

Manu Smriti as the Protection of Female in Hindu Philosophy: In the Dimension of Structural-Functionalism

Shukra Raj Adhikari

Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal

In the evolutionary process of socio-cultural structure, various “memories” and codes have been created as a collection of interpretations, rules, and regulations made by various experts in social, cultural, political, and religious leaders including kings, emperors, and sages. In these contexts, this article is focused to analyze the status, power, and authority of females in terms of the explanation of Manu Smriti in the structural-functional perspective. Mostly secondary and qualitative data have been used in this article. The data have been collected through the historical content analysis method. To obtain the objective, the facts have been collected from the verses of Manu Smriti (which are related to female issues) and historical interpretation of ancient society. Collected secondary data have been analyzed through the historical content analysis method. According to the structural-functional point of view, due to the socio-cultural environment of the time in which the laws and regulations related to women have to be made, these issues seem to be more relevant, such as the permission of men for functioning, child marriage, etc. Analyzing the issues from a patriarchal point of view, the law of the time was in favor of women’s inequality and exploitation of women. The theory of patriarchy mentions that women are oppressed, exploited, and subjugated by men in the patriarchal social structure. The facts of Manu Smriti, such as women as the gods, as an indicator of respect, as a symbol of the progress, etc., are not congruent to the explanation of the theory of patriarchy.

Keywords: Manu Smriti, patriarchy, protection, structural-functionalism, women

Introduction

The construction of Manu Smriti is considered an indicator of the extreme progress of Hindu culture. Gairola (1978) argued “shruti” and “smriti” as broadly synonymous words. In Hindu culture, “Shruti” refers to the Vedas, Brahmins, Aranyakas, and Upanishads, while the word “Smriti” refers to Shadvedang, Dharmashastra, Itihas, Purana, Arthashastra, Nitishastra, etc. The four major parts and subjects of the Smriti Granth are considered. The first part is related to “conduct”, the second to behavior, the third to atonement, and the fourth to karma. Brahman, Kshetriya, Vaishya, and Shudra are the four characters, and Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha, and Sanyasa are the subjects of proper maintenance and detailed analysis of these four ashrams. In the course of the development of Hindu society and culture, various smriti or “memories” have been created as a collection of interpretations, rules, and regulations made by various experts in social, cultural, political, and religious leaders including kings, emperors, and sages. Gairola (1978) mentioned Smriti as the creator of Manu, Yajnavalkya, Atri, Vishnu, Ushanas, Harit, Angira, Yama, Katyayan, Jupiter, Parashar, Vyas, Daksha, Gautam, Vasishta, Narad,

Shukra Raj Adhikari, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Sociology and Head, Department of Social Work, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.

and Bhṛigu. Raghavan (1993) mentioned an analysis of the verses of the Manu quoted in the *Adi*, *Aranyaka*, *Shanti*, and *Anusasana Parvans* of *Mahabharat* shows, as Hopkins and Buhler have pointed out that the great epic knew a Manu text closely connected with the current one but not identical with it, and that as the basis of both the epic and the present Manu Smṛiti, there was a floating mass of verses embodying the proverbial wisdom of philosophical and legal school ascribed generally to Manu. According to Ramaswami (1993), the chronology of the Dharma-Sutras and Dharma Sastras or Smṛitis is still an unsettled question. It is, however, held by a few western scholars that the Dharma Sutras are earlier than, and perhaps, the sources of the metrical codes. But since Manu and his extant Smṛiti and a few others are found cited by many Dharma-Sutras, it is very difficult to maintain that all metrical Smṛitis are evolved from the Dharma-Sutras. On the other hand, it can be asserted that both kinds of texts in the form of Sutras and side by side, with the result many Dharma-Sutra texts have also incorporated verses in *anustubh* and sometimes in other meters also. For the development of Hinduism “Manu” has played a vital role but who was “Manu”. His date of birth, birthplace is still a mystery. According to Hindu myths, “Manu” was the human son of god (*Manasputra*) “Brahma”; the founder of the life. At the beginning of life, “Brahma” introduced Sank, “Sanandan”, “Sanatan”, and Sanatkumar, etc. After this, he was not satisfied with all these creations and created a sphere for the incensement of life. From one edge of that sphere, the male was introduced from another female rasi. According to the myths, the first male was to be induced as “Acharya Manu”, where the female was his wife named “Satarupa”. In time, the offspring of Manu and Satarupa were called human (Baral, 2050BS). The current Nepali-socio-cultural tradition seems to have been directly or indirectly influenced by the rules and custom guide *Munsmṛiti*. There has also been a tendency among writers and speakers to use “Manu Smṛiti” in racist and feminist discussions and debates. In the new generation, the number of such texts being studied and debated seems to be declining. In this context, the verses related to women have been made the subject of discussion in this study by studying the rules and regulations formulated and described by adding the context of women in the Manu Samhita.

