

## Women in Brahmanical Literature: Some Aspects

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### Abstract

*Earlier researches on early India have focused mostly on the aspects of society, economy, polity and art including the 'position of women'. The recent researches have turned their attention to the study of causes, consequences and nature of subjugation of women in the early society and emergence of patriarchy. The notion of patriarchy cannot be ignored while discussing women as it defines unequal gender relations where males were dominating and females were always subjugated. Besides, women's identity was known only through their male relatives, which in turn gave birth to a male dominated society. Consequently women's behaviour, reproduction and sexuality were controlled and guarded by male. Further, women were seen as a private property of men not having any existence of their own. It is in this background that present paper seeks to study the depiction of women as projected in Brahmanical texts and the patriarchal attitude towards women. The paper uses the Brahmanical literature such as: Manusmriti, Yajnavalkyasmriti, Arthashastra, Ramayana and Mahabharata and focuses largely upon the private women.*

**Keywords:** private women, progeny, guarded, female nature, *pativrata*, economic resources

### Introduction

Earlier researches on early India have focused mostly on the aspects of society, economy, polity and art including the 'position of women'. The recent researches have turned

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their attention to the study of causes, consequences and nature of subjugation of women in the early society and some of them have been able to throw light on how gender as a social category can be used as an analytical tool to understand this subjugation. Feminist historians such as Uma Chakravarti,<sup>1</sup> Kumkum Roy,<sup>2</sup> and Shalini Shah<sup>3</sup> have largely contributed in this field through re-interpreting the existing sources from feminist perspectives and gender studies (women) and using literary texts which were not focused in the conventional histories. This new scholarship has raised serious concerns about the identity of woman and argued that the roles of women as portrayed in the Brahmanical texts were mostly written from a male centric approach. The early scholars, largely under the influence of the nationalist school, have explained the position of women in early India as 'high'. However, younger generation of historians, using the feminist perspective has been able to locate a different picture of the position of women in early Indian society. Their writings clearly show that women's identity was known only through their male relatives, which in turn gave birth to a male dominated society. Consequently women's behaviour, reproduction and sexuality were controlled and guarded by male. Further, women were seen as a private property of men not having any existence of their own. It is in this background that present paper seeks to study the depiction of women as projected in Brahmanical texts and the patriarchal attitude towards women. The paper uses the Brahmanical literature such as: *Manusmriti*, *Yajnavalkyasmriti*, *Arthashastra*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and focuses largely upon the private women.

## I

In early Indian society two categories of women emerged: 1. dutiful and devoted wife also described as 'private' women, 2. the nuns and prostitutes/ courtesans termed as 'public' women. The private women included mother, daughter, sister which formed part of the household and most of the Brahmanical texts of the period centered their discussion on them. In the Brahmanical texts, the

patriarchal household or the *grha* is dominant. The *grhapati* or the male householder presided over the *grha* which consisted of a wife and sons in particular. For women, they had to move from one household to another and marriage served as a key means as it marked a shift in their roles from daughters/sisters to wives. Thus, it is through marriage that patriarchal domination was able to infiltrate. It is through marriage males can control and harness the procreative ability of women and direct it towards the birth of male progeny.<sup>4</sup> Hence there is an obligation to control women's bodies in order to maintain the purity of the male line. Manu pointed out that women were created to be mothers to bear children while men were created to be the one who carry on the line.<sup>5</sup> Further, Manu also mentions that the woman represents the field and the man to be the seed.<sup>6</sup> Fertility was regarded as the most essential prerequisite for a wife in the patriarchal household and a barren wife was considered to be insignificant. Manu states that the wife is the visible form since she is the one who begets a child, cares for them when they are born.<sup>7</sup> Similarly Yajnavalkya also echoes the same statement that the wife should be served and well-maintained and protected since it is the wife only who provides the man offspring.<sup>8</sup> Procreating a son was considered to of great importance. Yajnavalkya states women should be attended and protected carefully because the continuity of the family lies on the wife who provides the man with a son, grandson and great grandson and for a man to attain heaven lies on the great deeds performed by them.<sup>9</sup> There is a passage in the text which states: 'a faithful wife, married in accordance with the law and dedicated to revering the ancestors, may properly eat the middle ball from that (ritual) if she wishes to become pregnant with a son.'<sup>10</sup> Thus it can be stated that birth of male offsprings was more favoured as compared to daughters.

