

# दिवकरद्युतिः



वेदमार्तण्डाचार्यदिवकरमहापात्राभिनन्दनग्रन्थः



दिवाकरद्युतिः

(वेदमार्तण्ड-आचार्यदिवाकरमहापात्राभिनन्दनग्रन्थः)

प्रकाशिका -

अर्वाचीनसंस्कृतसाहित्यपरिषद्

सी ६२, अक्षरधाम टेनामेन्द्स,

मथुरानगरी समीप, अक्षरचोक,

वडोदरा, गुजरात. 390020

२०१६

ISBN :978-93-827 13-15-9

प्रतिलिपयः - ३००

प्रकाशनवर्षम् - २०१६

मूल्यम् - ५००

प्राप्तिस्थानम् - वेदनिकेतनम्, लुहागडजागा, शंकरानन्दमथलेन्

तिआडिसाहि, पुरी- ७५२००१, ओडिशा

दूरभाषा - ०९४३७६९७५३०

मुद्रणम् - Pagemaker Computer Services

117, Bapuji Nagar, Bhubaneswar - 751009

## Women in vedic society

Dr.Satrughna Panigrahi

The Vedas are the mirror of the culture of the Aryan society. In Aryan civilization, we find women in a much better position. Especially in Rig Veda, women are considered equal with men. Even women are more respected in the society. According to the Rig Veda both men and women were treated equally respectable and powerful. “अग्निर्ह च वृषभश्च धेनुः”<sup>1</sup>The Vedic Darshan and Sankhya Darshan describes that the male and the female are like purusha and prakruti. It is meant that they are complementary to each other. The bisexuality of the human race conditions implies division of labour where man is the creator and woman is the lover. According to Aitareya Brahman the father is born again of his wife (जायते पुनः). In this way she is called ‘जाया’<sup>2</sup>. She is essentially the educator of man both when he is a child and when he is an adult. Hence we can happily call her his second mother. It is evident that women in the Vedic period enjoyed the status of arguing in the royal courts for which the dialogue between Gargi and Yajnavalkya stand as an important example. Even in the Vedic times we have evidence that musical recitation of the Sama Veda was originally reserved for ladies. There are 24 names of women found in Rig Veda like Ghosha, Vishvavara, Apala, Sarparanjni, Juhu, Surya, Vagambhruni, Lopamudra, Vibhavari, Indrani, Shachi, Maitreyee, Gargee, Vachaknavi etc. those have seen the Mantras of various Vedas.

We find frequent mention of unmarried girls as Ghosha, who grow up in the houses of their parents<sup>3</sup>, the references to the ornaments worn by maidens at festival occasions in order to win lovers<sup>4</sup>, to a youth’s courtship or the maiden he loves<sup>5</sup>, to the lover’s gifts<sup>6</sup>, to their mutual love<sup>7</sup> and to the spell<sup>8</sup> by which a

<sup>1</sup> Rig Veda – 1/

<sup>2</sup> Rig -Veda -1/105/2

<sup>3</sup> Rig-Veda- I. 117. 7, 10/ 39/ 3, 40/ 5

<sup>4</sup> Rig-Veda- I. 123. 11, VII. 2. 5

<sup>5</sup> Rig-Veda- I. 115. 2

lover hopes to lull the whole household to sleep while he visits his beloved, all this evidence speaks in support of the custom of girls normally marrying long after they have reached puberty. The marriage ceremony also supports this view, as it is presumed to be immediately followed by consummation, like-

परा देहि शामुल्यं ब्रह्मभ्यो वि भजा वसु ।  
कृत्यैषा पद्वती भूत्व्या जाया विशते पतिम् ॥<sup>9</sup>

The restrictions in the field of choice in marriage were few. Marriage connections with the dasyu-varna people, with whom the Aryans came into conflict in India, were probably prohibited. Among Aryans only the marriages of brother and sister,<sup>10</sup> and of father and daughter were banned. Thus there is conclusive proof that incest was not practiced.

There seems to have been considerable freedom on the part of young persons in the selection of a wife or husband, as they generally married at a mature age. There is no clear evidence that the consent of the parent or brother was essential. The latter appeared in the scene after the parties concerned had come to an understanding, and their participation as well as that of the "wooer" (vara) in the formal "wooing" was a mere formality, though it was an essential preliminary to the marriage ceremony.

The uncomplimentary references to some sons-in-law<sup>11</sup> suggest that in some cases a bride-price was paid by a no desirable son-in-law. Similarly when girls had some physical defect, dowries, it seems, had to be given

गावो भगो गाव इन्द्रो मे अच्छान् गावः सोमस्य प्रथमस्य भक्षः ।

इमा या गावः स जनास इन्द्र इच्छामीद्भुदा मनसा चिदिन्द्रम् ॥<sup>12</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Rig-Veda- 1. 117. 18

<sup>7</sup> Rig-Veda- I. 167. 3; IX. 32. 5, etc.

