Which Side of the Husband Should the Wife sit During Puja?

by Pandit RAM HARDOWAR
Spiritual Leader
Shri Surya Narayan Mandir
92-17 172 Street, Jamaica NY 11433
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Sarika Persaud for assistance in typesetting and formatting this paper. Also, to all those who have constantly reminded me to compile this information for the use and guidance of all my Hindu brothers and sisters. May Surya Bhagawan's grace and Assirbad always be with them.
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Discussions

Conclusions
INTRODUCTION

Where the wife sits/stands during Pooja and other rituals/activities has been an outstanding controversy among Priests, Hindu scholars and devotees. There are very strong opinions expressed by individuals with varying opinions on this subject. Since the main area of dispute is at time of pooja, I will attempt to focus my search primarily in this area.

Some feel that the wife should be on the left side while others think that she should be on the right side of her husband, when she sits for pooja. The current state of confusion benefits no one regardless of our opinion on this subject. In fact, it fosters disunity, creates doubts in our minds, reduces our level of devotion and ultimately projects a negative image on the state of practice of our Dharma.

To shed light on this issue we need to delve deeper in our shastras and follow the directives and examples given therein. Indeed Bhagavan Shri Krishna in slokas 5, 11, and 13 of the 17th Chapter of the Bhagavat Gita warns that Yajna (sacrificial rites) done without observance of the scriptural ordinance would be
Tamasic. The authority of the Shastras (our scriptures) is therefore of paramount importance in the performance of rituals.

The purpose of this research is to take a closer look at this issue and hopefully arrive at some conclusions from the facts presented. Just as a passing remark, I think we all agree that it is compulsory for both husband and wife to participate in all poojas and similar activities.

Om Gam Gana Pataye Namah
BACKGROUND:

There are three factors which are normally taken into consideration when making a determination on matters relating to ritual.

1. **The Shastras.**
   As pointed out in the introduction, yajna done without adherence to scriptural injunctions is tamasic in nature. Therefore, we need to examine the direct and indirect references made in our sacred texts with respect to this subject.

2. **Desh Reeti**
   The custom of the place where we reside. This factor is gradually losing its impact due to the significant migration of Hindus with time.

3. **Kul Reeti**
   The custom of our family lineage. This factor has to be examined very carefully and we must make sure it is genuine and not made up by someone along the way as convenience, etc. A very clear and logical example is brought to us in the Bhagwat Maha Puraan where Lord Krishna himself recommended that His parents change their current practice of Kul Reeti from the worship of
Indra Deva to the worship of Goverdhan Parvat, Cows and Brahmanas.

Normally all three factors are taken into consideration when making a final determination on matters relating to rituals. However, due to the preponderance of direct and indirect references in our Shastras, this search does not find it necessary to delve into the impact of Desh and Kul Reeti at this time.

An attempt is made here to capture the current state of thinking and reasoning by some who are of the opinion that the wife should be on the left side.

At the time of Vivah Samskara (Wedding ceremony) the Priest recites the vows (saat vachan) on behalf of the Bride and Groom. When both parties agree to these vows the Bride then moves to the left side of the Groom and she is then declared to be his wife.

The first of seven requests made by the Bride to the Groom is

तिथ्रथ्रतोधापनयज दानं मया सह त्वं यदि कम कुम्यां ।
वामाजः मायामि तदा त्वदीयं जगाद वाक्यं प्रथमं कुमारी

१९११।
I will sit on your left side if you allow me to participate in all activities of pilgrimage, fasting, religious observances, yagyas, charity etc.

The Groom responds by saying

मदियचित्तान्गतं च चित्तं स्वा मदाज्ञापरिपालन।
पतिवर्ताधंमपरायणतवं कुष्यः सदा सवमिमप्रयत्नम्।

May our minds be alike, follow my instructions and be faithful. If these are agreeable then I will accept you on my left side.

At this point in the marriage ceremony when both parties make the appropriate vows and agree to these conditions, the Bride will then move to the left side of the Groom. With this understanding the wife during her marriage life would continue to be on her husband’s left side on most occasions. In fact, it is claimed that since at time of marriage my wife was placed on my left side, that is where she belongs and will remain at all times, including pooja, etc.