The early marriage ensured greater control of parents. Jaya Tyagi has rightly argued that girls were married of at an early age to ensure the chances of the groom of keeping his family's lineage as well as to have control over the girl's reproduction.<sup>11</sup> Further, it has also been observed that men also see women as potentially a fertile

ground, a receiver and conserver of man's seed thus making full use of her fertility span.<sup>12</sup> Gerda Lerner opines that, 'By controlling women's sexuality through the requirement of prenuptial chastity and by the establishment of the sexual double standard in marriage, men assured themselves of the legitimacy of their offspring and thus secured their property interest.'<sup>13</sup> Thus, a woman's body was only seen to function as a bag to carry the seed. Apart from this, it can be observed that a woman's body is regarded as a space where culturally coded and socially sanctioned norms are inscribed. This has also to do by training the girl child to serve others from a very young age. Hence the identification of women with their bodies becomes the root cause of their oppression in a patriarchal society.<sup>14</sup> The subjugation of women's body finally led to their subordination and exploitation.

Certain alternatives were provided in the Brahmanical texts in which females were subordinated under male authority. Manu was the most ardent supporter of the idea who laid down that a girl, a young woman, or even an old woman should not do anything in her own house and that even in her childhood she remains under her father's control, in her youth under her husband and when her husband dies under her son.<sup>15</sup> He also mentioned that even the weak husbands must strive to guard their wives.<sup>16</sup> One of the reasons for controlling women's sexuality can be noted down from the clear statement of Manu where he says that 'for by carefully guarding his wife, a man guards his offspring, his character, his family, himself, and the Law specific to him.'<sup>17</sup> Similar is the view of Yajnavalkya about the male control over female.<sup>18</sup> In the Anusasana Parva of the *Mahabharata*, it depicts that women cannot be independent and should be guarded and protected. A passage from the epic states that: 'Women should always be protected by thee (from temptations and opportunities of every kind).'<sup>19</sup> Bhishma in the Anusasana Parva has stated, 'O king, Mann, on the eve of his departure for Heaven, made over women to the care and protection of men, saying that they are weak, that they fall an easy prey to the seductive wiles of men,...'<sup>20</sup> Bhishma while narrating a story

has described that a lady approached Ashtavakra but he resisted her and turned her away. When he dissuaded her, the lady answered him that she is her own mistress and by accepting her, he incurs no sin. Ashtavakra replied, 'Women can never be their own mistresses. This is the opinion of the Creator himself, viz., that a woman never deserves to be independent.'<sup>21</sup> In the *Mahabharata*, there are some other references which point out that women had to maintain their chastity. Draupadi while informing Satyabhadra about the duties of a wife tells her that one should not even talk in private to her own sons.<sup>22</sup> Similarly Sandili says to Sumana that she never used to stay at the door of her house nor did she speak long with anybody.<sup>23</sup> Therefore it can be said that women were expected to perform their duties according to the ideals set by the society where women has subordinate position to men. Looking at this setup, it is can be said that women came to be dependent on the men. Manu admits that no man can completely guard women by force.<sup>24</sup> So to be able to exercise a control over women, he suggests that the husband should employ the wife in the collection and the disbursement of his wealth, in cleaning, in cooking food, and in looking after the household.<sup>25</sup> Other means were also adopted for controlling women. Yajnavalkya mentions that a woman whose husband is away from home, a wife should abandon playing, beautifying the body, joining societies and festivities, laughing and going to another's house.<sup>26</sup> From the above discussion it appears that women were controlled and subjugated. However, from a scrutiny of one of the stories of the *Mahabharata* it emerges that the position of women declined during this period. It is noted that earlier women were free and independent as noticed from the conversation between Pandu and Kunti<sup>27</sup> but later he mentions as to why women had to be confined to the husband.<sup>28</sup>

