WOMEN-THE ULTIMATE WARRIORS: ERAS CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN, EDUCATION OF WOMEN AND ENACTMENT OF POWERFUL LEGISLATIONS: EARLY VEDAS TO THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract
The idiosyncrasy of calling the women docile and passive are subject to underestimation by a specific thought process and mind-set that nurtures the young sapling of ego and superego backed by parochial minded contemplation. The deeply rooted senses of suppressing the women and shackling them through and through to restrain from outstanding the periphery of submissiveness have reached the audacity level of the society to the zenith, since time immemorial. The egotist attitude of some insensitive minds dragged the dignity of women at such steps which gave birth to ignominious and barbaric acts, being committed brazenly with nil sense of brutality. Be it considering women as the weakest, snatching away their rights to live with dignity or freedom, following rituals of a widow or simply burning them alive if being dissatisfied or disgusted after a passage of time. There existed an era when not even for a nanosecond did mankind had the sanguine outlook towards the women in India. Neither the society cared about their feelings nor did a single voice opined in the favour of women rights; rather it was always deemed to be sinning to ponder over breaking their shackles of suppression. Slowly and gradually as the wheel of the time moved ahead, the soil of India produced great souls with noble thoughts that gave birth to the concept of Women Empowerment which arose this issue and simultaneously elucidated the umbrage of womanhood as the dogmatic approach towards it was in itself outrageous and that came under realization when literacy and education were brought into the picture; although both the terms defer in the contexts of individual references. This paper attempts to deliver the content of how was the actual status of women long back, perhaps during the Vedic period, what caused the degradation of the level that forced the society to be habitual with such eccentric temperamental and who are the ones revered for their remarkable contributions in the upliftment of this marginalized gender to foster the human development and establish a harmonious relation among mankind which consequently led to glorious eras ahead.

Keywords: - Women Empowerment, Women Laws, Crime, Women Education, Legal Provisions, Women Safety and Measures.

Introduction
The Indian soil’s history is pregnant with every kind of cultural, social, philosophical and emotional values that in itself brings out the truth which depicts the status of women in India since the Vedic ages, because the country has strong faith and reverence towards the religious beliefs, Vedas and Puranas, the Hindu Shastras in India has attained the quintessential level that included worshipping of women as Goddesses. Women were considered the superior while being in supreme authorities in many of the prime events. There was no gender biasedness in entitling a property. The spinsters always had the privilege to be the
legal heir of patrimony. The girls were given equal education as boys by sending them to “Gurukuls”. The women showed such scintillating performance in the arena of education that was achieved through some female gurus like Indrani, Poulomi, Urvashi. This is well evident from the fact that there were more than twenty women, had great contributions who composed the Rig Vedic Hymns. Intellectuals like Gargi and Maitreyi were the trailblazers in the philosophical ideas. They were called as “Brahmavadinis”. The concept of Shakti was also a product of this age, when each and every energy created was blessed with a divine power of a particular deity. Considering the fact that Saraswati being worshipped for creativity, Lakshmi for nourishment, Kali portrays the destructive energy and Goddess Durga is the Ultimate Protector. It is strongly believed as per the Hindu Shastra’s that Mahishasur’s Vadh was possible only after the Creation of next powerful energy called Mahishasurmandini (Goddess Durga), the creators were the ultimate three musketeers (Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh). Had the powers been self-sufficient in themselves, there wouldn’t have been any necessity to create the most powerful energy on earth, again in the form of the “Woman”. As the Vedic sayings go well that where women are honoured and worshipped like a goddess, prosperity will always flourish there.

A Woman must be applauded and revered by her father, brother, husband, and brothers-in-law, who wish to live a life full of prosperity. Where women are deeply honoured, there shall be showers of blessings of the Lord; but where they are humiliated, no sacred rite yields rewards. Where the female relations live in sorrow, the family never flourishes with good health, wealth and fortune. The houses, on which female relations, not being duly honoured, pronounce a curse, perish completely as if destroyed by magic. Hence men who seek (their own) welfare, should always honour women on holidays and festivals with (gifts of) ornaments, clothes and dainty food.

Furthermore, in the Vedas, when a woman is invited into the family through marriage, she enters “as a river enters the sea” and “to rule there along with her husband, as a queen, over the other members of the family”. This kind of equality is rarely found in any other religious scripture.

### Status of Women in Mohul and Modern Period

However, along with the coming ages and generations the military and cultural interventions degraded the highly set standards of women in India. Along with the gained influence of foreign bodies that disdained the rich Indian and Vedic culture. Women were more considered as entertaining and sexual objects, although prostitution existed in Vedic period too however the prostitutes were called as Devdasis who were supposed to marry gods in a temple and serve him like a maid while serving men in the society. As Swami Vivekananda has also mentioned not to hold

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2. Manu-samhita
4. Manu Smriti III.55-59
5. Atharva-Veda 14.1.43-44
feelings of animosity or hatred against prostitutes therefore work was a form of worship for the sex workers too in that ongoing era. Slowly and gradually when the ages advanced and India was sailing through the Mohul period violence and brutality against women were stepping higher.

