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MADRAS RECORD OFFICE.

Government of Madras.

Public DEPARTMENT

G.O. No.	97	Press
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Dated	25-1-	19 1871

Not to be folded or roughly handled

25th January 1871.

No. 87. Read the following letter from G. VEDANTA CHARRI, Deputy Inspector of Schools, Vizagapatam, to the Assistant Secretary to Government, Legislative Department, Fort Saint George, dated — December 1870:—

Pardon the liberty I take in addressing the following lines to your honour, which I have been obliged to draw with a consideration of trying to do a good to the Hindoo public. Really one individual can do nothing towards effecting such a good; but it must be the prayer of many eminent Hindoos, and an interference of their Government in support of the prayer, that can assist in making my endeavour to succeed.

2. The present style of Hindoo marriages is so very ignominious and absurd, and their effects so piteous and unremediable, that it has long been under my consideration what can make the Hindoo marriage condition better than now. At last I dared to make a draft of my opinion as to how to effect my wish, and for the last eight or nine months spared no trouble in consulting Hindoo pundits, most bigoted, on the subject.

3. Happily my proposals have met with a ready consent of all those whom I happened to meet in the District of Vizagapatam, and I have, therefore, most respectfully to request your honour, in the name of the Vizagapatam Hindoo community, to put the enclosed two papers (one in English and the other rendered in Telugu) before the Council to pass a Proceedings relating to the subject, as His Excellency the Governor and the Honourable Members may deem proper.

N. B.—The present marriage-tax will be willingly received by the people if marriages are to be registered under this proposed scheme.

May God give success !

The subject of Hindoo marriages has long been engrossing the minds of most of the educated Hindoos, consequent on the very frequent occurrences of early widowhoods in the Hindoo families. There should be no reason to regret such widowhoods if re-marriage could be performed without the penalty of being out-casted. It is not, however, my object at all, under present circumstances, to discuss the subject of re-marriage. Many educated Hindoos have knocked their heads about widow re-marriage, but to very little effect. I do not blame such; for their endeavours have been just according to the dictates of conscience, and solely for the good of the Hindoo female public. Why their efforts have been in vain I fancy as follows.

2. In most of the civilised countries of the world, the laws and regulations are every now and then reviewed and reformed or mended to suit the circumstances and the conveniences of the people, which naturally change with the course of events. In India it is quite the reverse; the Hindoo law was made long, long time ago, when the state of the country, of the people, and of the Government, was quite different from that nowadays, and when the law was quite adapted to the then state of the country, conducive to the welfare of the people, and in harmony with the policy of the then Government. The strange characteristic of the Hindoos has been and to this day is that the rule and conduct of their ancestors are worthy of being followed, and that any transgression from them, even under the most pressing circumstances, is irretrievably culpable. Their established daily acts of life or rules of conduct (which are called acharams) are formed from that consideration, and they believe that the very trying to alter them in the slightest way possible is itself going out of the pale of the Hindoo religion. No such change can at present, therefore, be expected as shall be felt necessary to effect, if it is only to go a little against the acharam, whether acharam is strictly according to the dictates of the law, or modified subsequently

to make it still more imperative and restricted. How can it then possibly be expected that the efforts of such philanthropic gentlemen, as above alluded to, will meet with any amount of success.

3. I have long been contemplating what can make the Hindoo marriage more beneficial and less hazardous without meddling with the Hindoo law or the acharam. At last I have hit upon certain proposals which I believe are according to common sense, and which I hope will be countenanced and confirmed by the several learned, respectable, leading members of the Hindoo Society, to whom this may be circulated.

4. Whoever hitherto spoke of effecting a re-marriage, surely it was in behalf of such poor girls only as have early lost their husbands (by early meaning either before the attainment of age, or shortly after, or without having enjoyed the pleasure of the company of a husband). Re-marriage before puberty is in the same way prohibited, partly by law and more by acharam, as that after; so that "re-marriage" should be useless to discuss in the present state of circumstances.

5. Nothing more is left then to consider to remedy the evil than to try to lessen the number of cases of widowhoods. The bigotted and the unreasonably superstitious will at once laugh at this proposal, and condemn my reasons as completely absurd. They will argue that while God had previously destined the fate of each man and woman, in all their stations of life, how can we possibly expect *our* proposals and exertions to carry weight and success. To this I say that, though the thing can be believed as long as we surely keep firm to the true road (viz., that of *virtue*) as far as possible, yet it is not in the power of any one to believe that he is acting uprightly and without any deviation from the right path: surely everything or at least *much* depends on the good or bad that we practice, and on the right or the wrong principle that we maintain and follow. We may safely believe that God always upholds only the *righteous*, but deserts the *unrighteous* or the wrong principled. But there is the proverb that "man proposes and God disposes" to plead in my favour.