Manu is not satisfied with the confinement approach and is of the view that due to their weaknesses they even cannot be confined. He writes 'By running after men like whores, by their [private women] fickle minds, and by their natural lack of affection these women are unfaithful to their husbands even when they are

zealously guarded here.<sup>29</sup> Thus Manu writes that knowing their nature, as it was born at the creation a man should make an effort to guard her.<sup>30</sup> Similarly in the *Ramayana* Agastya observed since time immemorial women cling to men in prosperity and abandon him in adversity. He further goes on about the way she speaks has been regarded to be as sharp as a sword and her moods can be compared to that of an eagle's flight.<sup>31</sup> In another episode in the *Ramayana*, Queen Kausalya's lament to Sita before her departure with Rama into the forest stated about the nature of women as untruthful, heartless, unchaste, devious and vain, full of evil passions and the destroyer of long-honoured ties.<sup>32</sup> There are also other statements in the *Ramayana* which project the female nature.<sup>33</sup> When Yudhisthira asked Bhishma that he wanted to hear about the disposition of women, Bhishma answered that 'women are said to be the root of all evil. They are all regarded as exceedingly frail.'<sup>34</sup> Similar statements which described the nature of women can be seen in the *Anusasana Parva*.<sup>35</sup>

Attempts to regulate the female nature are discussed in terms of the duties of women as depicted at length in the Brahmanical texts and they focus significantly upon the concept of *pativrata*. Shalini Shah has explained the concept of *pativrata* which symbolizes the 'service role' of women.<sup>36</sup> Their duty was to serve their husbands and worship him as a god which has been termed as the *pativrata*. The duty of the wife towards her husband is clearly depicted in the *Manusmriti*, *Yajnavalkyasmriti*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Manu states that for women, 'the marriage ceremony equals the rite of Vedic consecration; serving the husband equals to the living with the teacher; and care of the house equals the tending of the sacred fires.'<sup>37</sup> This statement given by Manu clearly defines the duties of the wife. Manu writes that the wife after her father or her brother with the permission of her father, gives her to someone, she should then obey her husband while he is alive, and she should not violate her vow to her husband when he is dead.<sup>38</sup> Yajnavalkya states that wives should act according to/by the direction of their husband which according to him is the highest duty of a wife.<sup>39</sup> Further in

the next few verses he states that a wife should be devoted to the pleasure and to the welfare of her husband and hence such a wife then obtains renown in this world, and after his death attains the best.<sup>40</sup> The wife's duty to serve their husbands is also observed in the Anusasana Parva of the *Mahabharata*.<sup>41</sup> Similar statements of a wife serving her husband as a god are noticed in the *Ramayana*.<sup>42</sup> Other instances which provide the idea of *pativrata* in the *Mahabharata* include the dialogue between Draupadi and Satyabhadra, Uma and Mahesvari and Sandili and Sumana. Manu further says that a virtuous wife should constantly serve her husband like a god, even though he behaves badly, or freely indulges his lust, and is devoid of any good qualities.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, the role that a woman as a wife should undertake in the household can be noticed in the *Mahabharata* when Kunti blesses Draupadi and tells her that she should wait on her husband anointed for the performance of grand sacrifices and she should be devoted to her husband. She further blesses her that she may be the mother of the long lived and heroic children.<sup>44</sup> Apart from performing the services to her husband, the wife is also required to provide her service even to other members of the household like Sandili who always waited upon and served her mother-in-law and father-in-law.<sup>45</sup> When a wife looks after the welfare of her husband then she shall be exalted and go to heaven<sup>46</sup> and even a virtuous wife who remains chaste when her husband has died goes to heaven just like chaste men, even if she does not have any sons.<sup>47</sup> Manu further says that even a woman who is not unfaithful to her husband but restrains her mind, her heart, speech, and body reaches her husband's worlds after death, and in doing so good people call her a virtuous woman.<sup>48</sup> But he further writes that if the wife is unfaithful towards her husband she is an object of reproach in this world and she is reborn again in the womb of a jackal and is tormented by the diseases born of her evil.<sup>49</sup> Thus if a wife was unfaithful to her husband she was looked down upon in the society while men were never perceived in this manner. This was not the end of the agony of the women. Sometimes, they were even compared with slave and hence deprived of the access to the economic resources and this aspect is discussed below.