Objective and Method

This paper is focused to analyze the status, power, and authority of females in terms of the explanation of Manu Smṛiti\Manu Samhita. This research is guided by a qualitative research approach. Mostly secondary data have been used in this research. The secondary data have been collected by historical content analysis methods. The information on Manu Smṛiti is based on Professor Har Govind Shastri’s book called *Manu Smṛiti*. Besides this, the historical information is collected from different kinds of scriptures. The content analysis method has been used to analyse the collected data.

Theoretical Discourse

According to Ritzer (2000), Emile Durkheim, the pioneer of functionalism, emphasizes that socio-cultural structures are formed through the interrelationship and collaboration of elements within society and culture, human-human interaction, interrelationships, social processes, manners, traditions, customs, legislation, various social institutions, groups, etc. He said that the division of labor has created interdependence between individuals and groups. According to Radcliffe Brown, units of socio-cultural values, traditions, and beliefs, social institutions are created in a systematic or orderly manner, creating a holistic socio-cultural structure. Turner (1995) quoted to Morton and said that not all organs within the same social structure perform the same functions and that their roles cannot be the same. Social structures are not made up of units and elements with similar

characteristics. There may be contradictions or contradictions in it, due to which both positive and negative functions are created within the social structure. Morton said social structures continue to be driven by both positive and negative functions. Referring to patriarchy as a male-dominated concept, Walby (1991) mentioned that patriarchy is a principle of subordinating women. She argues that in a patriarchal social structure, men oppress, exploit, and subjugate women. From this point of view, men have always been under the oppression of women. Even in a patriarchal society, maintaining collective ownership of the means of production reduces the exploitation of women. Similarly, this view does not seem to speak of ensuring the rights and participation of women even within the patriarchal social structure.