Another suggestion put forward by some is that the wife was only placed on the right side for convenience i.e. to assist the husband in preparation of the offerings during pooja by sitting in closer proximity to where the pooja ingredients are kept. So their conclusion is that wherever mention is made in the shastras of the wife
sitting on right side during pooja it is for this reason alone (convenience) and nothing else.

Still others suggest that because the heart is situated on the left side, it is our emotional side and it is dedicated to one's wife. Therefore, she should always sit on the left side. This point is further developed by making the similar analogy with the Ida Nadi. This channel is on the left hand side of the Sushumna and is governed by Chandrama (controller of the mind), making the left side our bodies the emotional side.

The foregoing, are some of the main points raised in support of the view for the wife being on the left side of the husband during pooja. If there are other reasons which I may not be aware of I encourage that they be brought to light so that all the facts can be considered in the final determination of this issue.
There are numerous references in our sacred texts dealing with this subject. They are presented below for your review and appropriate action.

1.0 संस्कार-विधि (Samskar Viddhi) by श्री पं॰ माधवाचार्य शास्त्री के तत्त्वावधान में श्री कण्ठ उपाध्याय एम॰ए॰, शास्त्री, व्याकरणाचार्य

1.1 Sanskar Viddhi - Page 10 - पत्नी का आसान (seat of wife)- The Sanskar Viddhi refers to the following verse from the Shishta Smriti - शिष्ट स्मृति

यज्ञ देव में ब्राह्मण दान स्नानपूजानिदिक्रमणी।
देवयात्राविवाहेषु पत्नी दक्षिणं शुभं॥

अर्थ - यज्ञ, होम, व्रत, दान, स्नान, देवपूजन, यात्रा, विवाहादि संस्कार के समय पत्नी को अपनी दांयों ओर बैठाना चाहिये।
At the time of Yagya, Homa, Vrata, Charity, worship of Devatas, pilgrimage, weddings etc., the wife should be on the south side of the husband. At time of assirvaad (blessings), the wife moves to the left side.

Since the husband is facing east during these activities this implies that the wife will be on the right side (south side) of the husband. Please note that this is the standard method used in our Shastras to point out occasions when the wife has to be on the husband’s right side.

Again we see in Shishta Smriti:

\[
\text{अशीवदिकाभिषेकं च पादप्रक्षालनं तथा।}
\text{श्यनं भोजनं चैव पत्नी तृततरो भवेत।}
\text{ (शिष्ट स्मरि)}
\]

Arthi – आशीवाद ग्रहण मन्नाधिभिषेक ब्राह्मणों के पांव धोने के समय शय्न और भोजन समय बाय बैठाय।

At the time of assirbad (for example at end of pooja), washing the feet of Brahmans and at time of sleeping, the wife should be on the left side of the husband.
The foregoing pair of verses are explaining the location of wife during different activities.

1.2

Sanskar Viddhi - Page 218 - अथ जन्मदिनपूजा प्रयोगः:

जन्मदिने पुत्रकलग्रसहितो यजमानो मझल
द्व्युतजलेन स्नात्वाछहते वाससी भूषणानि च
धृत्वा कृतमझलको मातापितुर्वाचार्य
कुलदेवताविप्रान प्रणम्य गृहान्तः शुभासने
प्रा मुख उपविश्य स्वदक्षिणतः पत्नीं तस्या
दक्षिणातो बालं ........................

अर्थः - बालक के जन्म दिन पर पिता अपनी पत्नी
के सहित मझल स्नान कर चीरेदार दो वस्त्र और
भूषणों को धारण कर माँगल्य तिलक लगाके माता
पिता गुरु आचार्य कुल देवता और ब्रह्मणों को
नमस्कार कर घर के भीतर शुभासन पर बैठ के अपने
से दक्षिण में पत्नी को और उस से दहिनी और
बालक को बैठाकर ........................

