



A review of the text *Manusmriti* on the role of women in the home

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Abstract

After a person reaches the head of the family status, the text clearly indicates the role of both sexes and also allows the head of the family to have control over the family and the woman's only role after becoming a wife has been to help her husband while the resting functions are performed by her husband. Although the importance of men in the normative texts is described, the role of women who have participated in society cannot be ignored. Therefore, the husband is often seen as the defender of patriarchal ideals and should consider that the patriarchal rules, as described in the texts, are collectively practiced at home. Although the householder has played an important role in the functioning of the home, the importance of women in the home cannot be ignored. Since marriage remained important for the continuation of lineage, the text clearly indicates that the wife was considered of great importance. Since the text was written mainly by the priestly class, they tried to show how men and women should behave in society, but what is most significant is that the text can also be seen as an indicator of how gender relations are emphasized during the post-Maurya period. Therefore, by focusing on how women are treated at home, this document attempts to develop the way women have been represented in the early textual traditions of India. Since this period has seen a series of developments, the gender issue cannot be ignored. One of these areas is the house where one can see that the patriarchal institutions held in high esteem, trying to create a patriarchal status to keep women within the private sphere, especially at home.

Keywords: marriage, household, gender, manusmriti, women, patriarchy

Introduction

While this period has seen several expansions in various areas that mark this phase as one of the most important in Indian history, it has been observed that the observation of society during this period reflects a lack of commitment to gender relations. Patriarchy also continued to control society during this period and the marginalization of women from the public sphere is evident from the fact that historical sources of the period are silent on the participation of women in a range of activities. Women apparently function as pawns in the hands of male relatives; however, they participated in the continuation of the institutions due to the pressure they had to carry out. Therefore, since the early texts of India were mostly centered on man, this adds difficulty in interpreting them. In the history of India, the period between 200 BC and 300 BC, a period of about five hundred years, saw a series of developments, both in terms of political, social or economic processes, and in the fields of art and architecture. The texts completely ignore the contribution of women and constantly project a gloomy image of women as recorded in the texts. Therefore, the attitude of women seen in these texts is contradictory because the role played by women in society cannot be ignored, but compilers have clearly tried to prevent them from taking part in society.

Therefore, in this article we will try to investigate in the text *Manusmriti* who tried to maintain the patriarchal institution to keep women within the domestic sphere and were subordinated by their male members in the home. The normative texts that were written during this period, it is

observed that the compilers of the texts have clearly defined the roles of the members of each of the varna, as well as for men and women on how they should behave in society. When a person enters the head of the household, his position changes completely, which makes them gain a more prominent position in society and a greater emphasis on the home? The birth of daughters was often considered a burden for the family and the child's birth was often welcome. Also the control over women's sexuality and their reproductive capacity to continue the lineage of the patriarchal home was considered important and, therefore, the emphasis was placed on women's sexuality.

Therefore, understanding the representation of women in society, especially in ancient societies, is difficult because it opens up a number of questions about whether women have actually recognized themselves in the same way that male compilers have indicated or are perceived as a different way. In society it is very difficult to understand because we have no evidence to support our arguments. It can be noted here that the birth of the son meant that he could continue with the lineage of the family and could also offer offers to the ancestors (pins).

The Text

The text establishes social and moral guidelines regarding social responsibilities and obligations with emphasis on the representation of life as "how it is and how it should be lived". It must be taken into account that this is a normative text and to what extent the laws have been practiced in reality, which

further increases the difficulty for the whole debate on the possibility of seeking a social reconstruction of a society based on this text. The Manusmriti (hereinafter referred to as MS) is one of the most important and controversial literary works of ancient India, containing 2,685 verses organized into twelve books. It is a text of different paternity and the acceptable date for its composition is between c. 200 BC - CE 200. In general, the Manusmriti demonstrates the process of reconsolidation of an ancient tradition underway with an emphasis on the reorientation of that legacy around the "new principles of life".

A text can also be defined as a cultural artifact based on the cultural tradition it involves and on the information it retains. In his recent work, Tyagi stressed that when a text or an epigraph is created, it leads to the imagination behind its creation. An attempt to create a patriarchal hierarchy is evident in the text in which women were confined to the domestic sphere and were subordinated to the home and were left with a range of roles such as economic, social, and the role of decision making. He goes on to say that when you read a text, you understand why a particular topic is selected compared to others, the mode of representation and the genre chosen for the representation of a particular socio-cultural experience also reveal information. You can see that the text discusses a range of topics and aims to cover a wide range of human behaviors in which gender relations are a very significant part. What can be emphasized in the text is that most of the established instructions are mainly for women belonging to the upper layer of society.

