

## ADULTERY AND HINDUISM

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper discusses the views of adultery in Hinduism and its impacts and consequences on relationships and society. Adultery refers to sexual behaviour outside of marriage, which is considered unwelcome for social, religious, moral or legal reasons. Although the sexual behaviour that constitutes adultery and its impact on society, religion, and law are different, the concept exists in many cultures, and is similar in Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. There are three types of adultery: 1) Physical – the worst, 2) Emotional – extremely distressing, and 3) Mental – spiritual and secret. The views of Hinduism on adultery are based on the scriptures of the prehistoric period and Vedas. Hindu laws are stringent on adultery and specifically strict because of moral consideration and social reasons. In the modern era, adultery is still seen as a sin in every society all over the world, but as adultery deals with human emotions as well, it is upon the individuals and not a crime anymore. In the modern era where human rights are given so much priority, few political groups and religious cults are opposing adultery to influence their ideology and beliefs. However, after the landmark judgement on Adultery Supreme court stated that “Adultery cannot and should not be a crime. It can be a ground for a civil offence, a ground for divorce and not a crime. The supreme court also stated that “the adultery law was against the right to equality and life”. Justice D.Y.Chandrachud opposed patriarchy and gender inequality to strike it down.*

### KEYWORDS:

EFFECTS, SOCIETY, RELATIONSHIPS, SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR, ANCIENT ERA, MODERN ERA, OFFENCE, DIVORCE, CRIME.

## INTRODUCTION

Adultery is a physical bond between two people who marry without mutual consent. According to the Hindu dictionary, adultery is the sexual relationship between a married man and a married woman without being each other's spouse. There are various kinds of adultery:

1) Physical – the worst, 2) Emotional – extremely distressing, and 3) Mental – spiritual and secret. <sup>1</sup>First, starting with the physical way of adultery which is considered very stressful, breaks marriages, breaks good relations in the family and ends up producing raving children. If the couple decides to forget everything and want a fresh start, some insecurities come to mind, disturbing the whole life. The second one is an emotional way which is very common in day to day lives. In this busy world, where husbands and wives are both working get attached to their colleagues of the opposite sex. It is common because they spend more time in the office with the person than with their husbands and wives. So, it is quite natural to grow feelings for the person with those who are regularly meeting and sharing thoughts. Lastly, mental adultery comes from fascination and the virtual world—fantasising about others rather than their spouse creates tension and distance between them. Virtual adultery includes pornography, which affects a person's mental health by fantasising about other forms of sex in real life. Many people, especially men, fantasise about having pornographic scenarios in real life, which is impossible.

According to Hindu law, adultery is considered a sin as it is violating dharma. Hindus consider marriage and the relationships of husband and wife as a sacred act. In the Hindu state, as per the Puranas, the typical case of adultery is Ahalya<sup>2</sup>, who was deceived by Indra<sup>3</sup>, which led to ancient India's first illicit relation. However, extramarital affairs are not advocated by Hinduism. In rural areas, the people who get caught in adultery have to answer the society members, and the society does not easily forgive the people who get entitled to it. Generally, the women have to suffer the consequences of adultery, and those actions are not forgiven by society. As per Hindu's, marriages are not for simple sexual entertainment but to build a

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=4387>

<sup>2</sup> In Hinduism, Ahalya also known as Ahilya, is the wife of the sage Gautama Maharishi.

<sup>3</sup> Indra, in Hindu mythology, the king of the gods.

Family, raise it and maintain the social order<sup>4</sup>. It violates sacred sentiments and beliefs because it is considered that marriages are the events established by God, and the people violating them have to face bad karma.

## ACCORDING TO HINDUISM

Hindu law books are exceptionally serious against infidelity, not for ethical reasons but also social reasons. They consider that it would lead to the disarray of castes, debasement of family values and social clutter. In long time past days, ladies from upper castes were banned from moving into society freely. Literary proofs recommend that antiquated Hindu society was not free from the issue of infidelity. Verifiably, Hindu ladies pulled in more condemnation and ostracization for two-timing connections. The disciplines were, moreover, extreme in their case. A double-crossing lady was called patita<sup>5</sup>. Another appellation was kulata<sup>6</sup>.