## II

The Brahmanical texts depict that women cannot have any access to economic resources. In the *Mahabharata*, it mentions that, ‘...a wife, a slave, and a son can never earn wealth for themselves. What they earn always belongeth to him who owneth them.’<sup>50</sup> Similarly is the approach echoed in the Sabha Parva, Udyoga Parva and Manu.<sup>51</sup> However, Manu differentiates between the women of higher and lower stratum of women. The *Laws of Manu* does not recognize the role of women belonging to the higher stratum of the society as generating resources or participating in productive activities.<sup>52</sup> But it provides insight whereby wives of lower orders are earning a livelihood, thus contributing to the generation of resources in the family.<sup>53</sup> From the text it is clear that ‘the above rule does not apply to wives of travelling performers or to wives who earn a living of their own, for such men get their women to attach themselves to men and, concealing themselves, get them to sexual liaisons.’<sup>54</sup> In this context, Kavita Kaur has argued that sexual liason is seen as a form of livelihood in the lower sections of the society. Therefore from the statement above it can be observed that wives of the lower orders were expected to earn a living for their families even from sexual services. Furthermore Gaur has argued that it should be remembered here that the authority was vested with their husband, and hierarchical relations within the household did not change although their wives were earning.<sup>55</sup>

In the *Arthasastra* one can notice the wives assisting their husbands on the manufacture of white liquor on festive season for medicinal purpose.<sup>56</sup> Kautilya tells us that women belonging to the lower orders such as dancers (*talavacaras*), wandering minstrels (*caranas*), fishermen (*matsya*), fowlers, cowherds (*gopalakas*), vintners and others can accompany their male family members. He further goes on to say that the males of these groups give enough freedom to their women counterparts.<sup>57</sup> For going along with their male folk were not considered as an offence but if it is prohibited then they shall have to pay a fine.<sup>58</sup> Though Kautilya has pointed out

that women were having an access to earn their living but he also mentions that women of these groups such as women of actors(*natas*), dancers(*nartakas*), singers, musicians(*gayana- vadaka*), storytellers, bards(*kuslavas*), rope dancers (*plavaka*) and women who follow a secret profession shall be charged a fee per show of five *panas*.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the frequent mention of women of the lower strata in the text suggests that the women belonging to this community had better opportunity of accessing the material resources. Furthermore, one can observe the involvement of wives in their earning capacity where Kautilya states that 'And the wife (shall not be held liable) for the debt incurred by their husband, if she has not assented to it except in the case of cow herds and cultivators tilling for half the produce.'<sup>60</sup> This indicates that their wives will be held responsible for the debt incurred by their husband whether it was taken with their assent or not. Kavita Gaur also asserts that the relationship of the husband and the wife belonging to the lower strata of the society can be compared to the conventional household. Thus one can notice that the responsibility of sharing the debt in lower sections of the society indicates the rights and responsibilities of both man and woman to earn a livelihood and wives would have generated enough resources for the family.<sup>61</sup>

Usually women of upper strata do not have much access to property or material resources other than their *stridhana*.<sup>62</sup> Manu orders that the king should punish the relatives with the punishment of theft if they take away the *stridhana* of a woman when she is still alive. Here Manu makes reference to women who are barren or have no sons, those who have no families, who are faithful wives, widows or those who are ill.<sup>63</sup> Manu in chapter 9 makes mention of the *stridhana* or women's property.<sup>64</sup> Apart from this, what she receives subsequent to her marriage and what her husband gives her out of affection- upon her death then the property goes to her children even if her husband is alive.<sup>65</sup> It asserts that when a mother dies, all uterine sisters and brothers should divide the maternal estate equally among themselves. If those sisters have any daughters, they should gladly give them also something from

their maternal grandmother's property.<sup>66</sup> By limiting and restricting women to *stridhana* it suggests that they were not expected to earn a living by themselves nor participate in any economic activity. Shalini Shah has opined that even if women were entitled to their *stridhana*, it mostly depends on the degree of control over the disposal and enjoyment which would determine the quality of their property rights. Furthermore, she goes on to say that the *stridhana* was not only women's wealth, but one that is given to women at the time of their marriage.<sup>67</sup> Manus also points out that women who are married under the *brahma*, *gandharva* and *prajapatya* marriage,<sup>68</sup> the property of woman is awarded to her husband alone if she dies without any offspring.<sup>69</sup> Manus also mentions that whatever property is given to a woman by her father goes to the unmarried Brahmin daughter, or to that daughter's offspring. Further, he makes it very clear that women should never alienate the common property of the family or even her own private property without the prior permission of her husband.<sup>70</sup>