Husband and wife prepare themselves (sacred bath, appropriate clothing, etc.), offers salutations to Mother, Father, Guru, Kul Devata and Brahmanas, then the wife sits on the right side of the husband, etc.
The day before the Upanayanam Sanskar is performed, the parents along with the child perform pooja with the wife sitting on the right side (of the husband) and the child on the right side of mother.

Let us now look at Baal Kanda of Shri Ram Charita Manas
The following chowpai is often quoted in supporting the point of view that the wife should be on the left side. It was at the wedding ceremony of Prabhu Shri Raam to Sita Maa.

At the appropriate time, the great sages sent for Sita’s mother (Sunaina Maq): Rani Sunaina (Janaka’s wife) came to Janaka’s left. They looked just as beautiful as Maina standing beside Himavan (the parents of Mother Parvati).

In my opinion, Tulsidas Ji makes this point to show that at certain times, the wife has to be on the left side. Therefore, for all such social appearances and occasions, the wife should be on left side and this should not be
misconstrued as the authority for poojas and other rituals.

The following shloka is added in the Ramayana to clarify this very point, thereby removing all doubts from our mind.

श्लोक
सीमांते च विवाहे च चतुर्यथा सहभोजने।
व्रते दाने मखे श्राद्धे पल्ली तिष्ठति दक्षिणे॥

अर्थः – सीमांत, विवाह, चतुर्थया, भोजन, व्रत, दान, यज्ञ, श्राद्ध, इन सब कर्मो में पल्ली को दक्षिण में बैठना चाहिए। (सों समय पल्ली को वामाङ्ग होना चाहिए।)

During parting of hair (of mother to be), wedding, taking food on chaturti vrat, fasting, charity, yajna, and shraadh, the wife should sit at the right of her husband. (However, at time of sleep she should be on his left side).

The abovementioned chowpai and shloka from Ramayan are very instructive and by themselves clarify the entire issue.
3.0 वाशिष्ठो हवन पद्धति (Vashishthi Havan Paddhati) page 76 & 77
tatodhishaek kuryait - atra patni vamata:
rudalkalshatpatpallvadake: sakalatraamabhishechet

Arth - abhishek ke samay stri ko vamabhag mein liyey
hu rh Sirparivat yajman ke upar 'om devacya tva'.
Aadhi mantra doora rudh kalsheke jal me pachpallav
doora marjan kere us samay brahman log uparok
mantra ko padhte hue marjan kare.

Here it is stated that at the time of Avhishekan or Assirbad
(blessings), the wife should be on the left side of the husband.
While chanting the indicated mantras, water from the Kalsa should
be sprinkled on the Yaj Karta (devotees performing the pooja).

4.0 क्यों? (Kyo)- धर्म दिग्दर्शन पूर्वार्थि - श्री पं.माधवाचार्य शास्त्री तथा श्री कणठ शास्त्री
pages 688-690

बाएं और दाएं क्यों?

Prashn ho sakta hai ki dharmaushthanon mein pati-patni
da samvrit hokar baat jana to samadh mein a
sakta hai parnitu aamuk karya mein daaii or yah
kaalayad parek kyo? Kya yathasthan baate rehne par
kuh haani hoato hai?
Why left and right side? The question raised here is, in accordance with our Dharmic injunctions: where should the wife be when they come together? Can there be any negative impacts as a result of their seating positions?

At time of assirbad, public appearances, eating, sleeping, the wife is on the left side. However, at kanyadaan, wedding, Devata Pooja, Yagna, rites at birth, etc., the wife is on the right side.

The foregoing is a Panini Sutra (Book IV, Chapter I, Sutra 33) which addresses this issue as well.

Therefore, the seating arrangement is based on the type of activity being performed.
Perhaps this is why a husband cannot perform Yagya without his wife. Even Shri Ram had to create a golden Sita Maa before he could proceed with his Yagya.

For the same reasoning you pass on the right side (your left side) of noble persons and on the left side (your right side) of unrighteous persons.

Kya karan hai ki prashast prapne muh se baare hokar ja rha hain aur apraashast daray se ja rha hain.

