



Women Education in Ancient Times

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ABSTRACT

In ancient time education for women was unique. They enjoyed high society and independence life in society. Even they were choice their husband, like Sita. The customs for early wedding and enforced widowhood were not prevalent in vedic India. There were so many learned women in ancient India. They were freely access their education in ancient time.

The manuscript briefly highlights the status, specialties, and shortcomings of Women Education in Ancient Times.

1 Introduction

In ancient time education for women was unique. They enjoyed high society and independence life in society. Even they were choice their husband, like Sita. The customs for early wedding and enforced widowhood were not prevalent in vedic India.

There were so many learned women in ancient India. They were freely access their education in ancient time.

In ancient time there were informal way used for education. The informal agencies in ancient India were family, interaction with person, neighborhood, society, etc. Women learned homemade work in their home. They taught by their mother and other family's member. Informal education is natural and incidental. It is beneficial in today's world also.

In ancient time women had freedom to structure their own experiences and knowledge in natural way according to their interest and need.

2 Women Education in Ancient India

As we know, women in India also have been facing so many difficulties in society because of masculine principal. They have been struggling for equal rights, opportunities and importance. But because of so many reform movements such as Jainism for women resolved the condition of Indian women. Therefore, they used to take important decision and certain important rights were given to them.

In Vedic period, women educational system was very much developed and the main subject taught was the Veda. As a result of women education in ancient India so

many intelligent women were founded like Gargi, Maitreyi, Apala, Urvisi, Sulabha, Ghosa, Lilavati, Saswati, kshana and others. Indian women participated in vedic sacrifices, utter mantras, debates and discussion with others knowledgeable person like in ancient society. Gargi was a participant next to men such as Uddalaka Arni. Lilavati was a great mathematician of ancient India. Women Education in Ancient India was very helpful to originated many talented women with significant knowledge, authority and equal rights with men in respect of education.

In ancient time Indian women used to receive general literary and other cultural education. The family was the only educational institution for women but after sometime later a class of women teachers came into picture. In ancient time the sometimes the boys and girls were also educated together for higher education because from the 'Malatimadhava' of Bhavabhuti, we find out that the nun Kamandaki was educated along with Bhurivasu and Devarata and from his another book 'Uttara-Ram-Charit' also we learn that Atreyi receiving education along with Kus and Lav.

3 Women Education in Advancing Time of History

It is not easy to determine the level of education imparted in women during early vedic period but Upanyana custom was essential for women thus a certain amount of vedic and literary education were imparting to all the girls.

But in later times Upanayana had become a formality so the prohibition of Upanayana was ruinous to the religious status of women

and now they were stated weak to recite vedic mantras and perform vedic sacrifices. The discontinuance of Upanayana was enhanced by the lowering of the marriageable age like in the vedic period girl was married at about the age of 16-17 but in the later vedic period girl was married at the age of 8-9. Thus, early marriage of girls gave a death-blow to women education.

The female education in India received a huge slow down in the Indian society. The female from rich, upper-class and royal families were given a fairly good literary education but not vedic literature.

The Brahmanical society also became rigid and conservative from the arrival of foreigners. Therefore, women lost their freedom and now they were restricted within the home. As a result the right of education for Indian women came to be denied.

4 Women Education in Manu age

At the time of Manu, the situation of Indian women was very poor. At that time they were totally depended on males of her families. From the book of Manu ('Mausmriti' and 'Manusanghita') women dependent position was clearly recognized. Manu was also stated about Indian women that, "by a girl, or by a young women, or even by an old one, nothing must be done independently'.

Manu further described about Indian women situation that, "day and night must women be kept in dependent on the males of their families. Women's father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth, and her sons protects her in old age; a women is never fit for independence".

Thus, at the time of Manu, Indian women were in low self-esteem and they were not allowed to study of Vedas. Now early marriages had become tradition.

5 Women Education in Buddha and Manu Era

There are so many examples to show that the Buddha and Manu shared the low opinion of women. It is correct that Buddhist nunneries didn't help much to spread education amongst women because their number was very few.

When Buddhism was at its zenith in India it did very little for women education. But, those nuns who joined his order received instruction in the Buddhist doctrines, reading and writing. Thus, many obtained higher proficiency in learning. There are also several references in Buddhist literature to the intellectual achievement of numerous Buddhist nuns. These Buddhist nuns even became famous as teachers and scholars

6 Women Education as a Wide Spread

The girl education for an ordinary family expected was one which fitted their girl to complete her duties and responsibilities in the home of her husband. The duties of girl were limited like to rearing up her children, clean her house, preparing food for the family and looking after the home. Thus, the education of women was completely domestic. So, now Indian women used to receive education at homes.

But our Indian literature of all the periods refers to educated women who took part in public affairs and showed finest skill in fine arts and military arts for example

Chandragupta Maurya had women bodyguards. The female of upper-class were received education from their elders or family priests. Many female mendicants used to learn some Sanskrit.

The some India dancing women in the south who were very clever and emotionally attached with temples, they were received some education related to dancing and music. These semi-prostitute women learnt to read, sing and dance. The education of these women is a very ancient ritual in India. In the 'Arthashastra' of Kautilya refer to the education of the prostitutes.

Buddhism also had its effect on the education of women in India. The Buddhist monastic order included not only monks but also nuns (bhikshunis). He had no doubt in reflected his opinions which were against the independence and education of women. It was clearly showed from his life's example when his aunt, Mahaprajapati expressed her desire to join his order but he refused thrice. At last, at the frequent appeal of Ananda who was his first favourite disciple, the Buddha agreed. However, he expressed his sorrow that the admission of women would destroy his work.

7 Conclusion

Women Education in ancient times has seen many transitions and transformations. Most era have supported education of women but in domestic means.

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