*Yajnavalkya* has also described the issue relating to inheritance rights. With reference to the wife's right to husband's property, he writes that in the case any person dies without leaving any of the twelve kinds of sons, then his wife, daughters, parents, brothers, nephews, siblings, his relatives, disciples and *brahmacaris* are entitled to his property. This rule according to him is applicable to all the *varnas*.<sup>71</sup> *Yajnavalkya* also lays down that a wife should get a share in her husband's property if she is abandoned by her husband. He states, 'He who abandons an obedient and skilful, son-bearing and pleasant speaking wife should be made to give one-third of his property to her. If he has no property, he should maintain her.'<sup>72</sup> In the *Anusasana Parva*, it is mentioned that the husband can give his wife some wealth.<sup>73</sup> *Yajnavalkya* also opines that after the death of the father and mother, all the sons should distribute the property and liability of their father equally.<sup>74</sup> But if the sisters are unmarried at the time of the partition, each brother should give one fourth part of his share or money equal to the value of one fourth part of his share for their marriage. This has been mentioned in the text that

states, ‘And the sisters also, but by giving them, as an allotment, the fourth part of his own share.’<sup>75</sup> The position of daughter was further protected in case of the death of her mother by providing an exclusive right over her *stridhana*. She was considered the only heir of her mother’s property. Yajnavalkya states that, ‘Of the mother’s (property) the daughters (shall take) the residue (after the payment) of debts.’<sup>76</sup>

For Kautilya, marriage was considered as an important transaction. For him all transactions begin with marriage. He stated this in the form of the different marriages to be undertaken. Kautilya gives instructions regarding women’s property as well as on widow remarriage and her property rights. For him, maintenance and ornaments constituted women’s property. For him, ‘maintenance is an endowment of a maximum of two thousand (*panas*) as to ornaments there is no limit.’<sup>77</sup> The chapter further discusses as to how the wife will use this endowment. The wife can make use of this property in maintaining her son, her daughter-in-law, or herself or whenever her husband is absent and has made no provision for her maintenance. But in certain cases such as calamities, disease and famine, in warding off dangers and in charitable acts, the husband, may make use of this property. Kautilya further says that if used in the *gandharva* and *asura* marriages, the husband shall return both with interest, if used in the *rakshasa* and *paichasa* marriages, he shall pay the penalty for the theft.<sup>78</sup> Regarding the property rights of women, Kautilya allowed that daughters can inherit the estate of their father, if they are born of pious marriages and there was no male off spring.<sup>79</sup> But widows were not accorded this right. Apart from the above, the text also describes living widows, their property rights, and their rights upon remarriage.<sup>80</sup> It is mentioned that the women shall settle on sons born to her from many husbands, hence she shall conserve her property in the same condition as she had received from her husband.<sup>81</sup> Apart from this, the text further states that when a husband is dead, the widow if she is willing to lead a life of piety she shall at once receive the endowment and ornaments and the remainder of dowry. If after receiving these she remarries

again, she shall be made to return both with interest. However when she is eager to start again a family, then she shall receive at the time of remarriage what was given by her father-in-law and her late husband.<sup>82</sup> But if she remarries against the wishes of her father-in-law, then she has to give up what was given to her by her father-in-law and her late husband.<sup>83</sup> The text indicates that widow remarriages was possible and was allowed in the society. On the other hand, the text also states that if the husband is alive and the wife is dead, then her sons and daughters shall divide the property among themselves. If there are no sons, the daughters shall be able to have the property.<sup>84</sup> Thus, this depicts a different picture where women were confined within the patriarchal domains of the society.