Disloyalty or shiftiness of a spouse or a lady was considered a deviation from the social standard or the set-up code of conduct or convention (abhichar). Thus, it was called vyabhichar, and the lady who revelled in it was called vyabhicharini. The utilization of such unforgiving terms signifies the shame that was enjoined to ladies who challenged to lock in in double-crossing relationships. The old Hindu law books reflect upon the unfair approach and sex inclination. They condemned two-timing connections and those who revelled in it, but the disciplines were especially cruel in ladies' case. Since the immaculateness of the caste and family was crucial to the assurance of Dharma, infidelity was considered a potential danger to the arrangement and normality of society and the conservation of the family title and the social arrangement. Consequently, they put the onus of ensuring the family title and heredity more upon ladies and the onus of securing the childbearing ladies upon men.

Hindu mythology incorporates a number of stories outlining the way in which divine beings themselves frequently revelled in two-timing contemplations and activities. Master Rama expelled his spouse Sita into the timberlands on the simple charge of conceivable infidelity.

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<sup>4</sup> Hinduism is bound to the hierarchical structure of the caste system, a categorization of members of society into defined social classes. An individual's position in the caste system is thought to be a reflection of accumulated merit in past lives (karma).

<sup>5</sup> meaning a fallen or deserted lady, an untouchable or a lady who fell from the beauty of her spouse.

<sup>6</sup> meaning an unchaste lady or a lady who debased the great title of the family (kula) and her husband.

The stories delineating the lustful exercises of a few Hindu divinities such as Indra and Agni with the spouses of a few high-minded risks are well known. Vats Yana's Kamasutra clarifies how men can tempt distinctive sorts of ladies. Ladies like Amrapali, Vasisthasana were open ladies with a refined character who commanded regard in society for their social and creative abilities. Ladies were bought and sold in open places and utilized as workers or joy young ladies. Until recently, respectability and sovereignty kept up huge arrays of mistresses absolutely for carnal joys.

Transitory connections, legally compulsory courses of action, relationship with housemaids, utilize of free ladies for looking for favours from the persuasive and roads of joy houses populated by ladies prepared within the craftsmanship and creativity of cherish were too exceptionally much predominant in old India. Manu<sup>7</sup> was especially suspicious of women's behaviour and endorsed a strict code of conduct for men to observe on their ladies so that they would not drop into fiendish ways and bring notoriety to themselves and their families. He accepted that if ladies were cleared out alone, they would surrender to fiendish allurements and bring distress to their families. So "indeed frail spouses (must) endeavour to watch their spouses." He announced that ladies would effortlessly surrender to men, caring not one or the other for age nor looks. "Through their enthusiasm for men, through their variable mood, through their normal mercilessness, they ended up traitorous towards their spouses, be that as it may carefully, they may be protected in this world. Knowing their mien, which the Master of animals laid in them at the creation, to be such, each man ought to apply himself to watch them most strenuously."

## **FROM SCRIPTURES**

Both the sagas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, a few Puranas, and Hinduism's mainstream writing contain references to double-crossing and affectionate behaviour. One of the foremost shameful occurrences was when Indra enticed Ahalya, the spouse of Sage Gautama<sup>8</sup>. She was the exemplification of virtue and virginity until Indra's eyes fell upon her astonishing

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<sup>7</sup> Manu is a term found with various meanings in Hinduism. In early texts, it refers to the archetypal man, or to the first man. The Sanskrit term for 'human', manav means 'of Manu' or 'children of Manu'.

<sup>8</sup> Gautama Maharishi known as Vamadeva Gautamawas a Rigvedic sage in Hinduism, who is also mentioned in Jainism and Buddhism.

excellence. She might not stand up to his overtures. She remained detained interior a stone for centuries until Ruler Rama protected her for her transgression. For his terrible activity, Gautama reviled Indra, but he has gotten away with milder discipline as the paradise ruler. Researchers still talk about the thought process behind Ahalya's decision to lock in within the loving relationship, whether it was her pride or destiny or both, which driven to it.

