

## WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN SMRITIS

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**Abstract:** From the times of creation of the universe women are treated to be the prime of the creation. Without the existence of the women the creation has no meaning. It is felt necessary to co-exist, man with woman and woman with man. The essential nature of woman is to co-operate and help with the fellow beings and to educate the society at large in the form of charity and sacrifice. Hence 'Adisakthi' or 'Parasakthi', what ever we may call, it is source of energy. The four fold human goals are possible with the woman, is fact of Vedic times.

**Introduction:** Indian tradition has respected women in a great degree. Where the women are looked with esteem, the society is known to be a civilized, cultured society. Indian mind has never ignored the above fact. The women are treated, Laxmi or Parvati or Sarasvathi i.e., Prosperity, Strength and Intelligent. In ancient Indian women is called as Adisakthi. Womanhood is blessing. She is an incarnation of Tyaga, Satya (truth) and Dharma (hard work). In the present society in India, because of several influences, the situation is different. The most important aspect is the attitude of women towards themselves. Men and Women are equal constituents of the society in ancient India.

Women are having free mind to exercise their ideas. Education to women means creating greater awareness



Manu ix-8

Women in ancient India were treated on a par with men. The Vedic initiation and wearing of the sacred thread was for both girls and boys. Women were eligible to learn and recite the Vedas and other religious texts, just like the men perform sacrifices and yagnas, choose to remain unwed if they wished to pursue studies (in fact the Atharva Veda said that a maiden was not to marry until she had completed her students life) and above all they could choose their partners in life. Many women had attained knowledge in the Brahman, the Supreme Being and were called Brahmavadini. Similarly there were the Mantranids who specialized in the Mantras and Vedas (such as Kausalya, mother of Rama and many others like Atreyi) and the Panditas who were scholars (such as Draupadi, the wife of the Pandavas brothers in the Mahabharata). Theology, religion, philosophy and teaching were some of the favourite subjects of study for women. Some Vedic hymns are supposed to have been written by women. According to Panini, the famous Sanskrit grammarian of later times,

there were boarding houses in the Vedic times, for women students. There were poetesses too in that period showing how conducive the ambience for learning and being creative was, for women. All this was in the period prior to 200 BC.

The great images of Brahmavadinis like Maitreyi and Gargi of the Upanishad age, and women missionaries like Sanghamitra carrying Buddha's message to Syria and Macedonia, all were laying buried deep due to millennium of foreign domination. The mid-nineteenth century India saw women, the great mother – power shackled and degenerated to mere “child producing machines” as Vivekananda saw it. In the period of degradation, when the priests made the other castes incompetent to study the Vedas, they deprived the women also of all their rights. You will find in the Vedic and Upanishadic age Maitreyi, Gargi and other ladies of revered memory have taken the place of Rishis. In an assembly of a thousand Brahmanas who were all erudite in the Vedas, Gargi boldly challenged Yajnavalkya in a discussion about Brahman.

Regarding her women management Manu says that she is an expert of household management, in-order to

prevail peace in the house. Women (mother) should be treated with high esteem. It is a responsibility of the house holder.

Generally three are known to be teachers for the children; they are mother, father, and preceptor. First position goes to the mother. Similarly, she is an expert in the propagation of the family. She allots the responsibility to the member of the family.

In the same text after climbing the ladder of success, if a man looks back he will find one person holding the ladder in a fine position, that person is his wife. Women have inspired the world. Freedom is the spiritual attainment that makes the society to grow.

Even in ancient India all the divine persons have their wives at the helm of affairs. Women surpassed men in intellectual discussions. It can be inferred from this that women enjoyed freedom in all walks of life. Women are educated in Upanishads. They used to participate in discussions Brihadaranyakopanisad, Yagnavalka Maitreya.

In our country from times immemorial woman have been given equal status and privileges as men and were never subjected to gender discrimination. They were treated as Goddesses, great mothers, valorous queens and noble teachers. (Jansi etc.) Lord Ramachandra has given his laps for his wife. Lord Vishnu has given half of his heard. Lord Eswara has given half of his body in the form of Parvathi. Lord Brahma, the creator, has taken his wife as his tongue. The above four with their potentialities are protecting the world. Such sayings speak of the Empowerment of women that had in existence in ancient India.

That is why "Gruhini Gruhamuchathi ithi". Saying speaks about the natural status of women in ancient India. Women are symbol of integrity, cultural upliftment. The poets have observed the empowerment of women in the Smritis and they proclaimed the necessities of the same. Kalidasa was elevated as a scholar because of his wife only.

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