### Conclusion

From the above discussion, one can observe that women were usually restricted to the private space. Her duty was to look after the welfare of her husband and his family members. If she looks after her husband and worship him as a god then she shall be exalted in heaven. Brahmanical lawgivers had put forward that women should always be under the control of a male head which justifies that they were different from men. While men were regarded to be socially independent and can move out of the household this was not the case for women. Her sexuality was protected and guarded in the patriarchal household in order to maintain the family lineage. Furthermore a woman's body came to be valued only in terms of their reproductive function so as to maintain the lineage. Another reason for women to be controlled by males was their female nature. If one does not control her thereby bringing about instability in the social order. With the dominance of patriarchy one can find that gender relations were not fully restricted. Further in terms of economic access, women were limited only to their *stridhana* and inheritance rights. But there were few women those who belonged to the lower orders who took part in certain economic activities and were earning a livelihood. By studying the Brahmanical texts, it has been observed that the males were having more rights to property

but certain relief was given to wives, daughters and widows who were not denied of property.

### Notes (Endnotes)

- <sup>1</sup> Chakravarti, Uma. 2007. *Every Day Lives, Every Day Histories: Beyond the Kings and Brahmanas of 'Ancient India'*, Tulika Books, New Delhi.
- <sup>2</sup> Roy, Kumkum. 2010. *The Power of Gender and the Gender of Power*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.
- <sup>3</sup> Shah, Shalini. 2012. *The Making of Womanhood Gender Relations in the Mahabharata*, Manohar, New Delhi.
- <sup>4</sup> Tyagi, Jaya. 2008. *Engendering the Early Household Brahmanical Precepts in the Early Grhyasutras Middle of the First Millenium B.C.E.*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, pp. 120-121.
- <sup>5</sup> Manu IX.96. (Hereafter Manu) Reference is from Doniger, Wendy and Smith, Brian K. 2000. *The Laws of Manu*, Penguin Books, New Delhi; Olivelle, Patrick. 2004. *The Law Code of Manu*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- <sup>6</sup> Manu IX.33.
- <sup>7</sup> Manu IX.27.
- <sup>8</sup> Yaj. I.3.78. (Hereafter Yaj) Reference is from Vidyarnava, Late Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra (trans), 1918. *Yajnavalkya Smriti with the Commentary of Vijnanesvara Book 1 The Acharya Adhyaya*, The Panini Office Bhuvaneshvari Ashrama, Allahabad; Gharpure J.R.,(trans) 1939(Second Edition). *Yajnavalkya Smriti Volume II Part IV With the Commentaries of The Mitakshara by Vijnanesvara Bhikshu, the Viramitrodaya by Mitramisra and the Dipakalika by Sulapani Vyawaharadhyaya*, Bombay.
- <sup>9</sup> Yaj.I.3.78.
- <sup>10</sup> Manu III.262
- <sup>11</sup> Tyagi, Jaya.2008, p. 128.
- <sup>12</sup> Sheth, Surabhi D. 1992. 'Women's Sexuality: A Portrayal from Ancient Indian Literature,' *Manushi*, No. 71, Jul – Aug, p.19.
- <sup>13</sup> Lerner, Gerda.1986. *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Oxford University Press, New York, p.22.
- <sup>14</sup> Mathur, Kanchan. 2008. 'Body as Space, Body as Site: Bodily Integrity and Women's Empowerment in India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol.43, No.17 (Apr.26-May 2), p.55.

