSTEMS IN INDIA

- Among the historians K.P. Padmanabha Menon in 'History of Kerala' was the first to deal with the system and he tried to trace its origin.
  - Elamkulam Kunjan Pillai in 'Studies in Kerala History' argued that during the Chera-Chola war the members of the military squad could not form permanent marriage unions or attend the management of households and thus it was entrusted upon women.
  - Historians never indulged into the condition of women involved.
  - Anthropologists like Kathleen Gough, Dumont, C.J.Fuller & others always searched for parallels in Kerala that would fit into the theoretical framework of matriliney.
  - Even while discussing the marriage they concentrated on the concepts of 'group marriage', primary marriage, secondary marriage and so on, but failed to recognize women.
  - A major addition to marumakkathayam studies can from a group of scholars like Saradamoni, Praveena Kodoth, J.Devika & others.
  - Saradamoni argued that the central feature of matriliney is that it confers on women permanent right to maintenance by and residence in their natal home.
  - This gives them a degree of autonomy which is not possible in the patrilineal system.
  - These scholars dealt with the various gender issues and were the first to reckon that women were central to this whole process.
  - They analyzed tarawad, its management and concluded that women enjoyed freedom in this system.
  - The geographical area of the study has been confined to British Malabar. Marumakkathayam is a conglomeration of various concepts and rituals.
  - Hence a multidisciplinary approach is inevitable.
  - Official records, diaries, private papers, literary works, field study, personal interviews, case study are all used in the course of this study.
  - To analyze the objective a field work is done in the districts of Kozhikode, and Palakkad.
  - Twenty Nair tharavads in these regions are visited during this study and from these a case of five Nair tharavads are chosen for detailed examination.
- MARUMAKKATHAYAM - MATRILINEAL SYSTEM OF KERALA**
- Matriliney of Kerala was known by the name Marumakkathayam.
  - The term came from marumakkal – nephews and nieces.
  - The word has been coined due to the unusual relationship between uncle and his nephews and nieces.
  - This peculiar system is built upon women.

- It gave protection to women compared to their counterparts in patrilineal families.
- Women were the stock of the land title and it was through her that the tarawad name was transmitted from one generation to another.
- She had a birthright over tarawad property and this lasted throughout her life.
- The Nair women and their children lived in the tarawad –matrilineal household – itself.
- A big tarawad was composed of several numbers of residences & vast landed property.
- Some tarawads enjoyed quasi judicial privileges which kept the cultivating population in its thrall.
- The property of the tarawad was held in common and partition was not allowed.
- The head and manager of the tarawad was the senior male member or karnavan.
- The literal meaning of the term is one who is accountable and responsible.
- He was an agent who represented the tarawad but, not its owner.
- British interpretation of marumakkathayam law vested in him exclusive right & duty to manage the tarawad property.
- The Colonial patriarchal system was confused to see that women were the property owners & they searched for a male figure with whom they could make all the settlements.
- Regarding the management of Tarawad Praveena Kodoth says that the general presumption in favor of management by the senior male was all too often turned into an exclusion of women from managerial roles or used to exhaust women's claims.

#### NAIR MARRIAGE

- The study of family and marriage largely focused on the institution of marriage.
- One such marriage that found worldwide attention was that found among the Nairs of Kerala.
- There were two types of marriage for a Nair girl – talikettukalyanam and sambandham.
- Talikettukalyanam was performed before attaining puberty and when she attained maturity she entered into a sambandham union.
- The marriage system of Malabar was definitely related to the then existing land relations.
- To conceive the significance of Nair marriage, one should understand the system of marriage that had existed in the Namboothiri community.
- Namboothiris were the Janmis and Nairs were the Kanamdars
- Janmi was the holder of Janmam right & was a dignity with a fixed share of the produce of land.
- In Kerala Namboothiris were the predominant group of Janmis & Kanamdar was the holder of Kanam tenure and it was the right to supervise all inhabitants of the particular land.
- Kanamdar was lower in status to Janmi.

- Namboothiris in Kerala followed primogeniture, i.e. only the eldest son was permitted to marry Namboothiri women and younger sons had liaisons with women of other castes.
- This system facilitated the Namboothiris to claim sexual access to Nair women.
- Through this Namboothiris controlled the sexuality on Nair women.
- On the other hand they wanted their women to maintain chastity, in order to preserve the purity of caste.
- The women except the Namboothiris were available for sexual relations by men higher than them in their caste, Namboothiri men were the prominent benefactors in this regard
- A Nair girl had to undergo two types of marriages- Talikettukalyanam and sambandham.
- A.K.B. pillai argues that the military occupation was the reason for this bifurcation.
- Thalikettu Kalyanam was a pre-puberty marriage and sambandham was a union that she could make after attaining maturity with a man of her own caste or higher than her.

