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## A Study On Gender Role And Women Equality In Vedic Language And Philosophy

Nikita Sarkar

NET:- Qualified (Department of Education) Agartala (West Tripura)

**Abstract:** In the Vedic Period (1500-1000 BC), women were venerate as mother goddesses (Shakti). They represent life and were believed to hold huge tolerance and sacrifice abilities. As a result, women held respectable position in society during Vedic era. In this period; women had equal status and position as their male counterparts. They were allowed to actively participate in rituals with their husbands and attend the Sabha political institution to share their opinions. Women like Virangana, Bipla, and Mrigalina were mentioned as gone to war. Despite the priority for the birth of a son in society, daughters were not neglected. Women can get higher education during this time and can learnt Vedic hymns, such as Apala, Ghosha, Lopamudra, Vishwabara, Gargi, and Maitri. They were also able to hold the upavit, a sacred thread wear by Hindu. Women were wealthy and can beautify themselves with expensive jewellery, cosmetics, and various hair buns. They could wear many costumes and participated in festivals and dances. Women during Vedic period were skilled in various handicrafts and were praised for their beauty. The main aim of this paper is to attain an understanding of gender role and women equality in Vedic language. The article "Gender Role and Women Equality in Vedic Literature" can give an overview of the position of women and gender role in ancient Indian society, as reflected in Vedic texts.

**Keywords:** Women equality, Women status, Vedic period, Ancient India.

### Introduction:

**“There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the situation of women is improved.”**  
- Swami Vivekananda.

The Vedic period was largely heeded as a "golden era" in which women can enjoy "equal or even high status" than men. To acquire a quality understanding of how women and girls were treated and get knowledge during Vedic time, it is essential to know about ancient Hindu scriptures, hymns, religious texts, and other literary works that express the social customs and habits that found in India. By learning these sources, we can gain mental penetration into the status granted to women, including their position in education, society, finance, rights, and customs. To attain a deeper understanding of the past, we can read texts such as the Vedas, Gita, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Arthashastra, Dharmashastra, and other ancient literary works. In the early Vedic period, women had high status, but this decreased in the later Vedic period. We can get a clear picture of the status of women by analyzing the position of women in terms of their education, society, finance, rights, customs, etc. In early Vedic period women were still allowed to participate in the traditional "Sayambhar" ceremony and can choose their own spouse. However, their married life was often unhappy because their husbands' marriage multiple wives. Women were married after the age of 16. Education was conveying for all unmarried women, and many female saints of the Vedic period, such as Maitrayi, Ghosa and Gargi were highly educated and skilled, writing complex Vedic stanzas for hymns. The Vedas includes being many verses that support the idea of women had the right to education. As wives, women were appeared love and respect, and as mothers, they were held in high regard. Compared to other ancient

societies, women in India enjoyed greater freedom and a higher status during the Vedic period. Daughters like Shakuntala, Kunti and Lopamudra helped their fathers in managing their kingdoms or households. This study will help us to understand women's enveloped in social, economic, religious, educational, political, and domestic affairs in ancient time. Hindus regard as women and men are the two aspects of human. Scriptures describe that Lord Shiva composed of a body of two parts – one is of male called Shiv and other one is of female called Sati, and he is called अधनारीश्वर (Ardhnarishwar).