Another curious story is that of Agni. It is said that when the seven sages performed a Yajna to appease him, he showed up some time recently and happened to see their spouses. Enamoured by their excellence, he wanted them. At that point, goddess Swaha expected the seven ladies' shapes to fulfil his desire and subsequently spared their chastity. Reference may too be made to the way in which Kunti generated the Pandavas by conjuring the five Vedic divine beings. In any case, her activities cannot entirely be considered two-faced since desire was not included, but a guiltless interest to test her control to get children by summoning the powers of divine beings. Master Rama was monogamous and had driven a pure life, but Krishna had numerous spouses. Legend has it that he too had affectionate connections with various gopis (spouses of cowherds). A few accept that the relationship was typical instead of truthful or physical.

## **ADULTERY IN MODERN INDIA**

Adultery is recognised as a criminal offence under Chapter XX of the Indian Penal Code before the honourable Supreme Court of India suppressed it on 27 September 2018 as unconstitutional<sup>9</sup>. Under Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code, the segment concerning adultery, if a man who had concordant sex with the spouse of another man without that husband's assent might be rebuffed for this offence with as long as five years of detainment, a fine or both. When it was initially authorized in 1860, the spouse could likewise be rebuffed for abetting the offence. The Supreme Court called the law unlawful because it "regards the husband as the sole master." Nevertheless, it is an adequate ground for divorce, as stated by the Supreme Court of India.

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<sup>9</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adultery\\_law\\_in\\_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adultery_law_in_India)

Due to this risky misunderstanding of the concept, the Supreme Court chose to acknowledge the PIL in December 2017, in which it was implored that the Court should strike down or get rid of Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code. Another issue contended was that the segment abuses two articles from the Constitution of India, Article 14 and Article 15. Article 14 peruses as follows: "The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India." Article 15 states that "The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them." On the appeal being accepted, the Court, in its underlying perceptions, noticed that this was not the only petition requesting the questioning of this segment. Discussions and cases on this matter have been brewing since early 1954, turning it significant for the court to settle this inquiry without haste. It was felt that the law should be unbiased. Nonetheless, for this situation, it simply makes the lady a casualty and accordingly "makes an imprint on the individual free personality of the lady,"

The parties' contentions restricting this decriminalization expresses that the part "supports, shields and ensures the foundation of marriage... The steadiness of relationships is definitely not an ideal to be despised." It further contends that assuming the appeal is permitted, "two-faced relations will have more free play than now." For other options, it gives the suggestions of the Committee on Reforms of Criminal Justice System (2003) to be executed. This panel suggested that phrasing of the part shall be changed into: "Whoever has sex with the mate of some other individual is liable of adultery..." This would handle the issues of sex inclination that emerge from perusing the present segment.

## FINAL VERDICT

The Court started paying heed to the contentions regarding this appeal on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August in 2018. The court stated that if the people who stood against this segment could demonstrate that it disregards Article 14 of India's Constitution at that point, then the part needs to be floored.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adultery\\_law\\_in\\_India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adultery_law_in_India)

A Constitutional bench consisting of five judges from the Supreme Court on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2018 unitedly decided to scrap out Section 497, and it is no longer considered an offence in India.

While delivering the judgment, Chief Justice Mr Dipak Mishra stated that " Adultery cannot be a criminal offence. However, it can be a ground for civil issues like divorce."

Under Article 32 of the Constitution, public interest litigation was filed by Joseph Shine, a non-resident Keralite on the October of 2017. The constitutionality of the offence of adultery was challenged by the petition under Section 497 of the IPC read and Section 198(2) of the CrPC.