The importance of the house at the beginning of India

In the Indian context, scholars and historians have been very interested in home study in India and have tried to describe how gender relations have been structured and challenged at home. A study of the importance of the home in ancient society has been a problem under development in recent times. There are a number of scholars who have tried to study the house in ancient societies. It should be noted that an important aspect that has influenced the social stratification that preceded the advent of the Christian era focused on the evolving role of grihapati (the head of the family).

The Sanskrit word grihapati appears from the Rgveda onwards and is used for the owner of the house, i.e. the owner of the house and the owner of the house was called grihatpni. Historians such as Kumkum Roy and Jaya Tyagi have opened up some problems in home study in ancient India. But before studying the Brahminical society one cannot ignore the house or the grha, which was considered a very important part of society. Later the word appears in Astadhyayi of Panini, which means the owner of the house. Suvira Jaiswal said the first Vedic grihapati was not a common family head and also stressed that the change of nomadic pastoralism to sedentary agriculture led to the transformation of grihapati as the head of a complex house structured on patriarchal principles. As a result, the family is seen as an area for organizing reproduction and production and for transmitting successive generations to the control of the property of the lineage.

Since patriarchy was very dominant during this phase, the supremacy of the male head in the house was clear, so the relationship between the two sexes becomes partial, which

leads to the submission of women. Ideally, the grihapati or the male head of the family grha chair, defined in terms of the presence of the wife and of the children in particular and offspring in general. The grha was also seen as a unit that controlled and used productive resources, between land and livestock, and guarantees the transmission of such resources from one generation to another through patrilineal descent and consumption and organized distribution. Likewise, a home study in early Indian companies cannot be omitted without mentioning the family that played an important role. Therefore, since the family organization was patriarchal, there is a very significant relationship between women and family life. Therefore, the study of gender relations within the family is undeniable by the understanding of women in society.

The role of the head of the family and the role of women in the home

The text clearly states that a man, after finishing his training with the guru, must enter the head of the household and then begin to gather resources to help support the family and carry out daily routines at home. Since people in the other three stages of life are supported every day by the knowledge and food of the head of the family, therefore, the life stage of the head of the family is the best. The Dharma Shastra, which was dominated by the reproduction code of the species in the nucleus of the father of the family, was given to glorify the state of the grhastha and to push the asramas of vanaprastha and sannyasa into the background.

Entry to the house was mainly by birth or marriage. A woman who is not a relative of her mother's food, nor belongs to the same lineage as her father, and who is a virgin is recommended for marriage only to those born twice. After a man enters the stage of the head of the family, one must observe what qualities he should see in a woman who will become his wife. The choice that a man makes to choose a bride for himself is very important and the text clearly deals with the details of the type of girl that should be chosen for marriage. The text also mentions the kind of girl a man should avoid before getting married. The text also notes what kind of woman should avoid a man born twice before getting married. The text even mentions that a twice-born man (dvija) should marry only a wife who is of the same caste and has the correct vows.

Therefore, getting married and having children was a central responsibility of the head of the family, so women were important only as wives and as bearers of children. Like a girl who has red hair or has an extra limb or who is sick or does not have body hair or has too much hair or talks too much, who does not miss any part of her body and will not marry any woman if she does not He does not have a brother or his father is unknown. The text also states that a man should marry a woman who does not belong to the same as he.

One of the reasons why early marriages have taken place for women is because this phase has seen a number of foreign elements in society. In order to prevent women from coming into contact with foreign races that were slowly absorbing society, the conforming normative texts showed that women had to marry at an early age. From the early stages, even before the composition of Manusmriti, emphasis was placed on the first marriage of the girls. The text states that a man of

thirty should marry a twelve-year-old girl who loves her heart and a twenty-four-year-old man will marry an eight-year-old girl. Marriage was considered very essential and important in Brahman society. Likewise, he goes on to say that when a woman marries a man of a superior class; a woman of the ruling class must grasp an arrow, because an ordinary woman, a whip and a servant, must keep to the edge of her dress. As seen in previous normative texts, such as the Dharmakutras, as well as in the Dharmashastra, a special emphasis was placed on the need for an ideal wife who could help her husband manage the house and raise children.

Therefore, the main role of women was limited to their sexuality, so through the institution of marriage marked an important change in their role as daughters to wives. The importance of clearly choosing a wife is carefully mentioned in the text as it determines the progeny. The importance of the wife is also clearly mentioned in the other verses of the text. The ritual of marriage was considered very important. The texts mention that the transforming ritual of taking the bride by the hand is prescribed for women of the same class; know that this (next) procedure is for the ritual of marriage with women of another kind. His wife gives birth to a son who is like the man with whom he makes love; that's why the husband should take care of his wife to keep her offspring clean. Likewise, another verse of the text also states that women were created to have children and men to follow the line. His wife is called jaya. As the wife is the most important focal point of attention among the different categories of women as seen in the normative texts; Symbols, rituals and rules focus on the person of the wife.

