



THEORIZING WOMEN : MANU'S PERSPECTIVE

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Indus valley civilization is not described and defined on a positive perspective, as the society failed in “theorizing women” optimistically by encouraging sexual politics. “Women”, are a subject of discussion, curiosity, subjugation, oppression and objectification in the patriarchal societies of the Indus valley civilization. The great civilization celebrates a legacy of women and her sacrifices; she is the epitome of sacrifice and a metaphorical symbol of sacrifice in the contours of the great civilization. Every woman is trained to fit into the frame of sacrifice, as a woman, she needs to sacrifice her wishes and live for the welfare of her family. The culture of India is actually theorized in golden words in the famous scripture “Manu Shashtra”.

Vedas are the first recorded scriptures authored by the supreme almighty “Brahman”, hence they were never questioned and argued on. Manu being the Tenth Son of the creator was given the power to design a society; his book on the designing of a society, rules and regulations to be specially followed have been mentioned in his book “Manu Shashtra”.

This book of commandments had to be followed by the people of the Indus valley civilization and eventually they were called as Hindu. This book was considered very sacred and people

were influenced to feel pious about it. This book was framed to control men and women and their social behavior; this book also promoted the importance of living together in a civilized manner.

Manu Shashtra is one of the few records that theorized woman and their roles; which latter led to the misinterpretation of these verses and the depletion of status of woman in the history of the great civilization.

The roles of women have been significantly theorized, into prominent roles of a mother, wife, daughter, sister, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, co-sister, grandmother. All of them were taught to fit into the sacrificing roles. A web of stories was woven to set an example of an ideal mother, daughter, sister, daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, wife, grandmother, and granddaughter. The list of relationships continues, each relationship is defined and described in this book of commandments.

These commandments are deeply instilled in the mindset of woman, by the woman coordinators of culture, the sexual politics took its birth in every family as a standard norm that vividly described the male dominance and female oppression. Manu Shashtra declared the role and rules that had to be implemented on the women and it was declared and assumed illusion of the society that woman is a weaker sex and needs to be taken care off.

While defending Manu smritis divine code of conduct for men and women, apologists often quote the verse: “*yatr naryastopojyantay, ramantaytatr devta [3/56] (where women are honored, gods are pleased to reside in that household),*

but they deliberately forget all those verses that are full of prejudice, hatred and discrimination against women.

Here are some of the ‘celebrated’ derogatory comments about women in the Manu smriti :

1. “Swabhavēv narinam” – 2/213. It is the nature of women to seduce men in this world; for that reason the wise are never unguarded in the company of females.

In the above said lines; it’s a clear demarcation of the woman’s nature that a wise man is never safe in a woman’s company as she seduces men but in reality, till

date, it's the vice versa and there are ample examples to prove this point. One big example is that of Draupadi being assaulted in front of so called wise men. My question to all the apologists is that how could they consider such a woman as the transmitter and queen of culture?

The verse from the divine book of "code of conduct" is completely contradictory and purely judgmental.

2. "Avidvamsamlam....." – 2/214. Women true to their class and character are capable of leading astray men in this world, not only a fool but even a learned and wise man, both become slaves of desire.

This verse indicates the objectification of women; as an object of desire and pleasure, this verse highlights the spinelessness of the superior sex; in other words a man fails to have control on his senses in spite of being a wiser sex. Such definitions have described women negatively in the great books and mythologies. She has also stood the pointless blame game all through the history.

The verse indirectly tells us that women are born smart hence they have the capability of leading astray men in this world; which indirectly means that a woman could act as a guide to a wayward.

3. "Matraswastra" – 2/215. Wise people should avoid sitting alone with one's mother, daughter or sister. Since carnal desire is always strong, it can lead to temptation.

On the one hand relationships have been celebrated in the Indian scenario but the above verse questions the existence of these relationships and their significance; these relationships only bifurcate human beings from animals. If men had no control on their carnal desires then how are they different from animals? and why are women held responsible for a man's erratic and erotic behavior?

Just because it is quoted in the divine code of conduct that men must never sit with their mother, sister or a daughter, the code of conduct continues to be practiced; it is invariably proved by the psychoanalyst's that only a psychopath craves to have a carnal relationship with his own mother, daughter and sister...