For the same reasoning you pass on the right side (your left side) of noble persons and on the left side (your right side) of unrighteous persons.
5.0 In the Pooja Pratishta text - सर्वकर्म अनुष्ठान प्रकाश - Part 1 composed by Pandit Rameshchandra Sharma. Page 24

स्त्रीणां दक्षिण भाग विचारः (Instructions on wife being on south side - right side of husband)

वामे सिन्दूरदाने च वामे चैव द्विरागमे।
वामेश्च श्रेयाय भवेज्जया प्रियार्थिनी।।
सर्वेषु शुभकार्येषु पत्नी दक्षिणत: शुभा।
अभिषेकं विप्र पादश्रालने चैव वामत।।
पत्नी वासे ऋषु स्थाने पितृणं पादश्रीचने ।
स्थारोहण काले च ऋतुकाले सदा भवेत ।।

The wife is on the left side at times of saindur daan, public appearances, abhishekm (assirvad), washing feet of brahmanas and at time of sleeping. However, for all auspicious rites and rituals, the wife is on the right side.

Again the same is repeated in Nitya Karma Pooja Prakash.

6.0 नित्यकर्म-पूजाप्रकाश

Nityakarma-Pujaprakasha Pt. Lalbihari Mishra

आशीवदिभिषेकं च पादप्राक्षालने तथा ।
शयने भोजने चैव पत्नो तूनरतो भवेत ।।

At time of assirbad, abhishekm, washing of brahmanas feet, sleeping and eating, the wife should be on left side.
7.0 माहा शिवा पुराण रुदसम्भिता  
Maha Shiva Puran – Rudrasamhita

In the Maha Shiva Puran, Maina (Mother Parvati's mother) takes her place on the right side of her husband Himachal as they perform Var (Groom) pooja.

8.0 हिरण्यकेशी गृहस्त्रुत्र ५.४.१

अग्निपूजयांध्र दक्षिणतः पति भाय्यो - पवित्रति

अर्थ - अनिष्ठापन करके पति के दायें भाग में भायाँ को बैठावे।

At the time of invocation of the Fire God (Agni Devata), the wife sits on her husband's right side.
9.0 खदिरगृह्य सूत्र १।३।७८
पाणिग्राहस्य दक्षिणत उपवेशयेत।
अर्थः – पति के दायीं ओर पत्नी बैठे।
The wife is on the right side of the husband during panigrahan.

10.0 जैमिनिगृह्य सूत्र १। २०
दक्षिणत एरकायां भायामुष्कवेश्योत्तरतः पति।
वर के दाये भाग में घास आदि से निर्मित आसन या ऊनी आसन पर पत्नी बैठे और वायी ओर वर बैठें।

11.0 धर्मप्रवृत्ति म ० म ० स्मारकपु ० १५८
आशीवदिभिषेके च पादप्रक्षालने तथा ।
शयने भोजने चैव पत्नी तूनरतो भवेत ॥
अर्थः – आशीवद ग्रहण करते समय, अभिषेक के समय, ब्राह्मणों के पांव धोते समय, शयन और भोजन के समय पत्नी वामभाग में रहे ।

This verse is described earlier. (see page 20)
The wife (bride) is on the left side at the time of Saindur Daan, public appearances, eating and sleeping.

13.0 व्याघ्रपात स्मृतीम ० म ० स्मारके तत्रेव

कन्यादाने विवाहे च प्रतिष्ठा - यज्ञकर्मणि।
सर्वेषु धर्मकार्येषु पत्नी दक्षिणन्तः स्मृता ।।

दक्षिणे वसति पत्नी हवने देवतार्थनी।
शुभ्रापारितकले च वामभागे प्रशस्यते।।

जातकर्माणि - कार्याणां कर्मकर्त्तव्य दक्षिणे।
तिष्ठद वर्ष्य वामे च विप्रशीवर्चने तथा।।

श्राद्धे पत्नी च वामाङ्ङो पादप्रक्षालने तथा।
नान्दीश्राद्धे च सोमे च मधुपकर्मे च दक्षिणे।।

अर्थ - कन्यादाने, विवाहे, प्रतिष्ठा, यक्ष-कर्मे, यथा
अन्यान्य धर्म-कृत्याः में भी पत्नी सदेव दक्षिण में रहे
हवन देवपुजा में दाएं भग में और पतिसेवा तथा
रतिकाल में वाम भाग में रहे (जातकर्म आदि)
At time of Kanyadaan, wedding, asthapan of murtis, Yajnas and other different religious acts such as havan, Devata pooja, the wife must be on the right side. When performing wifely duties she should be on the left side.