Findings and Discussion

Manu Smriti

The book containing the rules made by Acharya “Manu” is called “Manu Smriti”. Among the Hindu scriptures, the special significance of this Manu Smriti has been shown after the Vedas. It is said that the ancient Hindu social system was based entirely on this text (Singh, 2007). Smith (2003) mentioned, Manu Smriti is dated to 200 BC, according to the Hindu way of life. William Jones has dated Manu Smriti to 1250 BC, while Schlegel mentions Manu Smriti to be 1000 BC. Monier Williams dates the time of Manu Smriti to 500 years BC, while Weaver mentions the time after the Mahabharata as the time of Manu Smriti (Berry, 1971). Radhakrishnan (2004) considered Manu Smriti as a book similar to the Mahabharata and the Puranas. He interprets the Manu Smriti as a bridge between law and religion. Explaining Manu Smriti further, he said that Manu Smriti is basically a scripture and a set of moral rules. Similarly, Garola (1978) considered Munasmriti as a book that introduces an adult scholar and says that Vedic method and philosophical ideology are included in the discussion of the subject of Manu Smriti. Keith (1967) said that Manu Smriti should be compared not only as a book of theology but also as a great poem. Kaundinnayan (2062BS) had interpreted the Manu Smriti Manu as a work composed by Bhṛigu sage or his disciples without considering the Manu Smriti Manu as a work of art. Chapters 1-6 of Manu Smriti explain the creation, nature, rites, ethics, and ashram religion of the world, while Chapters 7-9 mention behavior, caste, and monarchy. Similarly, in Chapters 10-12, caste, caste, thought, penance, speed of life, and path of action are explained. Similarly, Keith (1967) examined the subject matter of every study of Manu Smriti: The first chapter deals with the real power of the mixed world in a theoretical and mythological way. At the same time, the position of nature and living beings is also mentioned. In the second chapter, the source of religion and the duty of celibacy are explained. The third chapter deals with the religion of the householder and the fourth chapter deals with the rules from marriage to death. Chapter 5 describes Ashoch, Feminism, Chapter 6 describes Vanprastha Ashram and Sanyasa Ashram, Chapter 7 describes political doctrine and monarchy, Chapter 8 describes behavior method, Chapter 9 describes behavior method, Vaishya and Shudra Karma method, Chapter 10 describes rules of character, the 11th chapter deals with the description of religion in emergencies and deals with charity, sacrifice, the law of atonement, and the 12th chapter deals with reincarnation by the law of longitude, the fruit of the sinner’s evil deeds, the means of salvation and teaching. According to the interpretation of life, “Manu Smriti” can be understood as the social and cultural constitution of Manu’s time. Manu Smriti refers to the rules that were made to govern the social and cultural structure of the time. Manu Smriti mentions various aspects of the religious beliefs, rituals, methods, methods, division of social labor, rules of division of labor, etc., of that time.

“Manu-Smriti” and Female

On the basis of socio-cultural information, Manu-Smriti which is related to women issues has been discussed in the following as the sub-heading.

Disrespect of Women and Destruction of Wealth

On the 58th stanza of “Manu-Smriti” of the third chapter, it is been told that “there is a high chance of losing wealth where there is no respect for women in that house”.

“जामयो यानि गेहानीशपन्त्यप्रतिपूजिताः ।

तानि कृत्याहतानीवविनश्यन्ति समन्ततः ।” (३-५८)

This means in a house, where is no respect for female (daughter, wife, and sister), there is a chance of losing wealth. According to the above facts of Manu Smriti, female members should be highly respected in the family. Those who do not do that some might lose their earning soon. Those who did not respect women in their household should have been losing their earnings, savings, etc. Manu Smriti was playing the role of as the mechanism of social control at that period. It had been developed a kind of fear, who has done the behavior of dishonor to females.

Rejection of Bride Price

In the 51st stanza of the third chapter of “Manu Smriti”, on the greed of wealth, if a father married his daughter, this kind of perform was taken as the symbol of selling a daughter in that era of Manu.

नकन्यायाःपिताविद्वान्गृहीयाच्छुल्कमण्वपि ।

गृहंश्छुल्कमं हि लोभेन स्यान्नरोऽपत्यविक्रयी ॥

It means a wise father cannot fix the price rate as the bride price of his daughter. If he had done this greedy perform, it had been as the symbol of selling his daughter. According to the mentioned facts, a father cannot fix his daughter’s marriage talking about any kind of wealth. These kinds of laws of Manu Smriti were created to reject the bride price and to protect the daughter.

It Is a Sin to Take Dowry

In Verse 52 of the third chapter of Manu Smriti, it is said that it is sinful for a woman to take wealth, property, clothes, and any other thing:

स्त्रीधनानि तु ये मोहादुपजीवन्तिवान्धवाः ।

नारी यानानि वस्त्रं वा ते पापायान्त्यधोगतिम् ॥ (३-५२)

That is to say, “A man who takes a woman’s dowry or a woman’s car or clothing ornaments, such a friend becomes sinful and goes downhill”. According to the above verse, it is said that it is a sin for a brother to covet, take, and grab any property, car, clothes, etc., of a woman. This kind of interpretation seems to discourage others from having to protect and use women’s property. It seems sinful for a man to usurp a woman’s property.