6. The Hindoo law treats of marriages in the same way as it does of other subjects. The manner in which the Hindoos conduct their marriages should necessarily be accordingly. But let it be considered whether the case is such or not. Unhappily no! Let me then describe the really ignominious way in which Hindoo marriages are, in the majority of cases, determined and conducted. First of all, for a *real* marriage, the parties marrying should know the object of marriage, the pleasure derivable therefrom, and the duties devolving on the husband and the wife after marriage. A knowledge of these should necessarily lead one to be willing to have a share in the choice of a match. To be able to know the above, *age* is the most indispensable requirement. Just let it be considered whether Hindoo marriages take place thus. On the other hand, they are determined and conducted quite against the Hindoo law, and are thus objectionable and attended with risks. *Firstly*, a Hindoo marriage is a mere declaration of the marrying couple solemnly and publicly; *secondly*, it is in many cases celebrated too early; *thirdly*, some take a foolish and a vain pleasure in seeing young boys and girls married or declared a couple; *fourthly*, some without taking her future prospects and interests into consideration marry a young girl to an almost bed-ridden old man; and, *fifthly*, there is an evil practice in many families of receiving Kanyasulkam (money for giving the virgin in marriage), or more appropriately the practice of selling girls to the highest bidder in the same way as merchants deal with an article. This last, I may say, is in nine cases out of ten at the bottom of every other evil custom above described; one that is quite forbidden by law, but so nourished and firmly established in many families by a mere greed for money, that it has become a matter of first consideration for the settlement of a marriage.

7. Are not marriages in many families celebrated now between boys of five or six years old and girls not quite a year old? Are not verbal promises held out by some that, if the pregnant woman should bring forth a female child, it would assuredly be married to such a boy or such a man? What a downright absurd ludicrous practice is this! Is it authorized by any of the Hindoo Sastras, or can it be established that it is a sathacharam (సత్యచారం) or one based on good principles? No; not in the least. There is a Telugu proverb నానుకరేల్ల చెయ్యి పెట్టి భగవంతుడున్నాడన్నట్లు, and a like one గాలిలో దీపము పెట్టి భగవంతుని భారమన్నట్లు, similar to the one in English, "put your finger in the fire and say it was your ill-fortune." The marriage conditions just described are in an exactly similar manner, purposely tempting the Providence of the Almighty and bringing on some sudden danger. The

Hindoos, therefore, should at once try to discountenance such evil practices and root them out. By preventing the occurrences of all early and disproportionate marriages, no doubt the Hindoo marriage condition is made subject to less danger: there will not then be widowhoods before the ninth year and there will be no more grumbling of girls with an old husband.

8. There are only certain classes and tribes in which marriage before puberty should be celebrated, all the others having it at their option to do it before or after. The custom of marrying too early has been of late adopted so universally that even those among whom marriage after puberty is not prohibited by law, prefer to undergo the risk of bringing on cases of widowhood; not to say that many allowable cases of re-marriage are now looked at with contempt, and, in certain families, have been entirely thrown aside and rejected. I now mention this only to remark that there is a strange tendency among all the classes of Hindoos to adopt such rules of conduct or acharams as are restrictive, and attended with risks or inconveniences. Those who wilfully refuse to extend the freedom allowed by the Hindoo law to their daughters, really commit a great sin. True, provisions there are in the Hindoo Sastras punishing all eccentricities from the statutes of law, but there are none now of such Rajahs of former days to enforce them and bring them into operation.

9. Summing the above arguments, it would seem that—

1st.—Early marriage,

2nd.—Disproportionate ages of the husband and the wife,

3rd.—The pair to be married not being consulted at all,

4th.—Receiving Kanyasulkam,

are the chief detriments to an happy, auspicious, and effective marriage. I have, therefore, to suggest that it is necessary to have the following rules to apply to all classes of Hindoos:—

i.—That no marriage should be celebrated before the girl is ~~nine~~ years old, and the boy sixteen at the very lowest.

ii.—That, in those classes and tribes of Hindoos in which marriage after puberty is freely allowed by the Sastras, marriage before the girl has attained her maturity be strictly prohibited.

iii.—That the ages of the marrying couple be not very disproportionate.

iv.—That no Kanyasulkam be received on any account, Kanyasulkam including presents of any kind, except the golden or silver ornaments, cloths, &c., given to the bridegroom at the time of marriage.

v.—That no marriage be settled and conducted without previously consulting the marrying couple, for a girl of nine years old is surely better acquainted with the matters relating to a marriage than when less old.

vi.—That all marriages be registered in the Tahsildar's Cutcherry before their celebration.

vii.—That any violation of the above rules be subject to a severe penalty.

