

The Role and position of women in Vedic period in India

Nagalaxmi.V

*Research Scholar, Dept of History
Osmania University*

Abstract

Early Vedic civilization placed a high value on the contribution of women. In comparison to later periods, their political situation was noticeably improved. This has been linked to the fact that the early Vedic period experienced considerable social and political stability, which made it possible for women to assert their rights and participate in a range of sociocultural activities. In early Vedic India's political history, women have been a significant player. Women were respected in the family and society in ancient India. In several sections of the Vedas, she held the role of household queen, which was envied by her contemporaries. In the Rig-Veda, you can find the names of about 300 poets and seers. The tales of ancient epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are the richest source of information about the lives of women at that time. Even today, the ideas portrayed in these epics are still relevant.

Keywords: *women, vedic period, India, political situation, and Ramayana.*

I. Introduction

Women in the early Vedic period played a vital role in society. Their political condition was significantly better than that of women in later periods. This has been attributed to the early Vedic period being a time of great social and political stability, which allowed women to assert their rights and engage in various socio-cultural activities. Women have played an important role in the political history of early Vedic India. This is evident from the many inscriptions that mention women, their actions and statements, and their impact on society. One of the earliest inscriptions to mention a female political figure is the Hathigumpha inscription, which was created around 1500 BCE. This inscription records the deeds and statements of a woman, Tvastarī. The inscription provides evidence that women were engaged in politics and had an impact on society during this early period. Another example is the Māmsāyana Arthashastra, also known as Kautilya's Arthashastra.

This work contains detailed instructions on how to run a government and describes various social. Despite their political achievements, women in the early Vedic period were not afforded equal rights. For example, they were generally excluded from positions of power and decision-making. This is evident from the many references to śruti (the word for "texts" or "authorities" in ancient Hinduism), which refer to male deities as ācāryas (teachers) and female deities as vidyādhārīs (learners).

Women Position in Vedic Period

Women in ancient India held a respected position in both the household and the wider society. Her contemporaries in many different sections of the Vedas admired her, but envied her status as queen of the home. Unfortunately, beginning in the seventh century, continuous invasions from other countries created a hostile atmosphere for women. Because of her susceptibility to mistreatment at the hands of the invading hordes, the man was given the responsibility of protecting her. Because of this, the male member of the family unit assumed the role of the dominating member of the unit, and the female member became completely dependent on the male member. During the time of the Vedas, particularly during the time of the Rig-Veda, women held an extremely respected and powerful position in society. It was very evident that a lady embodied all the virtues of Indian culture. Sarasvati, riches represented by Lakm, strength by Durga, beauty represented by Reti, and purity represented by Gag were the aspects of education. As a result, each of these morally significant and valuable aspects was likened to a lady or mentioned in her name. During the time of the Vedas, it was common for women to hold leadership positions, and they received an education on par with that of their male counterparts. She was called a "Soma priest" in the Yajurveda, which is an ancient Indian text.

Women such as Lopmudr, āraddh, Saram, Roma, Vivavr, Apl, Yami, and Gho were among those who belonged to this group. They had the same level of power as men in religion, literature, and the economy and they were able to read the Vedic mantras. Nevertheless, this period of time did not last very long. The divine equality of women over time evolved into a condition for exclusion. It was forbidden for the woman to participate in religious activities, despite the fact that throughout the Vedic time she was an essential part of both society and religion. During the time of the Vedic tradition, the perspective on women was elevated by divine imagination and sacred spirit; nevertheless, this has completely shifted since that time. The development

of male superiority over females occurred at the same time as the advent of the var a system. This was owing to the unbalanced distribution of power that existed throughout the Vedic civilization. As a direct result of this, there was an age in which the dignity of women was degraded. There was a barrier in place that prevented women from advancing not only mentally but also spiritually. It is possible that numerous obstacles were placed in her path in order to prevent her from progressing across the Vedic literature. It showed that lower caste people, including women, were not allowed to receive any sort of education. Women were not allowed to receive an education, marriage before the age of puberty grew widespread, and the practise of remarrying a widow was made illegal. In this religion, the husband of a woman was elevated to the position of a deity; the practise of polygamy was sanctioned; the custom of Sati was implemented; and it was forbidden for women to provide sacrifices, recite prayers, or read religious books. The position of radar was bestowed upon her.

Vedic Seers Include Women

The Rig-Veda contains the names of around three hundred poets and seers at the time it was written. On the other hand, the Rig-Veda only has the names of eleven or twelve of their female equivalents, which accounts for barely four percent of the total number. It most emphatically does not demonstrate to the women in the society that they have equal rights or equal opportunities. Alp is a female figure in the Rig-Veda who, after her husband left her because of her kind of illness, moved in with her father and asked with Indra for his blessing to heal her ailment so that she may regain her beauty. Her husband had abandoned her because of her illness. But it doesn't appear like Indradi will bless her. After taking a shower one day, Apl was chewing on some Soma when she was startled to see Indra standing in front of her. Apl immediately offered to share the Soma juice that she had in her mouth with Indra.

Female Infanticide

During the time of the Vedic civilization, the son was given the responsibility of performing rites. As a direct consequence of this, there was a yearning for young guys. As a result of this, the mother of a girl experienced feelings of shame, and women who solely had daughters were subjected to a significant amount of stigma. The substantial dowries that were prescribed by the Vedas were one of the reasons why having a daughter was seen as a burden. As a result, the killing of female infants came to be seen as a viable option for relieving the burden. They choose to adopt a boy instead of a girl whenever a girl kid is born to them. The TaittiriyaSamhit gives its approval to this method of treatment. In the first volume of his Origin and Development of Moral Ideas series, Wester Mark gives a comprehensive examination of this practise in both ancient and modern times, among both barbaric and civilised people from a variety of locations (1906).

