



Maharishi Dayanand and Women's Education: Condition and Direction

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Article Info

Received: 07 Dec 2021,

Received in revised form: 30 Jan 2022,

Accepted: 10 Feb 2022,

Available online: 18 Feb 2022

Keywords— Puranas, Hinduism, Vedas, history of India

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Abstract

In view of the predominance of opposing views for women's education in Hindu society, she did not do any work in this direction. In the latter half of the 19th century, when Maharishi Dayanand appeared in the field of female education, women were confined to domestic work only. Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati had an unprecedented contribution in the Indian religious reform movements. The Maharishi gave the result that in ancient times, not only the women of Brahma Vidya, but the women of the princes of Aryavarta also received the education of Dhanurveda. From these examples, Maharishi Dayanand was in support of giving two types of education to women - first general and second special. The first type of education was of grammar etc., similar to that of men.

INTRODUCTION

In the Vedic age, where sage women like Apala, Ghosha, Maitreyi, Pushpa and Lopamudra used to participate in debate, later in the same India, the condition of women became so pathetic that they were deprived of education. In the latter half of the 19th century, when Maharishi Dayanand appeared in the field of female education, women were confined to domestic work only. Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati had an unprecedented contribution in the Indian religious reform movements. In the nineteenth century the scope of Brahma Samaj and Prarthana Samaj remained very limited, but Arya Samaj established by Maharishi made efforts to re-establish the pure form of true Sanatan Vedic religion.

It is written in the Bhagavata Purana that the discussion of the Vedas should not be heard by women, Shudras and others who are not Brahmins.¹ According to

him, the Puranas, which were considered as the fifth Vedas. ²Women and Shudras should listen to this and follow their religion.

1.1 Status of female education before Maharishi –

At the time of Maharishi's birth, female education was negligible in Bombay. According to the reports of the district, there was not a single girl child in the schools of the province.

In these reports, the comment was given that 'According to Indian tradition, women do not have the right to education and school is only for the education of boys.' ³The British officials also did not take any steps in this direction because the policy of the British East India Company was to maintain neutrality in social and religious matters.

In view of the predominance of opposing views for women's education in Hindu society, she did not do

¹ भागवत पुराण स्त्रीशूद्रद्विजबंधूनां त्रयी न श्रुतिगोचरा । (२५-४-१)
द्विजबंधु का अर्थ है नकली ब्राह्मण या ऐसा व्यक्ति जो ब्राह्मण न होता जैसे भाट या ज्योतिषी । ;हुआ भी अपने ब्राह्मण होने का ढोंग करता है

² वही-पृष्ठ १, ४ इतिहासपुराणं च पंचमो वेद. २ ; २५, २१- उच्यते। इति भारतमाख्यानं मुनिना कृपया कृतम् ॥

³ A Source Book of History of Education in the Bombay Province, Part 1, A Survey of Indigenous Education (1820–30), The Bombay Book Depot, Bombay, 1945. "Satyarth Prakash Arya SahityaPrachar Trust

any work in this direction. The British officials feared that if efforts were made in the direction of women's education, there could be possibilities of strong rebellion. A member of the Governor General's executive committee, J.H. Littler made it clear from one of his remarks, "There is no doubt about the scheme of women's education not being popular among the masses. Both Hindus and Muslims look at it with suspicion and fear. I have always understood that the Government is committed to follow a policy of neutrality in such matters. Wouldn't this be an abandonment of this policy?" However, this policy was rejected by Lord Dalhousie. Women's education was given the first place in Charles Wood's proposal for education, but due to the Indian freedom struggle, it again went into cold storage. Lord Canning also said that more emphasis should be given on the education of boys. The Hunter Education Commission in its recommendations laid emphasis on women's education. Efforts for women's education were first made by Christian missionaries. First, the wives of Christian missionaries in Bengal and Bombay arranged for the education of their women in the genial system by opening schools, establishing orphanages and visiting the homes of middle and upper families.

Christian missionaries first established girls' schools in Bengal, Bombay and Madras. Apart from this, some liberal British like Bethune and reformist Indian Phule established educational institutions for women's education. Bethune understood seriously that Christian missionaries could not gain popularity because of the emphasis on teaching of Christianity, so he felt the need to open secular schools.

Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, the famous social reformer of Maharashtra, faced the problem of non-availability of female teachers, so he first educated his wife and after that his wife started teaching in the school.