## 92 WOMEN IN BRAHMANICAL LITERATURE: SOME ASPECTS

- <sup>15</sup> Manu V.147-148; Manu.IX.3. A similar statement is given in the *Mahabharata*. See, *Mbh*, Anusasana Parva, Section XLVI, p.25.
- <sup>16</sup> Manu IX.6.
- <sup>17</sup> Manu IX.7.
- <sup>18</sup> Yaj. I.3.85.
- <sup>19</sup> *Mbh* Anusasana Parva Section XLIII, p.16. (Hereafter *Mbh*) Reference is from Ganguli, Kisari Mohan (trans), The Mahabharata of Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa available at [www.krishnapath.org/.../Mahabharata/Mahabharata-By\\_Kisari\\_Mohan\\_Ganguli.pdf](http://www.krishnapath.org/.../Mahabharata/Mahabharata-By_Kisari_Mohan_Ganguli.pdf) accessed on 18.12.2017 at 3.30 p.m.
- <sup>20</sup> *Mbh*, Anusasana Parva, Section XLVI, p.25.
- <sup>21</sup> *Mbh* Anusasana Parva , Section XX, p. 113.
- <sup>22</sup> This can be cited from the epic which states, 'Foregoing all excitement and carelessness in the presence of men, conceal thy inclinations by observing silence, and thou shouldst not stay or converse in private even with thy sons, Pradyumna and Samva.' See, *Mbh* Vana Parva Draupadi- Satyabhama Samvada Section CCXXXII, p.476.
- <sup>23</sup> *Mbh* Anusasana Parva Section CXXIII, p.254.
- <sup>24</sup> Manu IX.10.
- <sup>25</sup> Manu IX.11.
- <sup>26</sup> Yaj.I.3.84.
- <sup>27</sup> *Mbh* Adi Parva, Sambhava Parva, Section CXXII, p.254.
- <sup>28</sup> For details see, *Mbh* Adi parva Sambhava Parva Section CXXII, p.254.
- <sup>29</sup> Manu IX.15.
- <sup>30</sup> Manu IX.16; Manu IX.17; Manu II.213-215.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ram* Book 3, Chapter 13, p.30. (Hereafter *Ram* ) Reference is from Shastri, Hari Prasad (trans.), 1952. The Ramayana of Valmiki A Complete Modern English Translation Volume 1 Bala Kanda and Ayodhya Kanda, London; Shastri, Hari Prasad (trans.), 1957. The Ramayana of Valmiki A Complete Modern English Translation Volume 2 Aranyka Kanda, Kishkindha Kanda and Sundara Kanda, London; Shastri, Hari Prasad (trans.), 1959. The Ramayana of Valmiki A Complete Modern English Translation Volume 3 Yuddha Kanda and Uttara Kanda, London.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ram* Book 2, Chapter 39, p.247.

- <sup>33</sup> Some examples can be cited here, the female ascetic Anasuya the wife of Sage Atri mentions to Sita about denigrating women. See, *Ram Book 2 Chapter 117*, p.407; Queen Kaikeyi has been described as the destroyer and wicked woman by king Dasaratha. When Rama left for his exile she has been compared to a venomous serpent. See, *Ram Book 2 Chapter 12*, p.177; When Sita sent Lakshman for Rama's assistance, it can be noted that Lakshman was not willing to leave Sita alone. When Sita got angry at Lakshman, she said some cruel words to him in which he responded; ' . . . An ill-considered utterance from a woman causes no surprise. Negligent in her duty, fickle and peevish, a woman is the cause of dissension between father and son; truly I am unable to endure these words of thine that pierce my ears like flaming darts,...' For details see, *Ram Book 3 Chapter 45*, p.94.
- <sup>34</sup> *Mbh Anusasana Parva*, Section XXXVIII, p.4.
- <sup>35</sup> Bhishma narrates about the conversation between the Rishi Narada and the celestial courtesan Panchachuda where she goes on to tell about the true and eternal faults of women. For details see, *Mahabharata Anusasana Parva Section XXXVIII*, pp. 5-6; Further, Bhishma states: 'Woman is a blazing fire. She is the illusion . . . she is the sharp edge of the razor. She is poison. She is a snake. She is fire. She is verily, all these united together.' See, *Mbh Anusasana Parva Section XL*, p. 7; In the same Parva another description is made with regards to the female nature. For details see, *Mbh Anusasana Parva Section XLIII*, p.16.
- <sup>36</sup> Shalini Shah further argues, 'In fact, *pativrata dharma* was meant to provide the ideology to school women in this role. This dharma was conceived not as a self –denying passive faith based solely on unquestioned devotion to the husband...' For details see, Shah, Shalini. 2012, pp.103-104.
- <sup>37</sup> *Manu II.67*.
- <sup>38</sup> *Manu V.151*.
- <sup>39</sup> *Yaj. I. 3.77*.
- <sup>40</sup> *Yaj. I.3.87*.
- <sup>41</sup> *Mbh Anusasana Parva Section CXLVI*, p.317.
- <sup>42</sup> When the aged female Anasuya spoke to Sita when Rama and Sita came to the *ashrama* of Sage Atri she spoke that, '...She who is devoted to her spouse, whether in the city or forest, regardless whether he be a sinner or virtuous, that woman attains the highest region. Whether a husband be cruel, or the slave of desires, or poor, a virtuous wife will continue to worship him a god...' See, *Ram Book 2 Chapter 117*.