10. But whom are we to look to to rule as above or similarly, and to enforce them? Some perhaps may question that, as this is a matter relating to the Hindoo customs and manners, no one can or should interfere with it, and the Hindoos ought to be left to themselves to mend it. But I say it is not a good acharam but an unprincipled one, and penal in itself, and in every one's common sense. Are not thefts, debaucheries, trespasses, and a number of other crimes punished? Is not then this marriage subject, if wrongly dealt with, a similar offence, a breach of law, a going against common sense, and a sin to those that allow it to exist? In my deliberate opinion, the Government ought to interfere in the matter and provide a remedy for such an evil custom. The Government are unquestionably the good wishers of, and the good doers to, the Hindoos; the whole of India is enjoying quiet and happiness under their sway; they have regulated the Hindoo laws and provided immediate remedies for all sorts of offences committable by the people, and, in short, have taken the burden of improving India on their heads. Without the least appeal and request on the matter, the Government ought to have taken it long ago into their consideration to reform the state of Hindoo marriages; but on the other hand they have, for some reason or other (which is not my province

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to seek), kept back from interfering in the matter, expecting perhaps the Hindoos to make the first move.

11. I have for the last eight or nine months been engaged in consulting the Hindoo Pundits of the Vizagapatam District on this subject, and I am very happy to observe here that they have expressed their opinion in conformity with my proposals. Let me, therefore, appeal to the Government, in the name of the Hindoo community of Vizagapatam, to direct their attention to remedy the really pitiable evil I have just spoken of. Let me request them to draw a certain number of queries on the matter of the form I have drawn out as under, and refer them to the several leading members of the Hindoo community in the several districts. If their opinion on the subject be favourable, let the Government at once take steps to make the necessary move in the matter, enforcing the Hindoo law upon their subjects.

Queries.

1. Is marriage too early, justifiable and legal?
2. Is it necessary or not to determine the minimum ages of the husband and the wife at the time of marriage?
3. Are not the ages of the marrying couple to be considered?
4. If so, what may be the maximum age of the husband to marry?
5. Should not the bridegroom and the bride have some knowledge of the objects and effects of marriage at the time of marriage?
6. Is the practice of receiving Kanyasulkam not objectionable and illegal?
7. Are not early marriage, disproportionate marriage, and receiving Kanyasulkam individually subject to unhappiness, loss of life, or early widowhood?
8. By putting a stop to all early and disproportionate marriages, and the receiving of Kanyasulkam, are not the unhappy state of the husband and the wife, the occurrences of early widowhoods, &c., prevented to some extent at least?
9. What are those classes and tribes of Hindoos among whom marriage after puberty is freely allowed by the Hindoo law or acharam? and which of these again may celebrate re-marriages?
10. Can the Hindoos themselves try to remedy the defects and evils pointed out in their present marriages?
11. Or have they any objection if the Government should interfere in the matter, and take steps to remedy the defects and evils.

No. 88.

ORDER THEREON, 25th January 1871, No. 97.

To be recorded.

(True Extract.)

R. S. ELLIS,
Chief Secretary.

3 నాల్గోయి ~~రామమూర్తి~~ కు సుబంధించిన కాయము, ఆరాచరమును నిరంధించె

Receiving report received from C. Viduana
Clairi, of Vissaguan, on the subject of Hindu
marriages.

బుబుదు రద్దము లోన నడుచుచున్న మనియును, ఎటువంటిచో
 రనియును చేసేవివేదనియును, నిశ్చయించుకొనియుండగలరా
 దుండవేరు. ఇతరులేరయుగామనసుబుదురబుదులు మనయు
 కల్మయుల్లేమ్రువల్లనలను అనుసరింపయుంచునుగాని, మర్మ
 యుమువలననుబుమునునప్యత్నివలనకష్టమునువినిపింపనై
 న్నప్పుడుమలనుభవించుదు అదరించునుగాని అసత్తులున్న

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రీతి నరచ

పాఠశాల కుర్రులు

೧೦ ಕಿರುಮಾಧುರಕ

[illegible]

[illegible]

మొందు శాశ్వతంబి న సంగతుల నన్నియెనన్ బుల్లు
నుండు వంతెనుల నీ కులకు నేను తెలియచేసి న హిక్షువువారి
నిరతియు ముఖసారము విడిచియున్నది నీ జగద్రాసుగనుక

2. ఆదివారమునకు వివాహము, వేదముగాఁజేయు
తొరతములుగాఁజేయు వివాహము, కనకములము
నొసఁగియు వివాహము, ఇదియేగాని, కనకము
లొసఁగి, కనకముగాఁజేయుగాని, అవియు
యెవరియొక్కవిగాని.

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౧౦. పొందు పాఠములను గ్రహించి నానందమును
బుద్ధి నష్టములను గ్రహించి నానందమును గ్రహించి
దుష్ట ప్రభుత్వమును గ్రహించి నానందమును గ్రహించి

౧౧. పొందు ప్రభుత్వమును గ్రహించి నానందమును
గ్రహించి నానందమును గ్రహించి నానందమును గ్రహించి
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Govt. of [1870] Madras.

Public

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Dated Jan. 25.

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G. O. 25 Jan. 1871, No. 97.

Nos. 87. 88.

Recording papers received
from G. Vedantachari ^{subject of} ~~Wazir~~
patam, on the ~~Wazir~~ ^{Wazir} ~~Wazir~~ ^{Wazir} ~~Wazir~~
reaps.