The wife is the visible form of what holds together the generation of children, the care of them when they are born and the ordinary affairs of life. In the same way, if both sexes submit to a bad marriage, abandonment of the rites and lack of study of the Vedas, families cease to exist. The following verses continue to state that the importance of the wife in the house is that if the wife is radiant, the whole family is radiant, but if the wife is not radiant, then the family is not radiant. Therefore, a woman is recognized in society as a wife, when she marries her husband only when she becomes a social identity. An extra emphasis on the importance of the wife in the house is clearly mentioned. The text says that in the family the husband is always satisfied with his wife and wife with her husband. As a result, only through marriage is the only ritual prescribed for a woman.

Because, together with her husband, she performs the rituals and generates a child, therefore, it is only through these two important acts that define her as a social being in society. Women were also regarded as houses' lamps, worthy of reverence and very blessed by their progeny. Therefore, the role played by the wife at home tends to be ignored by the text that clearly describes a gender bias. The notion of purity was considered of profound importance in the Brahmanic texts. The description of menstruating women in Brahmanical texts reveals hatred towards these women. Women who were menstruating were considered unclean. There are a number of verses in the text that clearly indicate this aspect. This shows a marked distinction between both sexes, in which the males were considered pure and the menstruation of women was considered a symbol of impurity. Controlling women was

considered of primary importance as represented in the Dharmashastra.

He goes on to say that a woman must be supervised by her father during her childhood, by her husband in married life and by his old son. The fact that women were not independent, as indicated in the text, shows that women were kept at home and that the role they played at home was very limited compared to their male counterparts. There was a constant fear among Brahman writers about the limits that were kept for women as women were kept under control, given the most important functions. In the text, it is clearly stated that even the spouses should protect their wives by considering them their highest duty.

It can be found in the text that efforts have been made to win the support of women who were subordinate. This was ensured through the prescription of gifts of ornaments, clothes and food on festive occasions and through the guarantee that serving the husband was his only duty that would lead to the attainment of heaven or the world reached by the husband. Gender inequality in society can be seen from the time when men and women who had not even completed marriage and would soon be married; His main goal was to give birth to a child. When a husband enters a wife, he becomes an embryo and is born on earth. While women's procreative role was clearly important, even that inside the house evidently acquired a new meaning. This is reflected both in the insistence to limit the women inside the house, and in assigning them a specific role within them.

The preference for the birth of the child is described in one of the verses of the text in which a faithful wife who is married according to the law and is dedicated to reverence, the ancestors can eat the half ball of the ritual, if desired. Get pregnant of a child but for children born of the remaining marriages they are born as cruel children and hate the Vedas and religion. The birth of daughters seems to be ignored or neglected. It can be seen in the way the different phases of the boy's education were celebrated. So he will give birth to a son who will live long and who will have fame, wealth and progeny, a man of lucidity and religion. Therefore, the birth of children has been taken into great consideration when the text states that the birth of the child who was born through different types of marriages, especially the first four marriages, is well educated in the Vedas and is considered highly valued. From educated men it should be noted that the birth of the daughters has not been looked at completely. In the text, Manu considers the daughter to be the highest object of tenderness.

But one must be careful in considering this acceptance because the birth of the child has been more favored than the daughters. But for the children who are born of the remaining marriages they are born as cruel children and hate the Vedas and religion. The birth of daughters seems to be ignored or overlooked by the way in which the different phases of the boy's education were celebrated. The initiation rite, the upanayana was performed by men, while the rites were not intended for the female counterpart. Before cutting the umbilical cord of the child, the birth rate is performed and he eats honey, gold and butter with the Vedic verses. This verse clearly indicates a gender bias when this has been overlooked compared to its female counterparts. Only in one verse of the

text is it said that in naming a girl, when naming a woman, the names given must be easy to pronounce, do not have an obvious meaning and are auspicious; They have to fascinate the mind and the heart, end in a long vowel and contain a word of blessings. The emphasis placed on the performance of domestic sacrifices in the home indicates that the home is a sacred institution where rituals have had a profound emphasis. Although the householder was mostly confined to the home, the women were clearly marginalized in the execution of the sacrifices. After entering the stage of the head of the family, the head of the family must also make the domestic sacrifices and the five great sacrifices (panchamahayajna) according to the rules and do their daily cooking. Suvira Jaiswal stressed that the displacement of women from the Srauta rituals and the abuse of their role by male priests can be seen in the later Vedic texts which, according to her, have been reported by a number of scholars. After having performed the ritual of the propitiatory offering, the head of the family must first feed a guest and, according to the rules, give alms to a beggar and a student caste of the Vedas.

