

# **Dharma and Grhya Sūtras as embodiments of ancient Hindu Ethical Corpus**

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Dharma and Grhyasūtras play a vital role in the Post-Vedic literature. They represent the ideologies of nourished Aryans who travelled from Persia to India. Moreover, it pertains to the genre of Kalpasūtras which is considered as a more philosophical and a bulky portion of Hindu Philosophy. As same as we can look into the extent of ethical code in most of Vedas and Brāhmaṇa scriptures, one can also see a host of such expressions in Dharma and Grhyasūtras. So this research article furnishes an extensive study of ethical values with special reference to Dharma and Grhya components in the following captions.

- 1) The Significance of Good demeanor
- 2) Truth and Righteousness
- 3) Moral conduct in Sexuality
- 4) Honoring the elders
- 5) Candidness
- 6) Compassion
- 7) Generosity
- 8) Hospitality
- 9) Etiquette

The good demeanor is highly appreciated in the Sūtra literature as all the sacrifices become futile if anyone is without it. Vāsishṭa Dharmasūtra further states that a man cannot get any help from austerities, Veda, Agnihotra or Sacrificial fees for his misconduct, though he has much studied six angas. It says the Vedas forsake him at his death bed as birds leave their nests after their feathers have grown. Just as a pretty wife to a blind one? The Vedas do not also save a fraudulent one for indulging in trickery. The misconducted man suffers both in this existence and the nether world. He is also lucky enough to live a hundred years due to the good conduct.<sup>1</sup>

Gautama Dharmasūtra expresses that compassion on all creatures, forbearance, freedom from envy, purity, avoidance of undue exertion, right conduct, freedom from avarice and absence of covetousness are the eight constituents of the soul. It also says that the avoidance of these eight constituents will not anyone get united with Brahman.<sup>2</sup> Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra too describes how one can attain higher bliss through good conduct as in the below.

“The destruction of all evils relies on self-discipline in this life. Having removed the evils that burn out creatures, a wise man attains beatitude. The evils that burn out creatures are the following: anger, exultation, grumbling, avarice, confusion, hypocrisy, malice, falsehood, gluttony, calumny, envy, lust, covert, enmity, lack of self-control and lack of concentration; their eradication is based on self-discipline. The virtues that have been recommended for all the āsramas (Orders) are the following : avoidance of anger, exultation, grumbling, avarice, confusion, hypocrisy and malice; truthfulness; moderation in eating; freedom from calumny and envy; sharing of one’s comforts with other people (Samvibhāgah), renunciation, straightforwardness; gentleness; serenity, self-control; Non-Violence towards all creations; concentration of mind; right conduct; peacefulness and Contentment. He who protects these virtues in accordance with the sacred law achieves the universal soul”<sup>3</sup>

Truth and Righteousness seem to have been highly admired in Sūtras. The ceremony called the selection of a bird for earth clods states that following verse should be compulsorily recited.

“Right (Rita) alone is the greatest; right nobody oversteps; this earth too founded on right. May she become all this”<sup>4</sup> To Pāraskara Grhyasūtra, a snātaka sh

period of three nights after his regular samāvartana.<sup>5</sup> Even at the time of a baby's sucking of mother's breasts, father recites a mantra which consists of "Suck truth".<sup>6</sup> This phenomenon too shows how far the then Indians respected the truth. Likewise, Graduates are also advised for being truth in their convocation address by the mentors in the Sūtra literature.

Sūtras are in a proper estimate about sexual crimes, as they strongly condemn adultery and rape. Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra points out the involvement of a man with a female friend of a female guru or with a female friend of a male guru or with a married woman perpetrates the crime called patanīya which expresses the crime resulted in the loss of caste.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, the suspected man from patanīya is subject to the expulsion by his own relatives.<sup>8</sup> Even the conversation with that man is regarded as a sin.<sup>9</sup> Abortion also falls into the patanīya crime.<sup>10</sup> In this regard, Gautama Dharmasūtra informs us that a woman becomes guilty by trying abortion.<sup>11</sup> It is also obvious the prohibition of blood-relation marriages.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, the celibacy is extolled in great details. For instance, the seats of utsarja ceremony are reserved for the people who are celibate or who have only one wife.<sup>13</sup> Kaushitaka Dharmasūtra has quoted some defects about the harassment of paramours using mantras.<sup>14</sup>

Honoring the elders is also a significant quality of the Sūtra literature. To Gautama Dharmasūtra, even an old śudra was also venerated by young Aryans at that time.<sup>15</sup> In common, Dharmasūtras supply that one must salute his or her parents, teachers and elders every morning and on returning from a journey.<sup>16</sup> It also enjoins that one should respect the oldest person at first if he is conscious about the exact age.<sup>17</sup> The mode of the salutation is also noted in this respect. One can worship the elderly person with the words. "I am so and so, sir! uttering his own name and crossing his hands so as to clasp with his right hand and right foot and with his left hand, left foot of the person" <sup>18</sup>

Honesty is also a strong ethic in the Sutras even it pertains to the portion of debts. To Kaushitakasūtra, even the creditor is dead; the debtor should pay the debt to progeny or to a sagotra of the creditor. If not, the debtor can scatter money in the cemetery or at a crossing of roads.<sup>19</sup> This example expresses us that how much the then people considered about the setting of debt. Also, it is a fact that they were not so desirous of the other's properties.