1.2 Women's education in the view of Maharishi Dayanand –

No special work could be done on women's education before Maharishi took interest in this field. According to the Maharishi, the education of the Vedas was absolutely necessary for the entire human race. He has written in support of women's education that 'All men and women, that is, human beings, have the right to read the Vedas. You fall into the well and this Shruti has come from your imagination. Not of any authentic text.'⁴ The basis of these arguments of Maharishi Dayanand has been Vedic evidence. (26-2) In which it has been said to the head of the Lord that "I preach the welfare speech of the Vedas for all human beings, so do you also." Education is

considered essential. It has been commented by the Maharishi that by teaching the Vedas, all human beings can attain happiness by increasing science, by accepting good things and giving up bad things and getting rid of sorrows. Just as God has created earth, water, air, moon, sun, food etc for everyone, similarly Vedas have also been published for everyone and wherever it is forbidden, its meaning is that nothing should come from reading or teaching. Because of being foolish and foolish, he is called a Shudra.

The second proof of female education is the Atharvaveda (11.5.18) mantra - Brahmacharyen Kanya Yuvanam Vindte Patim. That is, a girl attains a young husband through celibacy. Maharishi interpreted this mantra and said that 'just as boys get complete education and education by taking celibacy and marry women of their own kind, in the same way a girl is complete by consuming celibacy i.e. by reading the Vedas and attaining complete education and perfect education. In her youth, she will find a man who is as intelligent and full of youth as herself.'⁵

The third proof of women's education is from the words of the Srautsutras, in which the law of reciting Veda mantras by the wife has been told. The Ashvalayana Sutra (1.11) states that the Vedas should be heard through the wife.⁶ According to the Shankhayan Srautsutra, the wife reads the Vedas.⁷ Thus Maharishi Dayanand said that if the wife does not study Vedadi Shastras, then how will she be able to recite and recite the mantras with voice in the Yagya? Apart from these examples, Maharishi has also supported women's education from many historical examples. The first example is that of the learned Gargi mentioned in the Shatapatha Brahmana and the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, about whom it is said that in the assembly of King Janak, the well-known scholar Yajnavalakya had a debate with other scholars, among them a scholar named Gargi was also included. When all the scholars started losing to Yajnavalakya So Gargi said that I will ask him two questions, if he gives me the answer to them, then none of you will be able to win over these brahmavadis. It is known from this that the women of that time were also proficient in Vedic learning. Another example is that of Dasaratha's queen Kaikeyi who along with her husband was able to save her husband's life in the Devasura battle and got two boons.

From these examples, the Maharishi gave the result that in ancient times, not only the women of Brahma Vidya, but

⁵ Satyarth Prakash A. p. 70

⁶ आश्वलायन श्रौतसूत्र, वेदं पत्न्यै प्रदाय वाचयेत्।

⁷ शांखायन श्रौतसूत्र (15.15) इति वेदं पत्नी वाचयति।

⁴ सत्यार्थ प्रकाश, तीसरा समुल्लास, स्वामी विवेकानंद का संस्करण, पृ. 69

the women of the princes of Aryavarta also received the education of Dhanurveda. From these examples, Maharishi Dayanand was in support of giving two types of education to women - first general and second special. The first type of education was of grammar etc., similar to that of men.

Special education included attainment of proficiency in homework, production and upbringing of children. Along with this, they should also have the knowledge of medicine and medicine so that the health of the family members remains good. Women's education has been considered essential by Arya Samaj due to many reasons - society will improve if the first woman is educated. Due to various evil practices prevalent in the society like child marriage, child slaughter, widow marriage, purdah system, dowry system, the condition of women in the society was very bad. The second important reason was the return of the Vedic age. It was said in the texts that the Vedic age was the golden age of India, so the Maharishi was its aspirant. After the Vedic age, the condition of women in the society deteriorated and even they were denied the right to perform Yajna.

Because of the complexity of the rituals, the priests dominated. For other reasons, by marrying non-Aryans, she could have made a mistake in the yajna, so she was removed from the yajna. The third reason was that because of menstruation, they came to be called impure. The fourth reason is that women do not have the Upanayana ceremony. This led them to be considered at par with the Shudras. And the last main reason was to consider women to be the cause of enjoyment and attachment, due to which the condition of women kept on deteriorating. Maharishi Dayanand Saraswati was striving for the all-round development of the soul, mind, intellect and body of women, so he developed such an education system which could fulfill their all-round development.

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