At birth rites and other sanskaras, the wife is on the right side. Again the wife is on the right side at time of Pitri shraad and Abhyudai/Naandi muk Shraad.

14.0 विवाह सोपांगविधि: गंगाविष्णुदास, Vivah Sopang Vidhi (Pt. Thakurprasad Tripathi Ganga Vishnu Shrikrishnadas):

14.1 जातके नामके बैठक हान्नप्रशांकरमिणि। तथा निष्क्रमणे बैठक पत्नी पुत्रश्च दक्षिणे।।

अर्थ - जात-कर्म, नामकरण, अन्नप्राशन और निष्क्रमण संस्कार के समय पत्नी तथा बालक दोनों दायीं ओर रहें।

At time of birth rites, naamkaran (giving of name), annaprashan (giving solid food), nishkraman(child receives darshan from Surya and Chandrama) wife and child sit on the right side of the husband.

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14.2 पूर्वक मण्डप में शुभासन पर पूवाभिमुख बैठकर, सुन्दर वस्त्र और आभरणोंको पहिनी हुई अपनी स्त्री को भी अपने दाहिने भाग में बैठाय और
The wife must sit on the right of her husband and be tied together before aachman at the commencement of Pooja."

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14.3 Tattparvatan kanyadaranaka vidhanam nimnareitise kare aarthit varke dahinie tarfke bhagmes kanyadatan shubhanshapher uttararun bhet apne dahinie gant bhandh hi apni patnikeko bhi bhatakar, kanyak o dona haryam heladi lepan kardeva.

Wife sits on right side of her husband for Kanya Daan ritual. Page 228

15.0 Atriimsrati [3.136-137]
Jiwdhv-bhartir viamanghi mante vapi sudakshina.
Shraadv yade vivahe ch patni dakhshiant: sadha.

At the time of shraad, yajna, and weddings, the wife should be at the right side of her husband.

16.0 Sanskar ganpati karmith gur  - २२०
Vame sinduradanve ch vame cheiv driaramo.
Vame saddeva shabhyayam bhavajjaya priyarthini.
Sarveshu shubhakaryeya patni dakhshiant: sadha.

At the time of applying sindur on the bride's head, going to the groom's house and returning home, at the time of sleeping and taking a meal with her husband, the wife should be on the left side.
On all other religious/auspicious occasions, the wife should be on the right side of the husband.

17.0 लघु आश्वलायन—१५३६
दमपतीं तु व्रजेयातां होमायं चैव वेदिकाम।
वरस्य दक्षिणे भागे तां वध्रुमपवेशयेत।।
At the time of tirth yatra and havan yajna the wife should always be at the right.

18.0 गोभिल गृहसूत्र ६७
पूर्वं कटान्ते दक्षिणत: पाणिग्रहस्योपविशति।
दक्षिणन पाणिना दक्षिणमसम्बन्धाया:
षड्याहुतीजुहोति।।
During Kanyadaan, panigrahan, and other religious work, the wife must sit at the right hand side.

19.0 वास्तु प्रतिष्ठा संग्रह
खेमराज थिक्रण्डास, अध्यक्ष—श्रीवेंकटेश्वर प्रेर, बम्बई
स चेत्यं पत्नया: अंचलकोणे
रत्नक्षतरिद्राकुर्वाफिलानि बः यज्ञमानस्य
शांतिविद्यो वामपावर्वे पत्नीमुपवेशयेत
‘सस्वेषुधर्मकृत्यः पत्नी दक्षिणत: सदा ’—इति
वचनात। अन्यमते—“शांति केषु च सस्वेषु
27

Here again, it clearly states that at all religious rites the wife must be on the right side of her husband.