Women’s Grief and Total Destruction

In the 57th verse of the third chapter of Manu Smriti, it is said that a woman should not be mourned and if a woman is in a state of mourning, the whole house and family will be destroyed:

शोचन्तिजामयो यत्रविनश्यत्याशु तत्कुलम् ।

न शोचन्ति तु यत्रैतावर्धते तद्धि सर्वदा । (३-५७)

That is, in the clan where women are in mourn, the clan will be destroyed, and in a clan where women are

happy the clan will always prosper. According to the above verse, it is understood that during Manu's time, there is a belief in the family that they should not do things that cause grief and anxiety to women. If women are not in a position to live happily, it will be unfortunate and that clan will be destroyed. But if the women are kept happy, the clan will be naturally oriented towards progress. Women are considered as an indicator of progress in the socio-cultural structure of the Manu era.

Satisfaction and Welfare of Husband and Wife

On the 60th slogan of the third chapter where a husband is satisfied with his wife and wife is satisfied with husband; the family always lives happy.

सर्तुष्टो भार्यया भवर्भर्गा भार्या तथैव छ ।

यस्मिन्नेव कुले नित्यं कल्याणं तत्र वै ध्रुवम् ॥ (३-६०)

That is, "In the clan where the husband is happy with the wife, same way, the wife will be happy with the husband. There will be immovable welfare in that clan". The above verse explains that the welfare of the family can be achieved only through mutual intimacy, cooperation, and mutual satisfaction between husband and wife, which is understood to have explained the equal relationship between husband and wife. But there is not that kind of behavior still in today's modern civilized culture. But in the time of Manu, within the Hindu culture, it seems that the legislation of husband-wife relationship and co-satisfaction has been made. This legislation has been inspiring even for the present.

Female Worship and the Pleasure of the Gods

In the 56th verse of the third chapter of Mana Smriti, women are worshiped with respect. It is said that even the gods are happy there.

यत्रनार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते रमन्ते तत्र देवताः ।

यत्रैतास्तु न पूज्यन्ते सर्वास्तात्राफलाः क्रियाः ॥ (३-५६)

That is, "the gods are pleased with the clan where a woman is worshiped, the clan where the woman not be worshiped and respected, the work will be worst and result less in that clan". According to the above verse, it is understood that women had been got a higher position during the Manu era, where women were been respected and revered. In such a home-family and society, the gods are also happy where women are revered or respected. It is said that the gods are not happy with that clan where women are not respected and the deeds of that clan also fail. From this, it is clear that in the time of Manu, women were considered as a symbol of respect, reverence, and deity.

Protection of Women

The third verse of the ninth chapter of Manu Smriti explains that women should be protected by the father in childhood, the husband in youth, and the son in old age:

पिता रक्षतिकौमारे भर्ता रक्षति यौवने ।

रक्षन्ति स्थविरे पुत्रा न स्त्री स्वातन्त्र्यर्भाति । (९-३)

According to the above verse, in the time of Manu, the complete freedom of women is understood to have been imprisoned under the rule of men. Women are not allowed to lead a free social life in childhood, youth, or old age. The above verse explains that the woman's every desire and interest should be handle by a man. In the social environment of that time, the fear of being attacked and looted by other groups, classes, and communities may have led to the need to make such rules for the social and cultural security of women. According to the

mentioned facts, then every moment of a woman seems to be passing within the dependence of a man. This seems to have opened up an environment of extreme discrimination for the general female class.

Appointing Women as a Helper. Appointment of Women as Maids

On the 11th verse of the ninth chapter, it is mentioned that women are appointed as helper to clean and care the house.