Adultery is condemned by Section 497 of the IPC by forcing accountability on a man who gets involved in sexual intercourse with a different person's better half. Adultery was reprobable with the detainment of a minimum of five years. Ladies, including consenting parties, were denied prosecution. Further, under Section 497 of IPC, a lawfully married lady could not show her grievance when her significant other got engaged in sexual intercourse with an unwedded lady. This was considering Section 198(2) of CrPC that determined how a respondent could record charges in reply for the offences submitted under Sections 497 and 498 of the Indian Penal Code.

Section 497 is deemed unconstitutional and illegal as the very reason for condemning adultery was the very suspicion that a woman is considered her husband's property and cannot keep relations outside of her marriage. As it may, similar limitations did not matter in the husband's matters, however. The right to protection just as freedom of woman by oppressing married woman and executing sexually-orientated generalizations is disregarded by Section 497.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2018, the Supreme Court, headed by a five-judge bench in complete agreement, immobilised Section 497 of the Indian Penal Code as unsavoury to Articles 14, 15 & 21 of the Constitution of India.

## MODERN VIEWS ON ADULTERY

In today's society, marriage happens when two individuals (generally a man and a woman) begin to look all starry eyed, fall in love, and choose to spend the remainder of their lives in

monogamy<sup>11</sup>. However, did you realize that was not generally the situation? Truth be told, the very concept of marriage arose only several hundred years ago. Previously, marriage seldom elaborated the need for love in a marriage. Most of the relationships were orchestrated dependent on pay and economic wellbeing, and most social orders permitted and anticipated plural relationships, with either different spouses or various husbands.

The idea of marriage has changed extraordinarily over the years. Furthermore, with the present pace of divorce somewhere in the range of 40 and 50 percent, combined with the pervasiveness of adultery in numerous relationships, maybe it is the ideal opportunity for the idea of marriage to evolve. As indicated by studies conducted by various marital institutions, 41% of spouses concede to unfaithfulness, either physically or emotionally. This leads us to the question, "Would we say we are truly expected to be with only one individual our entire life? Also, if not, must we get re-hitched multiple times? Are there elective approaches to see and take part in a marriage that will ensure its prosperity?"

Since marriage has developed such a great amount over the ages, and various societies have various perspectives on it even today, maybe it is the ideal opportunity for the deep-rooted foundation to advance once more<sup>12</sup>. Perhaps the fruitful marriage principles should not be whether the couples stay monogamous for quite a long time, yet instead, whether the couple transparently conveys what their extraordinary marriage will resemble, what will be considered satisfactory, and what will not, and afterwards, regarding that joint choice.

For example, most couples admit that they have fallen into complacency. One or both people in the relationship have checked out, but they do not want to divorce for the sake of their children. Alternatively, they still love each other, valuing each other as a support system and as close friends, but do not feel sexual towards one another. Alternatively, one partner feels the need for solitude to work on themselves, separate from the relationship's responsibilities. In any of these cases, they are all frustrated by their limitations by traditional marriage expectations and committing adultery.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/world-agrees-adultery-while-prevalent-wrong>

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/is-it-time-to-change-our-adultery\\_b\\_5242171](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/is-it-time-to-change-our-adultery_b_5242171)

While strict religious dogmas actually denounce adultery, social practices and laws have changed. Adultery continues to be strictly restricted in various nations like Pakistan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia and Somalia, yet is decriminalized in virtually all modern social orders. A prominent exemption for adultery's decriminalisation among created nations is the United States, where it stays a criminal offence in 21 states. Various infidelity types are wrongdoing in Florida, New York and Utah and a crime in Massachusetts, Michigan and Wisconsin.

## **CONCLUSION**

Individuals deny the very act of adultery since unfaithfulness has genuine adverse social and individual outcomes – and can prompt blackmail, bribery and corruption. Extramarital affairs can decimate relationships, families, vocations and political aspirations. Infidelity expands a couple's chances of being separated and is regularly referred to as a significant justification separate and a basic factor for increasing separation rates.

The vast majority across the globe keep on seeing adultery as ethically unsuitable and messed up, yet the broad objection may not be adequate to change the developing perceivability. In the long haul, the sexual choices of people may disintegrate moral issues with infidelity and social trust.