When giving alms, the family head born twice gains a reward for merit that is the same as the reward for merit earned by giving a cow to a guru according to the rule. Although it is noted that women do not have the right to make any sacrifice for themselves, the text makes some exceptions: at night, the wife can make propitiatory offerings of hallowed food, even if without reciting any of the Vedic verses, so that called the ritual of all gods is prescribed for morning and evening. The activities assigned to women were devalued and this was evident in the concept of the five slaughterhouses within the grha. According to Manu, the head of the family (grhastha) has five "slaughterhouses", the fireplace, and the stone from the millstone, the broom, the mortar and the pot of water. The system of initiation and submission to the guru to learn the Vedic scriptures allowed their continuation and exclusive control of Brahman's post while marginalizing women by denying them the right to learn the Vedas.

Since the initiation was for the men of the three upper vara, it can be seen that the text of this period was also obsessed with the birth of the male child. In other words, the equipment necessary for routine domestic activities has been conceived as a contaminant and it is likely that this association has spread to those who use them. By using these he is bound to the chains of sin, so he must make up for it by performing the five great daily sacrifices. But these are the "sinful" places around which the life of a common housewife rotates. The offer to the ancestors must be sent diligently to those who are based on knowledge. This verse clearly indicates that only the men of the house can perform this ritual because their female counterparts could not perform this ritual because they did not have access to Vedic learning.

The role of the upanayana in the Brahmanical tradition that has been implanted and rooted in the social strata cannot be underestimated. In the early Vedic period Upanayana marked the beginning of school for girls and boys, but in later stages women were denied and with this the writings became inaccessible to them. This entailed the limitation of their religious rights. Therefore, the wife at home had no right to the sacrifices made with her husband and had neither the experience nor the right to pronounce the Vedic verses.

Therefore, from an early age to men has been assigned a position to play a distinctive role in society. Should there be a child who has crossed the other side of the Veda while his father does not know the Vedas by heart or the father who has crossed the other side of the Veda while his son does not know the Veda by heart? It should be understood that who has the father who knows the Vedas by heart is superior, but who also deserves respect for the reverence due to the verses of the Vedas.

We see that as young men have been educated in Vedic learning for women, this cycle should be performed without Vedic verses. The ritual of marriage is traditionally known as the Vedic transformative ritual for women, the service to her husband is (the equivalent of) living with a guru and household chores are the rites of fire. The text also clearly indicates that women had no role to play, as they were totally excluded from any formal training or learning that would allow them to play the same role as men in society. Women were put in the background when they learned the Vedas there indicating a gender bias against women in society. Because this distinction has been made from an early age, it has prevailed throughout life, which shows that women play no role in social, ritual or political terms. Therefore, the control of males of the upper caste on Vedic learning.

Summary and conclusion

In conclusion, life at home as shown in the text does not offer many options for women. The only way for her to be excluded from the family was only through death. It can be said that the development of Brahmanical ideas and philosophy as described in the text marks an important stage that has attempted to establish the models for the ideal grha that families should follow mainly for those who belonged to the upper strata of society. Although there are some cases in which it turns out that women have opted for the home only if they join the heretical sects. It can also be discovered that women who join the heretical sect have received very little attention from adherents.

Therefore, he guaranteed that the patriarchal rules in the house were held strictly in the hands of the male chief, since they had only the right to make various sacrifices and to participate in the various activities of society. It should be noted that although women have limited roles to perform at home as seen in the text, one must take a more objective approach to looking at women beyond the roles they play at home. Although it is noted that women have not played any major role in the home, as noted in the text, there are some verses in the text that indicate that women were respected at home. Therefore, from the text, it can be clearly stated that a standard model has been proposed in which men and women should perform in society.

References

1. This statement is very clear in the normative texts that were written in the periods before the composition of the Manusmriti, where the main emphasis is on the birth of children with respect to the birth of their daughters.
2. It can be noted that in most regulatory texts, compilers stressed that the central or principal role of women was only as wives and not as daughters and that they placed

- more emphasis on their reproductive roles.
3. All references on Manusmriti come from Wendy Doniger and Brian. K. Smith, *The Laws of Manu*, Penguin Books, New Delhi, 2000.
 4. *Ibid.*, xvii.
 5. Regarding the time period of MS, there has been a debate among scholars on the composition of MS. Dharmasastra.
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 7. *Ibid.*, xxxv.
 8. Here, Jaya Tyagi referred to the Puranic texts (with reference to Matsyamahapurana) while studying these texts, and makes an observation looking at the content and context of the text while examining the participation of women in ritual traditions. For more details, see Jaya Tyagi, *Response and Compliance Agency Recovery for Puranic Traditions*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2014, 4.
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