



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Women Education in Rigveda

Archita Pathak

State Aided College Teacher

Barabazar B.T.M. College

Purulia.

The vedas are the oldest religious texts and literature in India. These vedas are the source of culture and religion of Indian civilization. The vedas are the only book which contains social knowledge, rituals, spiritual consciousness, truthfulness, unity and non-violence. It also considered as literature, scripture and philosophy to Indians. With the help of these vedas Indian Social culture has been able to get the best seats in the world assembly. The Aryan sages did not stop working for the sake of desire only, they always tried to search pure knowledge. That society was enlightened with the teachings of the Aryan sages. The teaching was pure and also not followed by superstition. When we discuss their devotional verses, we see various and varied streams of thought and knowledge. Although the society was patriarchal, the spread of education was not limited. Both men and women are encouraged to take education. So the discussion on the education system of women in that Rigvedic period is the subject of my reference.

The place of vedic civilization is undoubtedly the foremost among the ancient civilization of the world. Although the vedic civilization is ancient, it carries the identity of an age that is quite mature and cultured. In that patriarchal society, women held the position of special honor in those days, which is unimaginable and idealistic for modern civilized people. We find that men and women had equal rights in education in Rigveda. In Rigveda we find many educated female sages like-Lopamudra, Vishwabara, Apala, Ghosha, Savitri, Surya, Bak, Indrani. 1- Like men women also undertook Upanayan and they also studied the vedas.

Purākalpe kumārñāṃ mauñjībandhanaṃ iṣyate

Adhyāpanaṃ ca vedānaṃ sāvitrī vacanaṃ tathā. 2

In the Rigvedic age, the field of education for women was various like studying and discussing scriptures, politics, warfare, musicology, choreography and other works of art.

The place of women in the Rigvedic period was much more advanced and modern than the mediaeval society. After completing their studies, both men and women entered to Gahasthya got married and practiced household affairs.

Inspired by the guru's devotion, some remained in the ashram with perpetual virginity. In the case of students, the names of these two classes were upakurban and naistik students. In the case of female students, the names of these two classes were brahmacharini and brahmavadini. Because of education, marriage of women happened in the right time in that era. In Rigvedic period, women were free to choose their husbands.

svayaṃ sã mitrṃ br̥ṇute jane cit. 3

Not only in Rigveda, are these things mentioned also in Yajurveda and Atharvaveda.

Brahmacaryena kanyā yubānaṃ vindate patiṃ. 4

We know the names of the brahmavadinis, who remained unmarried for the whole life and engaged themselves in studies, from the etymology of the word kathi, bahuchi, kashakrishna. 5

From all these definitions it is understood that a large number of women were proficient in a particular branch of the vedas.

Not only did women gaining Knowledge, they also took charge of teaching. As a proof of this, we got upadhyayani and upadhyaya terms as feminine in upadhyaya position. 6

Upadhyaya who used to be teacher herself. Women regularly taught scriptures and even participated in scriptural debates. Such brahmavidushi women are known in the Upanishada era. Bachaklukanya Gargi joins the debate on theology with Yajnavalkya in the royal court of Mithilaraj Janak.

7 Again in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishada, we find the story of Maitreyi, the wife of Yajnavalkya, who ignored everything and became interested in attaining enlightenment.

yenāhaṃ nāmṛtā syāṃ kimahaṃ tena kuryāṃ. 8

The special skills of women of the vedic age are also known in various fine arts. Although music and dance were the rights of both men and women, women were the ones who taught these arts in particular. 9 Devas created music and dance, and teach this first to Bagdevi. 10 Besides, women used to do knitting.

Tad bā etat strīṇāṃ karma yad urṇāsūtraṃ karma 11

They excelled in music and dance, as well as in martial arts, mudgal's wife mudgalani, a warrior, took part in the battle and destroyed many enemy troops. 12 In the Rigveda, the story of the heroism of a woman named Bishpala is particularly noteworthy. 13 There are also references of women warriors like badrimatishashiyasi in Rigveda.

It was for this unfettered freedom of knowledge that many women in the vedic age excelled in various teachings and became the forerunners of the learned. In the Rigveda, the female sage Ambhrini has declared herself as the lord of the world in the language of ojaswini. Acharya Sayan calls her.

Baṇnāmnī brahmanaviduṣī sātmanamastaut. 14

Brahmanavidushi has proudly declared this woman sage.

Ahaṃ rudrebhirbasubhīscarāmyahamādityairuta biśvadebaiḥ. 15

A question has been raised by Acharya Sayan in the commentary of Rigveda.

nanvebaṃ sati strīśūdra sahitāḥ.

sarbepi vedādhikāriṇaḥ stuḥ

That is, are all the women and shudras entitled to the vedas? He gave quote in support of this answer

strīśūdra dvijabandhunāṃ trayī na śrūtigocarā

iti bhāratamākhyānaṃ muninā kṛpayākṛtaṃ. 16

That is, their Mahabharata text will be the same fruit full as the vedic texts. Again, it can be seen by observing the Sayan commentary that the vedas can be acquired if are undertook upanayana. Therefore, in the Rigvedic age, since women undertook upanayana, they were entitled to the vedas. Besides, the statement is clear from the commentary, given by Acharya Sayan,

iṣṭa prāptyaṇiṣṭa parihārayoralaukikamupāyaṃ

yo grantho vedayati sa vedaḥ. 17

The general meaning of owner is to be able to know or understand. There are signs in Acharya- everyone wants that good happened to him and no evil. Since this feeling desire is universal, everyone can be considered entitled to study the vedas.