अर्थस्य संग्रहे चैनां व्यये चैवं नियोजयेत् ।

शौचे धर्मेऽन्नपक्त्यां च पारिणाध्यास्य वेक्षणे । (९-११)

That is, “men (father/husband/son ...) employ women in the collection of wealth, expenditure, purification of goods and materials, service of elders and husbands, cleaning of the house and household items”. The above verse has inaugurated the social position in which women had been given the responsibility of household chores, including sanitation and service responsibilities, and in that work did not be voluntary, the women had been appointed at that kind of perform by men.

There is a lack of social security when women are given the responsibility of working outside the home. However, analyzing the situation from a feminist point of view, it has seemed that women have to be confined within the four walls of the house and even in that, only service and sanitation work is seen.

Female Field and Male Seed, Seed Is the Best

In the 35th verse of the ninth chapter, it is said that the woman is equal to the field and the man is equal to the seed.

वीजस्य चैव योन्याश्चवीजमुत्कृष्टमुच्यते ।

सर्वभूतप्रसूतिर्हि वीजलक्षणलाक्षिता ॥ (९-३५)

That is, “Seed and field are considered the best seeds. So, all the offspring are born with the symptoms of seed”. The above verse has only defined women as fields. Just like when a seed is sown in the soil, the seed grows according to the seed. In the same way, only men are the donors of the seed of child production. The women are only the soil and that the soil does not act as a seed but only grows; the need and role of women in the production of offspring seem to have been completely negated. The combination of “ova” and “semen” does not negate the idea of having a child. It seems that only children are characterized by the man. Therefore, the mentioned fact indicates the denial of the existence and role of women.

Women and Child Marriage

In Verse 88 of the ninth chapter, it is said that a woman should be married at the age of nine years and earlier:

प्रयच्छेन्नग्निकां कन्यामृतुकालभयान्वितः ।

ऋतुमत्यां हि तिष्ठन्त्यामेनो दातारमृच्छति ॥ (९,८८)

The above verse has revealed the fact that in the society of that time, women had to get married before menstruation. Due to the lacking of sexual security of women and a very low population at that time, it seems that this system was made to allow women’s “Raj” to not be wasted. But on the basis of a feminist point of view, it seems objectionable to make a rule that women should be married off as infants without considering their physical condition. Not only that, even if the girl decides to get married only after menstruation, the parents are afraid of sin.

Prohibited From Doing Any Work Without the Permission of the Man

On 147th verse of the fifth chapter, “Women cannot work without approval of male” is mentioned.

बालयावायुवत्यावा वृद्धयवाऽपि योषिता ।

न स्वातन्त्र्येण कर्तव्यं किञ्चित्कार्यं गृहेष्वपि ॥ (५-१४७)

That is, “In no case (during childhood, youth, or old age) should a woman do anything voluntarily without the consent of a male parent”. The above verse also shows that women have control over men and women should not be allowed to do their work freely without the permission of men. The society of that time seems to have completely denied the independence of women and the situation of having to remain under the control of one’s own son even when one is physically and mentally mature seems to have been explained.

Conclusion

A study of the 2,700 verses collected in the 12 chapters of Manu Smriti reveals many verses related to the issues of women within the rules and regulations of the social and cultural system. In the social context, some of the issues are in favor of women and some of them are in the context of inequality/discrimination of women. In the structural-functional perspective, due to the socio-cultural circumstances of the time when these legislations have to be formulated, it seems that these issues are more relevant to the environment of that time than discriminatory ones, because laws and regulations are always made on the ground to run the social structure. Observing and analyzing the same legislation from other points of view, it seems natural to look at it as pros and cons, although it seems relevant to study the social and cultural environment. But in the patriarchal point of view, the legislation of that time seems to be in favor of women’s inequality and exploitation of women. The Manu Smriti is the production of patriarchal socio-cultural structure. According to patriarchy, women are always subordinated by men in the patriarchal socio-cultural structure. In this context, Manu Smriti seems to be a collection of extreme feminist rules and beliefs. So mentioned facts differ from patriarchal arguments, because several verses of Manu Smriti’s are advocating women’s respecting and worshiping.

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