



அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னிதழ்

(Peer Reviewed Journal Multidisciplinary)

ISSN: 2582-399X



காலாண்டு இதழ்
(ஐனவரி, ஏப்ரல், ஜூலை, அக்டோபர்)
ஆகிய மாதங்களில் வெளிவரும்

அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னிதழ்

Aran

International e Journal of Tamil Research

EDITORIAL BOARD

Founder / Editor in Chief

Dr PRIYAKRISHNAN

Publisher

MR P. JAYAKRISHNAN

Editorial Board Members

Dr V SELVAKUMAR

Professor And Head of The Department of Maritime History and Marine Archaeology Tamil University, Thanjavur, TamilNadu, India
selvakumar.v@tamiluniversity.ac.in

Dr. S. KAVITHA

School of Indian Languages and Comparative Literature, Tamil University, Thanjavur. TamilNadu, India

Dr.K.DAYANIDHI

Assistant Professor & Head i/c , Department of Vaishnavism , University of Madras, TamilNadu, India. dayanidhi@unom.ac.in

Dr O.MUTHIAH

Professor of Tamil, The Gandhigram Rural Institute (Deemed to be University) Gandhigram - 624 302 Dindigul District, TAMIL NADU

DR UMADEVI

Professor In Tamil, Department of Modern Indian Languages And Literary Studies University of Delhi, Delhi . dumadevi@mil.du.ac.in

அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னிதழ்

Aran

International e Journal of Tamil Research

EDITORIAL BOARD

DR JAGADEESAN.T.

Assistant Professor of Tamil, Department of Indian Languages,
Faculty of Arts, Banaras Hindu University,
Varanasi- 221005, Uttar Pradesh,India.

DR SENTHIL PRAKASH.S

Teacher – in- charge/Assistant professor (SG),Department of
Tamil, Institute of Languages, Literature& culture,
Visva – Bharathi University,Santiniketan,West
Bengal, India -731235

DR R TAMILSELVAN

Assistant professor, Aligarh Muslim University, Uttar Pradesh,India-202002

Dr SWARNAVEL ESWARAN

Associate Professor Departments of English, and Media and Information
Michigan State University. USA. eswaran@msu.edu

Dr (Ms.) NILANKA LIYANAGE

Senior Lecturer in Dance ,Department of Dance,Drame&Theatre Arts,
Swamy Vipulananda Institute of Aesthetic Stidies,Eastern University Srilanka

Mrs THULSIVANTHANA UDAYASHANKAR

Senior lecturer Gr II in English, Swamy Vipulananda Institute of
Aesthetic Stidies ,Eastern University, Srilanka

அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னிதழ்

Aran

International e Journal of Tamil Research

EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr B. DHANANJAYAN

Associate Professor, Sir Theagaraya College, Old Washermenpet,
Chennai - 600 021.

Dr P.SEKAR

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Govt. Institute of Advanced Study
in Education, Saidapet, Chennai-600015. sekar@iasetamilnadu.ac.in

நிறுவனர்/பதிப்பாளர்/நிர்வாக ஆசிரியர்

இதழாக்கம்

திரு ப. ஜெயகிருஷ்ணன்

முதன்மை ஆசிரியர்

முனைவர் பிரியாகிருஷ்ணன்

+917299587879

www.aranejournal.com

aranjournal@gmail.com

அரண் பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னிதழில் வெளிவரும் ஆய்வுக்கட்டுரைகள் அனைத்தும்
(Peer Review)பீர் ரிவியூ செய்யப்பட்டு பதிவு செய்யப்படுகிறது என்பதைத்
தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறோம்.