Vedic literature gives prove that women in ancient India perceive equal rights and even women were settled above men during the Vedic period (Dr. Kumari, 2020). Women such as Gargi and Maitrayi help to bring about social order, and figures such as Durga, Chinnamastika, and Kali were adored for their strength and wisdom (Dr. Kumari, 2020). This lift up status of women in Vedic society is expressed in their individual freedom and social position, which was equal to men in all levels (Dr. Kumari, 2020). However, there seems to be an opposition between the Vedic ideals and later developments in Hindu society. While ancient Hindu scriptures like the Vedas and Upanishads exhibit deep respect for the feminine principle, following texts like the Epics, Smritis, and Sastras defined the ideal woman, leading to practices where women became obsequious to men (Pathak, 2019). According to the ancient Hindu Scriptures and texts, women in Indian society were offered a important amount of freedom and held a high status. Though, over the next millennium, the status of women decreased significantly in all areas. During Vedic period in India, there was no discrimination against women, and they were respected and valued by the male members of their families. Women in ancient India held a respected position both within the household and in wider society. Her contemporaries admired her in various sections of the Vedas, and she was envied for her status as the queen of the home. Women played an important role in the political history of early Vedic India. In the scriptures mention women, their actions, statements, and impact on society. For instance, the Hathigumpha inscription from around 1500 BCE records the functions and statements of a woman named Tvastarī, providing evidence that women involved in politics during this period. Hence, the main objective of this current paper is to gain knowledge about gender role and women equality in Vedic languages.

## Equality of Women in Vedic language and Philosophy

### Women in Early Vedic period:

In the Vedic period, women played a vital role in society. The Rig-Veda, one of the oldest sacred texts in Hinduism, includes verses that provide prove for women's equality with men. During the early Vedic period, women had equal status with men in all sphere of life. In the Vedic period woman was not only limited to the home but she was able to go and can participate in intellectual discussions, in committees and Sabha. Even ancient India was a patriarchal system of society; women were respected and regard as valuable and efficient community members by the Vedic Aryans, who were chiefly engaged in warfare. Women in the Kshatriya caste were trained in martial arts and the use of arms. Vedic women were physically fit and participated in religious events. The Goddesses was created by common people in ancient times to put respect for women. Hinduism considers both men and women as two aspects of a person, with women being regarded more potential and treated as a "Shakti" deity. In the spiritual area, wives had full rights and in a regular manner they joined with their husbands in religious ceremonies. Together, husband and wife participated in religious rituals and sacrifices. Although women took part in lectures about religion and were permitted to read and study any of the holy texts without restriction. According to the Vedas, women worked in many parts of the society. During Vedic period women worked both as labourers and scholars. Women were Acharayas or teachers. In addition to that, they also acted as the first teacher of child and ensured transmission of sanskars. Women also served as physicians and took care of family members in illness. Rig-Veda indicates that women had equal access to capacity for acquiring knowledge, including absolute knowledge. Women constituted significant parts of the Vedic rishis (seers).

**Women in Later Vedic period:**

The status of women has significantly changed across time in every area of society. During later Vedic period the status of women became worse. In this time, the political right and position of women abolished. Child marriage became widely practised. Aitreyya Brahman affirms that daughters are source of misery. Similarly the Atharva Veda disallow towards the birth of daughter. However, in this time an increasing trends we find in society that is to divide society along with gender lines. The Vedic ideals of unity and equality began to decrease and gradually the status of women declined. During later Vedic periods women were not agreed equal status to men, or more precisely, they did not enjoy the same rights and privileges as men. Women partake in every family ritual with men, as a passive observer rather than active participate. Women started to experience discrimination in order to achieve education and other advantages or favour. Child marriage stressed the physical virtual of women, and their unquestioning loyalty to their husbands as a result in the continuous degradation of their position (Mehta, Bhavika 2020).

**Women in the Epic period:**

In ancient Epic's periods women held a respectable role in family. In the Ramayana and the Mahabharata women were given an honoured place. During Epic period women were prescribe as a source of ahimsa, dharma, pleasure and prosperity (Mehta, Bhavika 2020). The description of women in Indian epics, distinctly the Ramayana and Mahabharata, gives a complex and different view of their roles and position in ancient Indian society. Powerful female like Draupadi, Kunti, Tara, Ahalya and Mandodari, form these epics feature that proved remarkable wisdom, consecration, and sacrifice (Pathak, 2023). In Mahabharata epics women such as Kunti, Draupadi have showed their power and authority (Potnis, S. 2013). The Mahabharata also explain the responsibilities of wife and behave towards their husband (Mehta, Bhavika 2020).