– 3/10. Wise men should not marry women who do not have a brother and whose parents are not socially well known.

This verse promotes gender bias and creates a helplessness among the fathers of a daughter; such superstitions indirectly turn the fathers into slaves of the society in the name civilian code of conduct; this also highlights the inequality and the ill-treatment a father goes through as he doesn't have a son; apparently a woman is blamed for not bearing a son.

– 3/11. Wise men should marry only women who are free from bodily defects, with beautiful names, grace/gait like an elephant, moderate hair on the head and body, soft limbs and small teeth.

This verse is hilarious and would definitely not fit the description of an ideal woman, if the external appearance of a woman mattered and not her conduct then the definition of beauty is thoroughly baseless and more seems like a matrimonial add featuring the requirements in a woman and not a life partner.

– 5/150. A female child, young woman or old woman is not supposed to work independently even at her place residence.

These lines are bizarre as they declare that a woman doesn't deserve freedom in their respective houses. She is a property/jewel that needs to be guarded all the time or could also be the fact that they didn't deserve freedom or get a chance to explore their skills and strengths with a possibility to challenge a man's world

– 5/151. Girls are supposed to be in the custody of their father when they are children, women must be under the custody of their husband when married and under the custody of her son as widows. In no circumstances, she allowed to assert herself independently. This verse indicates that she is no equal to man and should be always under his control. These verses created a history and women are still battling it with more or less similar constraints in life.

– 5/157. Men may be lacking virtue, be sexual perverts, immoral and devoid of any good qualities, and yet women must constantly worship and serve their husbands.

Gender bias very well established under the concept of “Pati Parmeshwar”, a woman is taught to worship her husband as her deity and serve him and please him with no self respect and dignity. She is very clearly asked to succumb to the oppression and be ignorant and non-repellant in the name of culture and tradition. It was in built in women to accept oppression as fate and destiny due to such historical verses.

– 5/158. Women have no divine right to perform any religious ritual, nor make vows or observe a fast. Her only duty is to obey and please her husband and she will for that reason alone be exalted in heaven.

This is one of the verse that describes the roles a woman needs to play and she has successively fit into these roles and portraits of women created by the oppressors, her duties were assigned to her and was pushed into the world of darkness and treachery for ages as she hardly realized her ambition or her motto of life and lead a life designed by somebody else. The concept of heaven was used as reward to the obedient women, wife, daughter and a mother. The satire is never be happy when you are alive because you believe in happiness and peace after death and women have left a record of such mockery to their existence itself.

– 5/160. At her pleasure [after the death of her husband], let her emaciate her body by living only on pure flowers, roots of vegetables and fruits. She must not even mention the name of any other men after her husband has died.

These Verses have monitored inequality; men can have more than one wife and can remarry after the death of the wives but a woman is never allowed to move on in her life because happiness is not served to her and all her life she needs to mourn the death of her master, lord, and a least life partner and prove to the hypocrite society of her being an ideal woman. There are instances were a woman is forced into the funeral pyre of her husband all alive and latter worshipped in the name of the great Sati. Such theories have created a sad history of the lives of the woman.

– 9/6. It is the duty of all husbands to exert total control over their wives. Even physically weak husbands must strive to control their wives.

Such verses created more of dominance and less of equality and created a wave of being the superior sex and a patriarch born to dominate a woman and rule the world as per his norms.

9/18. While performing namkarm and jatkarm, Vedic mantras are not to be recited by women, because women are lacking in strength and knowledge of Vedic texts. Women are impure and represent falsehood.

A woman was declared foolish and ignorant by birth hence she was never allowed to learn to read or write neither was she allowed to chant mantras and was considered impure and unfortunately this belief of woman being impure continues till date in the name of god.

There are verses that declare that a man must never lead his life with a fighter cock woman as she would set the example of revolt which might cause trouble to his patriarchal rule and society.

These are few example of women being theorized in the manuscripts of the great Manu Shastra and the effects are still prominently prevalent in few areas and a slow shift in the status of women is being noticed shifting from darkness to light.

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