#### THALIKETTU KALYANAM

- When a female child grew up & was to attain puberty it was the concern of the mother to conduct her thalikettu kalyanam.
- The Nairs of one village or two adjacent villages formed a neighborhood group of six to ten lineages (वंशावली)
- Each lineage was linked by hereditary ties of ceremonial co-operation with two or three lineages in the neighbourhood. These linked lineages were called enangan.
- Every ten or twelve years each lineage held a grand ceremony of thalikettu kalyanam during which immature girls of one generation was ritually married by men drawn from their enangan lineages
- It was an elaborate ceremony for four days.
- The enangan tied a tali around the neck of the girl.
- After this each couple was secluded in private for three days and here sexual relation might take place (regional variation existed) .
- A 'girl' who belonged to an age group of 5-10 or even less than that was expected to have sexual relation.
- On the fourth day the enangan left the house and had no further obligations to the girl.
- Thalikettu Kalyanam was essential for a girl. It marked various changes in the social position of a girl; she was given the status of a women.
- After the tali-rite she should observe all the rituals of a Nayar woman and was to be addressed only as amma, in public.
- It was an occasion to display the pomp and glory of the tarawad.
- It was an expensive ceremony that lasted for four days.

- Tarawads had to sell or mortgage property to meet the expenses of the ceremony and tarawads plunged into huge debts

#### SAMBANDHAM

- Bound up with the system of marumakkathayam was the institution known as 'sambandham', the loose form of marriage which entails no responsibility or legal obligation on the part, of 'husband' towards his 'wife and children'
- Whoever studied about Nairs criticized the sambandham relations as it created no perpetual relationships between man and woman.
- Duarte Barbosa wrote that, 'these men are not married their nephews are their heirs'
- After attaining maturity a girl received 'visiting husbands' from her own sub-caste or caste higher than her.
- But she could never have any relation with a man of a caste lower than her's
- Sambandham ceremony was very simple — a pudava was given to the woman as gift by the bridegroom.
- Neither party to a sambandham union thereby a member of the other's family and the offspring of the union belong to their mother's tarawad and have no sort of claim to the share of father's property.
- If a Namboothiri Janmi begins a sambandham with a Nair woman, it was not possible for him to take her to his illam.
- Hence women and her children remained in their own tarawads, where they had right on tarawad property.
- Due to this reason some of the scholars have considered marumakkathayam system as a matrilocal system (matrilocal means the couple lived with the bride's matrilineal kinsmen).
- During sixteenth & seventeenth centuries it was a practice among nair women to have three or four husbands at the same time.
- It is said that woman could have visiting husbands as well as regular husbands.
- However if a woman became pregnant one or men of appropriate caste should acknowledge the paternity of the offspring unless a child could never enter his/her caste or lineage at all .
- Sambandham was easily dissoluble, no formality was needed.
- As per the scholars, in the case of sambandham relations women had the right to decide their partner.
- But in practice it was the decision of the karanavan.
- 'Women' could give her opinion but it was not the girl who was getting married but her mother.
- If the karnavan desired to have a relation with a Namboothiri, women were forced to enter into a

sambandham union regardless of his age, physique, etc.

- Here there was no option for a woman other than being obedient to the karanavan.
- If karnavan had some misunderstanding with a woman's husband, she was forced to end the relation.
- Here also woman's choice never turned up
- Foreign travelers had continuously argued that Nair women had sexual promiscuity.
- This argument cannot be accepted because plural unions were customary, but relations were forbidden with members of the same lineage on pain of death.
- Even more relations with men of any lower caste were not entertained.
- If a woman was found guilty her tarawad was excommunicated until the woman was expelled from the tarawad.

#### INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE & WOMEN

- Women & their experiences are never found expression in historical works or literary texts.
- This necessitates the use of ethnographic research methods in revealing the issues related with women.
- The field study was conducted in the districts of Kozhikode, and Palakkad. In this study several women and men belonging to different socio-economic status were interviewed.
- Many of the respondents were of the opinion that they had no freedom in their tarawads.
- During interaction they recollect what they have been told by their mothers, aunts and grandmothers
- At first the case of Parol tarawad of Kozhikode can be seen.
- It is one of the upper class tarawad of Kozhikode region.
- This was a large tarawad with numerous members and was divided into several thavazhi.
- Their experience was that, they had no freedom of choice to marry.
- Information from the case studies is astonishing as it provides unexpected insights into the issue.
- They remember the stories and events as told by their family members.
- Women of Nair tharavads were under the control of the male folk, hence the widely popularized concept that the sexuality of Nair women were out of the control of the male members has to be discredited
- A marriage was always a prestigious issue for a tarawad so it was arranged as per the interest of the karanavan.
- Hence the interest of the bride or her mother was never considered and it was a monotonous decision of the karanavan.