## 94 WOMEN IN BRAHMANICAL LITERATURE: SOME ASPECTS

- <sup>43</sup> Manu V. 154.
- <sup>44</sup> *Mbh* Adi Parva Vaivahika Parva Section CCI, p.395.
- <sup>45</sup> *Mbh* Anusasana Parva Section CXXIII, p.254.
- <sup>46</sup> Manu states ‘Thus when a wife who obeys her husband she is exalted in heaven and should never do anything that might displease her husband, when he is alive or dead.’ Manu V. 155-156.
- <sup>47</sup> Manu V. 160.
- <sup>48</sup> Manu IX.29
- <sup>49</sup> Manu IX.30
- <sup>50</sup> *Mbh* Adi Parva Sambhava Parva, Section LXXXII, p. 180.
- <sup>51</sup> *Mbh*, Sabha Parva, Section LXX, pp.137-138; *Mbh*, Udyoga parva, Section XXXIII, p.62; Manu VIII.416.
- <sup>52</sup> Gaur, Kavita. 2016. ‘Dynamics of Women’s Work in the *Sastric* Sources: Household and Beyond’ in Vijaya Ramaswamy (ed.), *Women and Work in Pre-Colonial India*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p.41.
- <sup>53</sup> Gaur, Kavita. 2016, p.41.
- <sup>54</sup> Manu 8.362.
- <sup>55</sup> Gaur, Kavita.2016, p.41.
- <sup>56</sup> AS.II.25.38. (Hereafter AS) Reference to the *Arthasastra* is from Kangle, R.P. 1992(Reprint). *The Kautilya Arthasastra Part II*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi.
- <sup>57</sup> AS. III.4.22.
- <sup>58</sup> AS. III.4.23.
- <sup>59</sup> AS. II. 27.25.
- <sup>60</sup> AS. III.11.23.
- <sup>61</sup> Gaur, Kavita. 2016. p. 40.
- <sup>62</sup> *Stridhana* means the wealth of a woman to designate the resources that married woman could claim. For details, see Roy, Kumkum. 2009. *Historical Dictionary of Ancient India*, Scarecrow Press, Maryland, pp.304-05.
- <sup>63</sup> Manu VIII.28-29.
- <sup>64</sup> According to him, the *stridhana* consists of six types; what a woman receives at the nuptial fire, what she receives when she is taken away, what she is

given as a token of love, and what she receives from her brothers, mother and father. See, Manu IX.194.

<sup>65</sup> Manu IX.195.

<sup>66</sup> Manu IX.192-193.

<sup>67</sup> Shah, Shalini. 2012, pp.50-51.

<sup>68</sup> Marriage was recognized as the most important rite of passage for women and one of the important one for men within the Brahmanical tradition. In the Brahmanical literature especially the *Dharmasutra* and *Dharmashastra* contains a list of about six to eight different forms of marriages. These are *Brahma*, *Prajapatya*, *Arsa*, *Daiva*, *Gandharava*, *Asura*, *Raksasa* and *Paisaca*. For details see, Roy, Kumkum. 2009, p.200; Manu III.20-21; Yaj. I.3.58-61; *Mbh* Adi Parva, Sambhava parva Section, LXXIII, p.155; *Mbh. Adi Parva, Section CII, p. 219*; *Mbh* Anusasana Parva Section LXIV, p.17.

<sup>69</sup> Manu IX.196.

<sup>70</sup> Manu IX.198-199.

<sup>71</sup> Yaj.II.8.135,136.

<sup>72</sup> Yaj. I.3.76.

<sup>73</sup> *Mbh* Anusasana Parva, Section XLVII, p.27.

<sup>74</sup> Yaj.II.8.117.

<sup>75</sup> Yaj. II.8.124.

<sup>76</sup> Yaj.II.8.117.

<sup>77</sup> AS.III.14-15.

<sup>78</sup> AS. III.2.16-18.

<sup>79</sup> AS. III.5.9-10.

<sup>80</sup> Kautilya has dealt on this in detail in Book III chapter 2.

<sup>81</sup> AS. III.2.31.

<sup>82</sup> AS. III.2.19-21.

<sup>83</sup> AS. III.2.23.

<sup>84</sup> AS. III.2.36.

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