<sup>8</sup> Rig-Veda- VII. 55. 5. 8

<sup>9</sup> Rig-Veda- X. 85. 29

<sup>10</sup> न वा उ ते तन्वा तन्वं संपृच्यां पापमाहुर्यः स्वसारं निगच्छात् ।

अन्येन मत् प्रमुदः कल्पयस्व न ते भ्राता सुभगे वष्टयेतत् ॥ Rig-Veda - 10/10/12

<sup>11</sup> अश्रीर इव जामाता । Rig-Veda- 8/ 2/20; I/109/ 2

<sup>12</sup> Rig-Veda - 6. 28. 5



A hymn in Rig-Veda<sup>13</sup> – which may be called the wedding hymn – gives us some idea of the oldest marriage ritual. The bridegroom and party proceed to the bride's house<sup>14</sup>, where the well-adorned bride remains ready<sup>15</sup> to join the marriage-feast. The ceremony proper now commences. The bridegroom grasps the hand of the bride and leads her round the fire<sup>16</sup>. These two acts constitute the essence of marriage and the bridegroom is now the husband who takes her by the hand, like-

हस्तग्राभस्य दिधिषोस्तदेदं पत्युर्जनित्वमभि सं त्बभूथ ।<sup>17</sup>

The bridegroom next takes the bride home in a car, in a wedding procession.<sup>18</sup> Then follows the consummation which is signified chiefly by the purification of the bride's garment.<sup>19</sup>

Perfect harmony and happiness are prayed for in conjugal life, which (it is hoped) will be long enough to bless the couple with sons and grandsons.<sup>20</sup>

सम्राज्ञी श्वशुरे भव सम्राज्ञी श्वश्रवां भव ।  
ननान्दरि सम्राज्ञी भव सम्राज्ञी अधि देवेषु ॥<sup>21</sup>

The above quoted mantra describes the newly married wife securing respected position as the mistress of her new household, wielding authority over the husband's father, brother, and unmarried sisters. This verse envisages the case (very probably) of the marriage of the eldest son in the family, when the old father

<sup>13</sup> Rig-Veda – 10/85

<sup>14</sup> त्वष्टा दुहित्रे वहतुं कृणोती तीदं विश्वं भुवनं समेति ।

यमस्य माता पर्युह्यमाना महो जाया विवस्वतो ननाश ॥ Rig-Veda- 10. 17. 1

<sup>15</sup> कन्या इव वहतुमेतवा उ अज्ज्यज्जाना अभि चाकशीमि । Rig-Veda- 4. 58. 9

<sup>16</sup> गृष्णामि ते सौभगत्वाय हस्तं मया पत्या जरदष्टिर्यथासः ।

भर्गो अर्यमा सविता पुन्धिर्मह्यं त्वादुर्गार्हपत्याय देवाः ॥ Rig-Veda- 10. 85. 36

<sup>17</sup> Rig-Veda- 10.18.8

<sup>18</sup> Rig-Veda – 10/85

<sup>19</sup> Rig-Veda – 10/85/28-30

<sup>20</sup> Rig -Veda - 8. 31. 5-9, 10 . 34. 11,

<sup>21</sup> Rig-Veda - 10. 85. 46

has retired from active life. The authority exercised must have been more or less the rule of love. The wife participated regularly in the sacrificial offerings of her husband. She played a true role for the welfare of the family,

मम पुत्राः शत्रुहणोऽथ मे दुहिता विराट् ।

उताहमस्मि संजया पत्थौ मे श्लोक उत्तमः ॥<sup>22</sup>

The fulfillment of the desire for offspring, and male offspring in particular, was the chief aim of marriage. Abundance of sons is constantly prayed for along with cattle and land, but no desire for daughters is expressed. This desire for a son is natural in a patriarchal society. The son alone could perform the funeral rites for the father and continue the line. Lack of sons was as deplored as poverty.<sup>23</sup> The adoption of sons was recognized, though not favored.<sup>24</sup>

There is very little evidence of the prevalence of the custom of Sati or widow-burning in the Rig-Veda, though we may detect a semblance or reminiscence of this ancient custom in Rig-Veda- X. 18. 8, where the widow is asked to descend from the funeral pyre of her dead husband on which she was first made to lie. The only safe conclusion would be that the practice, even if known, was not widely prevalent, or at best was confined to the Rajanya class. Rig Veda, X. 40. 2 and X. 18. 7, 8 point to the practice of requiring a childless widow to cohabit with her brother-in-law until the birth of a son. This niyoga is a kind of short-term levirate. At that time the remarriage of widows was permitted in certain circumstances, though there is no clear or definite reference to it in the Rig-Veda.

---

<sup>22</sup> Rig - Veda - 10.56.3

<sup>23</sup> Rig-Veda - 3.16.5

<sup>24</sup> Rig-Veda - 7. 4. 7



The Vedic society in brief was a highly egalitarian society where neither class nor sexual prejudices operated. There was plenty for all and every individual equally privileged. Material prosperity as well as spiritual development guided the living standards. It would not be much of an exaggeration if Plato's utopian society actually flourished in India during the Vedic age. The *Ayusha sukta* of Rig Veda<sup>25</sup> is a sufficient testimony to this.

Apart from the Vedic and the Vedantic discussions there are other cases where women proved their expertise in different stages. This shows the fairly widespread female education in Vedic society. The concept of education was so deep rooted during the Vedic society that it was to be started from the words of the mother. After birth, even the girls had the fullest opportunity to attain education. In course of time circumstances changed and home remained the sphere of future activity of women. In this way they are seen descending to the inferior position from the lofty and glorious status of the Vedic age. The women were in complete darkness only after the advent of Muslim invasions. Though an effort has been made in the British rule to encourage them they could not come up in flying colours because of the restrictions of the traditions and customs. It is in the very modern period that ladies are given full support to progress in the disciplines of their own choice.

**Assit. Professor & Dean**

**Shree Somnath Sanskrit University, Veraval**

---

<sup>25</sup> Rig-Veda – 1/83