

**ANCIENT MARRIAGE SYSTEM AND SOCIETY WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO POLYANDRY UP TO THE KOTTE PERIOD IN
SRI LANKA**

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The history of human society is nothing but the description of the evolution and diffusion of various institutions designed toward perpetuation, maintenance and survival of society. The institution of marriage occupies a unique place in the realm of institutions and it is this institution which is instrumental in perpetuating human society through regulations of conjugal and filial ties. As a social institution, it has taken different forms in different societies from time immemorial. The chief sources of our knowledge about the institution are the literary and archaeological data which give us a glimpse of the picture regarding progress in this sphere. There were various forms of marriage in ancient Sri Lanka such as love marriage, monogamous marriage, political marriage and polyandry. In the present study, attention will be focused mainly on Polyandry system up to the Kotte period in Sri Lanka as marriage and the males in partnership as husbands and a single woman shared as their wife. As has been pointed out by S. J. Tambiah, in *Polyandry in Ceylon*, as a customary form of marriage establishes the inheritance rights of children, and their full birth status rights common to normal members of their society or social stratum. The meaning and definitions of polyandry, forms of polyandry, reasons for polyandry, the origin of this practice and the Sri Lankan context on polyandry will be discussed in this presentation. The research will be mainly based on primary sources and wherever necessary material will also be obtained from limited secondary sources published on the marriage system of the island.