**Women in the Hindu Dharma:**

The source of Hindu religion is in the Aryan society. The unity of family was concern as an important role. During Ancient times, the common system of family was joint family. Joint family system includes grandparents, parents, children, grandchildren, siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins. In the Aryan family born of new boy are welcomed to a great extent. In this time people hold viewpoint that male children would contribute effectively in developing of well-being of family and society. During this time women were enjoyed freedom (Dr. Kapur, Radhika). Hindu dharma adored women as deity and powerful like Adi-shakti and Lakshmi. Hindu dharma had being of the divine feminine, along with goddesses like Kali, Durga and Saraswati. Rig-Veda celebrates feminine energy of Devi Sukta hymns as the essence of the universe. Hinduism had seen many puissant women composed rulers Rudramadevi, sage like Andal and Maitreyi as a philosopher.

**Women in Manu Smriti:**

Manu smriti is considered as an ultimate source of our culture and custom. According to Manu smriti the family where women feel satisfied and happy with their husband's behaviour and also husband feel happy and satisfied with wife, this ensure improvement of that family. The families prosper where women feel pleasant and happy; the families get destroy where women are feeling sad and suffer (60). Manu scripts also includes that all men in the home like father, brother, brother in law and husband etc. kept women happy and treating them respectfully, talking in sweet voice, kept her happy mood without stressing her. Also, give her jewelries, good food, good clothes etc. And also mention if you want prosperity in your family do not klesh or fight with her. Manu smirit also said that where women are worshiped, the God stay in those houses; where women are not worshiped or disrespected there will be no prosperity or no worked will be succeed in those houses (Jane, Sandhya 2023).

### Women Scholars in Ancient period:

“In Puranas, the story of Kahoda, Sujata, Ruru, and Pramadvarya studied in Gurukula, in co-ed system. Lady scholars were part of Puranas as well- Bhagavata, two daughters of Dakshayana were expert in theology and philosophy. Some women authoresses of the Rigveda are Lopmudra (1.179), Visvavara (V 28), Sikata (VII 91), Nivavari (IX, 81. 11-20), Gosha (X 39 and 40). Even in Vedic sacrificial religion has women participants, Yajnavalkya’s wife Maitreyi belonged to this category. Lady Scholar Gargi was a spokesperson of the distinguished philosophers in the court. She confronted Yajnavalkya. Hala in his anthology of Maharashi poem there were mention seven poetesses they are Reva, Madhavi, Anulakshami, Pahai, Vaddhahi and Sasiprabha. Atreyi was another lady scholar student of Vedanta who studied under the renowned sages - Valmiki and Agastya” (Jane, Sandhya 2023).

### Women in the Buddhism:

In the Buddhist periods women education was development slowly. The founder of Buddhism was Gautama Buddha. Lord Buddha said that women are source of all evils. Firstly, Lord Buddha not admits women in Monasteries. At last Lord Buddha had permitted around 500 women monks because of the insistence of his dear pupil Anand. In Buddhism women monks are called Bhikkhuni. In this period separate monasteries school were established for women monks and strict rules were setup for them (Mehta, Bhavika 2020).

### Conclusion:

In ancient periods women were highly respected and given recognition society. Daughters were given equal opportunity to prosper. The Rig Veda and Upanishads too mention several women sages (Rishikas) and seers. Women had a significant contribution in prosperity and improving the well-being of family and community. They were provided education and they can participate in teaching professions and also improvement their skills and capabilities in carrying out the administrative and political activities. Women were also can participate in the song and dance performance in several festivals. The position of women in Vedic periods was influenced by many factors like economic, social, and religious etc. In ancient periods women also gets jobs in such as craftsmanship, weaving and pottery making etc. At last we can conclude that Kautilya’s Arthshashtra include that destitute women should be give work like spinning, weaving, coloring etc. which fetched good money as cloaths were expensive in ancient period.

“India of the Vedas entertained a respect for women amounting to worship. Here is a civilization, which places the woman on a level with the man and gives her an equal place in the family and in society.” - **Louis Jaccoliot, French Author.**

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