20.0 वेद वन्दना  — पं. रामलाल page 14

यज्ञ करते समय यजमान की धर्मपत्नी पति के दाहिनी ओर बैठें।

Yajman’s Dharmpatni must sit on the right side of her husband when performing yajna.

DISCUSSION:

I am sure there are numerous other references and examples in our vast literature dealing with this subject matter. However, let us examine the ones selected herein and see if they provide adequate information to clear the air on this issue.

We acknowledge that all of our Shastras are divinely revealed. Every mantra or shloka therefore, is the dictate and word of GOD provided for the benefit of humanity.

Examining the various verses quoted, we see a clear cut pattern developing with regard to where the wife should be during different situations. In the first reference from Samskar Viddhi onwards, we see that on all religious occasions (poojas, yagyas, charity, fasting,
pilgrimage, etc.) the wife is on the right side. However, on social and private settings (such as dining, sleeping, public appearances) she remains on the left side.

One important exclusion is made at the end of poojas or whenever assirvad (blessings) are given the wife will return to the left side of the husband. (refer to 3.0 Vashishti Havan Paddhati)

Although we accept the instructions of our Shastras in totality, let us attempt for a moment to peek into the minds of our Rishis and Munis who have given us these mandates. At the time of marriage the Bride is given to the Groom by her parents in what we call Kanyadaan (charity or gift of daughter). Towards the end of the wedding ceremony she assumes her seat on the left side of the Groom and remains there. In normal everyday living both parties continue to live in accordance with the teachings of our Dharma and specifically to maintain the vows they made on their wedding day. The husband is viewed as her Lord and as expounded by Mata Anusuya in Ramayana she lives with such dedication. All prayers and pooja can only be at the feet of her husband as long as she remains on his left side.

In my opinion, the dictate of the Shastras is such that the husband grants permission for the wife to leave his left side during the situations mentioned above (poojas, yagyas, charity, fasting, pilgrimage, etc) so that she is
free and clear to worship as an individual Jiva. However, at time of assirbad she resumes her position on the left side so that they can be blessed as a family unit.

CONCLUSION:

The following obvious questions can be asked. Why is it important to do this research? Why can’t the wife sit on any side where ever she is comfortable or wherever the husband prefers? After all isn’t devotion to the Lord what matters, so why make things so intricate. I have been doing things a certain way all my life and everything is going 'good’. Further, why should I change my procedures, my parents and their parents have been doing it this way?

These thoughts and questions seem sound when looked at superficially, however, when examined in some depth they fail to stand up to the overwhelming mandate of our scriptural texts. There are sound reasons why the Rishis took so much effort in describing the seating arrangement of husbands and wives for various situations. It is not our job to second guess the Shastras nor to try and justify the teachings of the wise sages using our limited, guna tainted intellect. My humble suggestion is to simply follow their teachings as much as possible for their wisdom is infinite. In fact,
faith in the Shastras and faith in the words of the teachers are necessary prerequisites to Moksha.

In conclusion, therefore, we look at the preceding verses from our Shastras and see that they clearly demonstrate the circumstances under which the wife should be on the left and when she should be on the right.

At time of washing of feet of brahmanas, assirbad, abhishekam, social events, eating, sleeping and copulation the wife is on the left side.

At the time of kanyadaan (vivaah), Devata Pooja, performance of yajnas, charity, pilgrimage and all samskaras the wife is on the right side.

By no means is this research exhaustive and as such I may have missed important facts which could affect my conclusions. Perhaps others may have in their possession authorities to the contrary, if so I shall be happy to peruse them and continue this discussion.

In your review of this paper, I would be grateful if you can point out any mistakes and make suggestions on how it can be improved. Jai Shri Ram.
SHRI SATYA NARAYAN BHAGAWAN

Please note that the wife is sitting on the right side of the husband during pooja.
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WED. 7:00-8:00PM – MUSIC/TABLA CLASSES

THUR. 7:00-8:30PM – TRAINING OF JR. PRIESTS

FRI. 7:00-8:30 PM SURYA VEER SANG – A FOUR (4) YEAR PROGRAM ON FUNDAMENTALS OF SANATAN DHARMA

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