Moving onto the kindness, we feel that the people at that time were so involved in giving foods to guests, infants, old and sick people, females under his protection and pregnant women.<sup>20</sup> Another citation is the factor of not letting down any after the Vaiśvadeva ceremony by the spouses.<sup>21</sup> Giving foods even to dogs, birds and poor people was also the duty of householders at that time.<sup>22</sup> Eating alone was regarded as a sin in Śāṅkhāyana Grhyasūtra.<sup>23</sup>

Donating money to various kinds of people including to those who are begging for their mentors, for setting the expenses of a wedding, for performing a sacrifice, for begging mendacity for the sick, to those who are without a regular means of a life is also noted as regular customs of householders in the Gautama Dharmasūtra.<sup>24</sup> To Āpastambīya, the donor should be conscious of the recipients' actual wish for requests. If the recipients expect sensual gratification, they should not be given or pay no attention for these requests.<sup>25</sup> In peculiar, Dharmasūtras lay emphasis on not giving anything for unlawful purposes.<sup>26</sup>

Hospitality was also regarded as an indispensable ethic in that society. This is proved well as it is added to the concept of major five sacrifices. To Āpastambīya, hospitality is an everlasting sacrifice which is offered by the householder to prajāpati.<sup>27</sup> In general, host should go to welcome the guest when he is present in accordance with age and invite him to be seated.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the host is bound to see him off at the departure of the guest.<sup>29</sup>

The details about the etiquette at that time are mostly related to the snātaka (graduate). Gotama Dharmasūtra provides a list of etiquette in this regard as in the following.<sup>30</sup>

“A graduate should be genial and take his bath daily. He should not wear old or dirty clothes. He should not also put on shoes and garlands used by others. He should not also allow his beard grow without any specialty. He should refrain cutting, breaking, crushing anything or from making joints crack without any reason. In this way the Dharmasūtras exhort the graduates”

Taken as a whole, Dharmasūtras deal with a good account of ethics which can also be exposed to any literature or dogma. Even the Vedic texts encapsulate some features related to ethics, Sūtra literature seems to have precisely introduced a set of ethical rules for the readers. So we can clearly assume that the post-Vedic literature not only submits factors about philosophy, but also more information on ethical corpus.

## End Notes

- 1 Vāsishṭa Dharmasūtra, VI, 1-8
- 2 Gautama Dharmasūtra, VIII, 20-22
- 3 Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra, I, 8
- 4 Gobhila Dharmasūtra, II, 1-6
- 5 Pāraskara Grhyasūtra, II, 8
- 6 Khādīra Grhyasūtra, 34, 6
- 7 Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra, I, 7
- 8 ibid, I, 10
- 9 Gautama Dharmasūtra, XX, 8-9
- 10 Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra, I, 7
- 11 Gautama Dharmasūtra, XXI, 9
- 12 Baudhāyana Dharmasūtra, I, 2-3
- 13 Baudhāyana Grhyasūtra, III, 9
- 14 Kaushitaka Grhyasūtra, 36, 5-9
- 15 Gautama Dharmasūtra, VI, 10
- 16 ibid, VI, 1-3
- 17 Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra, I, 4
- 18 Śāṅkhāyana Grhyasūtra, IV, 12
- 19 Kaushitaka Grhyasūtra, 46, 36-39

**“ Uttamarṇe mrte tadapanyāya prayaccati.Sagotrāya. śmasāne nivapati.catuṣpate ca”**

- 20 Gautama Dharmasūtra, V, 26

21 Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra, II, 2,4,13

**“ Kāle svāmināvannārthinam na pratyācakṣī yātrā ca”**

22 Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra, II, 4, 9

23 Śāṅkhāyana Grhyasūtra, II, 14

24 Gautama Dharmasūtra, V, 22

25 Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra, II, 5

26 Gautama Dharmasūtra, V, 24

**“pratiśtyāpyadharmasamyukte na dadyāt”**

27 Āpastambīya Dharmasūtra, II, 3, 7

28 ibid, II, 3, 6

29 Gautama Dharmasūtra, V, 37-39

30 ibid, IX, 2-70

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