Reimagining the Divine Feminine: Power, Presence and Symbolism in Ancient India

Dr G.Sathiyadevi, Associate Professor and Head, M.R.G. Arts College, Mannargudi
Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tamilnadu

Abstract

Women in ancient India played a significant role in society, contributing to various spheres, including education, politics, religion, and culture. Their status and rights evolved over time, reflecting the changing dynamics of Indian civilization. This paper examines the multifaceted roles and status of women in ancient India through a historical lens, highlighting their contributions, challenges, and societal perceptions. It also discusses the shift in women's roles from the Vedic period to later periods, emphasizing the influence of patriarchy, social reforms, and religious practices. By analyzing ancient texts, archaeological evidence, and scholarly interpretations, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of women's lives and legacies in ancient India.

Keywords: Feminine, Vedic period, gender roles, status, education, religion, patriarchy, social reforms

Introduction

The position and perception of women in ancient Indian society have undergone significant transformations across centuries. Women were both revered and restricted, enjoying autonomy during certain eras while facing societal limitations during others. Their identities evolved through intersecting influences of religion, culture, law, and social hierarchy. This paper aims to examine the status of women in ancient India by focusing on key historical epochs, especially the Vedic and post-Vedic periods, and to highlight how religion, patriarchy, and legal doctrines shaped their rights, roles, and representation[1][2].

Objectives

1. To analyze the role and status of women during the Vedic and post-Vedic periods.
2. To understand the impact of ancient Indian religious and legal texts on women's rights and responsibilities.
3. To identify the contributions of women to ancient Indian society.
4. To explore the factors leading to the decline in the status of women over time.
5. To assess how ancient practices shape contemporary gender perceptions.

Methodology

This study adopts a historical-analytical approach:

1. Literature Review: Core texts such as the Rigveda, Upanishads, Manusmriti, and Arthashastra are analyzed to explore perspectives on gender[7][12][13].
2. Historical Analysis: Archaeological evidence such as inscriptions, sculptures, and material artifacts from Harappa to Gupta periods are examined[6].
3. Comparative Study: The status of women during the Vedic period is contrasted with their status in later periods to trace patterns of decline or change.
4. Interdisciplinary Approach: Gender studies, sociology, and political history are interwoven to present a holistic view.

Position of Women in the Indus Valley Civilization

Archaeological findings from Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro suggest a prominent role for the feminine divine. Figurines and seals depicting female deities indicate goddess worship, implying that women may have been accorded respect in social and spiritual spheres[3][6]. Indologists argue that such religious symbolism hints at a relatively favorable societal position for women during this era[4].

Position of Women in the Rigvedic Age (2500–1500 B.C.)

The Rigveda portrays a society where women enjoyed educational and spiritual freedoms. Girls were given equal consideration as boys in terms of upbringing and learning[1][12]. Women such as Ghosha, Apala, and Visvavara composed hymns and engaged in spiritual discourse[6]. Their education was often guided by women spiritual teachers, and girls participated in household rituals, arts, and customs[2].

However, while domestic roles were primary, women were not entirely excluded from public life. The political presence of later figures such as Prabhavati Gupta, who served as regent in the Vakataka dynasty, demonstrates that exceptional women still held power[6].

In marital matters, the Rigvedic age allowed women a degree of autonomy, including the right to choose their partners, and child marriage was absent[1].

Decline in Status: Later Vedic Period Onwards (1500 B.C. – 1000 A.D.)

With the evolution of settled agricultural communities and the codification of social norms, women's freedoms began to diminish. The synthesis of Aryan and Dravidian traditions led to the formalization of Varnashrama Dharma—a social order that rigidly defined gender roles[2][5].

Endogamy and caste-based marriage norms curtailed the freedom once enjoyed by women in choosing life partners. Arranged marriages became the norm, with parental authority overriding individual choice[1][4]. Emphasis was laid on family prestige and wealth in matrimonial alliances.

While the Manusmriti acknowledged women's participation in religious duties, it redefined their education and societal role. It equated marriage to a girl's Upanayana (sacred thread ceremony), thus transferring her religious education to her husband[7][13].