Marriage

Marriage laws and customs are able to shed light on whether or not men think of women as merchandise or as spoils of war, or whether or not they are aware that a wife is her husband's valued partner and that their collaboration is necessary for happiness and success in family life. New social forces were advocating for earlier marriages to take place. During the entirety of the Vedic period, parents' primary concern was for the safety of their young daughters, and they considered annual marriage to be the best way to ensure this. As a result, child marriage evolved into a social norm. The unfortunate reality is that girls were expected to adhere to this convention.

Polygamy

In the presence of the sacred fire, the husband is obligated to make a solemn promise to his wife that he will never abandon her to pursue his desires for pleasure, financial success, or spiritual enlightenment. The complaint was that society does not punish criminals who break these standards in a severe enough manner. It was acceptable to have multiple wives. There are a number of songs in the Rig-Veda that allude to the practise of polygamy. The Aryans held the goal of having a large number of wives. This wish was granted with the assistance of the gods as well as the tribal leaders who took on the role of kings. The two Avins are lauded throughout many hymns for the quality of their respective consorts. For example, they made Cyavana the husband of a large number of different women. In a manner comparable to this, King Asdasya presented Surabhi with the offer of fifty brides while they were standing on the bank of the Suvsturiver. Vaia was given a large number of brides by King Suda, who was transported to him in two chariots. Despite this, there is a clear depiction of the difficult predicament that a man faces when he has a large number of wives.

The Girl's Duty

According to the Samhitas, the name Putrika is given to a daughter. In ages past, it was not uncommon for a man to coerce his daughter into committing a crime so that he could have a son. It said that a brother who did not have a virgin was now legally recognised as equivalent to a reason in the Putrik sense that is most

specific to it. In the event that her brother is still alive, he presides over the burial services for their father. However, despite her father's absence, she is able to carry out the rituals associated with his burial. The sole purpose of this is to ensure that she will be able to inherit her father's property. The only objective at hand was to carry out the necessary burial rites here. She might continue to exercise this right even after she was married.

Education

Education was used as a crucial change agent in the effort to improve the position of women. The home of a teacher now serves as the primary educational setting, displacing the traditional role of the family home. It would suggest that sons, as opposed to daughters, were more likely to remain with a teacher throughout this protracted and rigorous period of study. The TaittiriyaSamhit states that every Brhma male was born with three debts that he was obligated to pay off throughout the course of his life. In this place, he makes good on his duty to the wise by remaining with the instructor and gaining knowledge from him. He is required to provide sacrifices in order to repay his debt to the gods, and he must have children in order to repay his debt to the men. On the other hand, a daughter is expected to live with her parents throughout her life. It's possible that her education came from her father, who is an expert in Vedic education. If he is, then she would have received it from him. Brahmavdinis and Cryas are two particularly notable examples of this phenomenon.

Widow

During the Vedic time, the situation of women was typically pitiful, and the position of a widow's life was even more dreadful and horrific than that of regular women. [Caveat:] [Caveat:] [Caveat:] [Caveat in Vedic culture, a widow was subjected to the harshest of treatment at all times and was forced to live a horrible existence full of torment, deformity, tonsure, and desolation. Due to the fact that she had her head shaved, she was not permitted to take part in any kind of social activity, she was not allowed to wear fine clothes or jewellery, and she was not even permitted to walk about the streets barefoot. As a result, she was restricted in all the sentiments that come with being a woman. In the Vedic society, the practise of Sati was common.

Sati

The Vedas, which are among the oldest and most revered of all the Indian scriptures, include a passage called the "Sati Hymn" that expressly allows the practise of Sati. This passage is performed during the actual immolation of the widow. "Let these spouses take the first step onto the pyre, tearless, free from any illness, and exquisitely attired," the narrator says. These wives ought to have husbands who are worthy of their praise and who are still with them. In recent times, there have been several attempts made by ryanapologists to demonstrate that this poem does not endorse the act of suicide in any way.

Remarriage

Throughout the entirety of the Vedic period, remarriage was forbidden; yet, according to the "Niyoga" concept, it was acceptable in some exceptional circumstances. The Rig-Veda includes a passage that speaks to a mourning widow who is standing close to the body of her deceased spouse. The sister-in-law of her husband is convinced that she has moved on to the realm of the living.

II. Conclusion

The tales told in epics like the Mahabharata and the Ramayana are the finest approach to gain an understanding of the lives that women led in ancient times. Even in modern times, the ideas that were presented in these epics continue to be thought-provoking and relevant. However, over the course of history, numerous laws have been revised to ensure that everyone is treated equally in society and that gender bias does not exist. In addition, in today's world, many political parties are attempting to increase the number of times they nominate a woman for political office in order to get more votes in subsequent elections. It would appear that the people who lived during the time of the Vedas had a mindset that was more gender-sensitive, progressive, and liberal than what we see today.

References

- [1]. DaloiSarma Dr Harianth: India through the Ages of the Smrtis, Saraswati press, Nalbari, 2013, January.
- [2]. Dutt, M.N: Sixteen minor Smrtis, Vol-I, ParimalPuiblications, Delhi, 2 Ndedition, 2010.
- [3]. A tharvaveda , II 5- 18
- [4]. kanyavaravayatisoma'pisrutavidat/ astamharantyavryavidindrayasunavaitvasakrayasunavaitva// (RV., 8/91/1)
- [5]. Education in Ancient India., ch.ix
- [6]. India through the Ages of the Smrtis, p.103
- [7]. Ibid., p.114
- [8]. Rgveda .,10/27/12
- [9]. India through the Ages of the Smrtis, p.103
- [10]. Sixteen Minor Smrtis, vol-I, p
- [11]. Sixteen Minor Smrtis ,vol- ii, p