The ancient Aryan sages realized that in practical life as well as in the world of thought, women have equal right with men. That is why in the history of ancient India we find the names many theoretic and brahmavidushi women. Those whose names are pronounced today with reverence are Bishwabara, Romla, Poulami, Kakshibati, Raka, Usha, Aditi, Anumati, Kuhu, Shraddha, Sinibala, Ratri, Ayati, Urvashi etc.

It is true that we knew about many learned women the Rigvedic age as well as in the Upanishadic age, but there is no doubt that their position were gradually changing towards the end of vedic era. The complexity of the society was undoubtedly less in the time of Rigveda and that is why the predominance of irrational conduct did not over whelm the sense of judgement at that time. At that time a developed view of the life of the sages seemed to be unwavering in giving women the status they deserved in education. It was during the Yajurveda that society's attitude towards women began to change. Perhaps with the increase of family and social wealth, the complexity of various relationships, the increasing complexity in religious matters, the hegemony of the Brahmin community, and above all, the combination of non-aryan culture all these combined to change the society and in this women were the most affected. Their right to education was shrinking gradually.

Even now-a-days well educated parents also think that a son is more desirable than a daughter. Even in the vedic age, a son was desired, but there is no evident for the neglect of a daughter. According to the Upanishads, an educated daughter was as desirable to her parents as an educated son.

Artha ya icched duhitā me paṇḍitā jāyeta. sarbamāyuriyāditi tilaudanaṃ

pācayitvā sarpiṣmantamaślīyātām. 18

After the vedic age and in the middle ages, women's education was somewhat reduced. Child marriage, Satidah, Polygamy. These become obstacle to women's education. Although with progress of science, the ignorance towards girl child has been reduced, the neglect of daughters among the poor has not been eradicated due to socio-economic reasons. However at present, the government has taken initiatives to give importance to girls' through various project and encourage them to go to schools and engage them in various professions. Without harmonizing with the overall development of girls, their inherent energy has been wasted by keeping them in them in the dark. At present girls are participating in all activities in harmony with boys. Their self-confidence has increased, they are now self reliant. So as most of the girls are educated, the overall progress of the society and the state has increased. Girls are employed today in every profession.

Education not only makes people wise but also makes them cultured. So the vedic education system is the inspiration for all the education system in the world. The teachings of ancient India are beautifully reflected in the teachings of Acharya in the Taittiriya Upanishads.

vedamanucyācāryo nte vāsinamanu śāsti-satyam vada, dharmam cara.....19

So the teaching of ancient India was as applicable today as it was then

End Note

1) Ṛg veda- 1/179, 5/28, 8/96, 10/39, 10/40, 10/80, 10/125, 1/145

2) Yasmṛti-

3) Ṛg veda- 10/27/12

4) Atharva veda 11/7/18

5) pāṇinīyaṃ- 4/1/63

6) pāṇinīyaṃ- 4/1/49

7) Bṛhadāraṇyak upaniṣad 3/8/9

8) Bṛhadāraṇyak upaniṣad 2/8

9) Ṛg veda- 7/103, 10/135

10) Satapath Brāhman 3/2/4/6

11) Satapath Brāhman 12/7/2/11

12) Ṛg veda - 10/102/2

13) Ṛg veda-- 1/116/15

14) Ṛg veda bhāṣya

15) Ṛg veda - 10/125/1

16) Purāṇ

17) Aitareya Brāhman bhāṣyabhūmikā

18) Bṛhadāraṇyak upaniṣad 6/4/17

19) Taittiriya upaniṣad 1/11/1-4

References.

1) *Bhattacharya, Dr. Bhabani Prasad Adhikari,*

Dr. Taraknath. Vedicsankanlan .kolkata Sanskrit Book depo 2004.

2) *Bandopadhyay, Smt. Santi. Vedic Sahityer Ruparekha. Kolkata Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar 2003*

3) *Sen, Atul Chandra. Upanisad Nabak. Kolkata Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 2005*

4) *Kumar, Dipak. Bharatiya Sanskrit. Varanasi Chaukhamba Surabharati Prakashan , 2014*

5) *Chaubey, Brajabihari. Riksukta Manimala. Hoshiarpur (Panjab) Katyan Vedic Prakashan 2010*

6) *Trivedi, Ram gobind. Rigveda Samhita Varanas: Chaukhamba Surabharti Prakashan 2011*

7) *Upadhyaya , Baldev. Vedic sahitya. Varanasi sarada sansthan 1989*

8) *Gope, Yudhisthir. Vedic Sahityer Hitihis. Kolkata Sanskrit Book Depo- 2009*

9) *Lahiri, Prabodh Chandra. Shastri, Hrishikesh .Paniniyam. The Dhaka Students Library 2004*