Education of Women

In the Rigvedic Period

Women were allowed to study the Vedas, and Upanayana was performed for girls, enabling them to become Brahnavadinis—seekers of spiritual knowledge[1]. Gargi and Maitreyi were examples of women who engaged in philosophical debates with sages like Yajnavalkya[12].

Post-Rigvedic Period

Following the Later Vedic period, female access to formal religious learning declined. However, with the rise of Buddhism and Jainism in the 6th century B.C., women once again received religious instruction and took monastic vows[5][6]. Mahavira and Buddha supported female education and established orders for nuns[4].

During the Mauryan period, this revival continued, but gradually declined again with the resurgence of Brahmanical orthodoxy post-Gupta era[10].

Cultural Roles and the Devadasi Tradition

From 300 A.D. onwards, the Devadasi system emerged as a socio-religious institution. Women dedicated to temple service were known as Devadasis. Initially, they were respected as artists and ritual participants, but over time, social and religious decline led to their exploitation by priests and local elites[1][6].

Customs and Legal Rights

Several customs impacted women's lives:

1. Sati: Though not universally practiced, instances of sati were documented. Some ancient texts and thinkers opposed it, suggesting it wasn't originally widespread[1].
2. Niyoga: The practice allowed childless widows to bear children with a designated relative. Though controversial, it aimed to preserve family lineage[10].
3. Widow Remarriage: Acceptable in earlier periods, widow remarriage was increasingly denied to upper-caste women after the codification of Brahmanical law[13].
4. Property Rights: Women could hold property in the form of Stridhan, and in some cases, they inherited after their sons[7].

Conclusion

In ancient India, the position of women reflected a complex interplay between reverence and regulation. Early Vedic society allowed women significant participation in religious and intellectual life. However, socio-political shifts, legal codes, and the establishment of rigid caste structures led to a decline in their freedoms and rights. Nonetheless, influential women continued to leave an indelible mark on Indian culture and history. The legacy of these ancient practices continues to shape gender perceptions in contemporary India.

Footnotes

- [1]: Altekar, A. S. The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1959.
- [2]: Sharma, R. S. India's Ancient Past. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- [3]: Basham, A. L. The Wonder That Was India. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1954.
- [4]: Thapar, Romila. Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- [5]: Chakravarti, Uma. Rewriting History: The Life and Times of Pandita Ramabai. New Delhi: Kali for Women, 1998.
- [6]: Singh, Upinder. A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India. Delhi: Pearson, 2008.
- [7]: Manusmriti. Translated by G. Buhler. Sacred Text Archive.
- [8]: Mahabharata. Translated by C. Rajagopalachari.
- [9]: Ramayana. Translated by R. K. Narayan.
- [10]: Kosambi, D.D. An Introduction to the Study of Indian History. Popular Prakashan, 1956.
- [11]: Thapar, Romila. Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300. University of California Press, 2002.
- [12]: Vedic Texts: Rigveda, Upanishads. Translated by Ralph T.H. Griffith.
- [13]: Manusmriti. Translated by Patrick Olivelle.
- [14]: Joshi, P.S. Cultural History of Ancient India. New Delhi: S. Chand and Company Ltd, 1978.



அரண்

பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னஞ்சல்

அறிவிப்பு / Announcement

அன்பான தமிழ்ச் சொந்தங்களே

வணக்கம்.

வரும் 2026, ஜூலை மாதம் வெளிவரும் அரண் பன்னாட்டுத் தமிழாய்வு மின்னஞ்சலுக்கான ஆய்வுக் கட்டுரைகள் ஆய்வாளர்களிடமிருந்து வரவேற்கப்படுகின்றன.

கட்டுரை வந்து சேர வேண்டிய கடைசி நாள் - ஜூலை 10. அதற்கு பின் வரும் கட்டுரைகள் ஜூலை இதழில் இடம்பெறாது என்பதை தெரிவித்துக் கொள்கிறோம்.

www.aranejournal.com