Neither women were any more given the freedom to enjoy the privilege which they have had some centuries back, nor they were on equal footing with men. The Racist colonial historians demanded the notions of modernity and scientific principles prevalent in the society. When they found India lagging behind these specific qualities, it was highly slammed. Historians like Vincent Smith severely condemned everything facilitated with India. Some features, such as Indian art, which was undeniably worthy of praise was attributed to Greek influence, thus refuting it any possibility of aboriginal roots.  

The miserable life of women was forcibly confined within the walls and under the roof of domestic households, considering and declaring men as the sole breadwinner and head of the family. In that prevalent era daughters who were married had the privilege to enjoy their husband’s assets whereas, the sons were the real and sole owner of the patrimony; in case if the daughters were widow and had no means of livelihood then the male siblings were responsible to look after them. Only if the deceased fathers had daughters and no sons the sole owner of the patrimony was in the favour of the women. Women faced challenges in retaining the property and were often subjected to harassment. On to the Mughal times, we have greater clarity about the role of women in society. This leaves no room for ambiguity the society in itself was suppressive to women and also the the growth in influence and number of Smritis not only are maintained elucidated the number of restrictions and brutality women faced. 

Condition of women in British Raj

The status of women degraded to the nadir when British were reigning the soil of India, the women were forcibly confined, caged, and all dogmatic beliefs and customs were firmly etched in the minds of men as well as women. The orthodox practices were carried on generations after generations and since no basic education was accessible to the women, therefore, illiteracy and uneducated contemplation exacerbated the living condition of women in India. They were so much beleaguered by these that made them bling to raise voice against the unethical and monstrous acts towards their gender. There was such a devastating story behind the violation of Bengali women by the British assigned tax collectors. The women were dragged out, naked and exposed to the public view, and scourged before all the people. They put the nipples of the women in the sharp edges of split bamboos and tore them from their bodies.  


7 AS Altekar, The Position of Women in Hindu Civilization
bald, were not permitted to wear any colour except were always in white saree, as for them ornamenting themselves with jewellery or any other cosmetic item did tantamount to sinning. Also, there existed this practice of “Sati Pratha” where women were considered as cursed to have lost husband and were forcibly burnt alive beside the funeral pyres of their husbands.

According to the Hindu mythology as well mentioned in the holy book of Bhagwad Gita, Chapter 4.8, Verse 8, mentions “paritranaya sadhunam vinashaya cha__
dushkritam dharma __sansthapanathaya
sambhavami …___yuge … yuge……” which means to protect the righteous, to annihilate the wicked, to teach dharma. I come again, age after age says, Lord Krishna.

Perhaps he sends some noble and courageous souls who hold the capacity to bring revolution and reformations when the sins over the brim. To expostulate such maverick acts which were opprobrium in the eyes of some great intellectuals and brilliant social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidya Sagar, the absolute gems brought forth by the soil of Bengal, who raised voices and penalised such despicable mind-set and acts by laying stress on Women’s education, prevention of child marriage, removal of polygamy, and remarriage of widows, that paved the way to enactment of legislation about Prohibition of Child Marriage, Commission of Sati, Widow Remarriage Act etc. which deracinated the thought process of enervating women. Lord William Bentick who was also known as a benevolent Lord initiated the Venture against Sati and ultimately Sati was abolished in the year 1829. This encouraged the enactment of several other laws to embolden women to enact laws like Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929, Hindu Widow Remarriage Act, 1856 and The Hindu Woman’s Right to Property Act,1937.10

Swami Vivekananda’s Views and Contributions on Women Empowerment

Swami Vivekananda, a diamond born in the Indian soil, who is not only internationally renowned but also highly revered all across the globe. The extraordinary merit and the rarest intellect that he possessed paved his way to the hall of fame and reverence. It was America who invited this wonderful soul to deliver a speech that had such an impact that it engraved upon the audiences at Chicago on 15th September 1893 at the age of 30. The impeccable knowledge and superior intellectual capacity eased him creating a history. He elucidated on many topics revolving around women and he believed women can do wonders if given a chance to be a well-educated and learned.

Vivekananda believed that a woman’s pining for her beloved (reminiscent of the mythical Radha in Vaishnava folklore)… represented the highest metaphor ,for God realisation.

Vivekananda took the lady to represent now not merely the frailty of body and mind but an emasculating influence that visibly robbed the person of his manliness.

10 http://www.yourarticlelibrary.com/women/status-of-women-during-british-period/47393
11 https://www.sahapedia.org/swami-vivekananda-and-woman-question
She became from time to time capable of braveness and heroism, however importantly…….
This emerged handiest within the ____context of her fidelity or chastity____ being put to test…….
Vivekananda had first-rate admiration for Padmini, the ‘brave’ Rajput princess who, instead than give up to every other guy’s lust, chose to immolate herself inside the husband’s funeral pyre.
towards figuring out the route or pace of lady related reform, arguing that this become best____... Left to girls themselves.
He said, …..‘No guy shall dictate to a woman nor ladies to a man...women will workout their destiny higher than men can ever do for them.

____All mischief has come due to the fact guys undertook to form _____the destiny of girls…….’ On one degree surely, this carries... factors of feminist self-determination and yet a very different___ meaning may also be examine into this statement.
“[Woman has (suffered) for ....."Acquittal", and that has given her .....Infinite patience and infinite....Perseverance].”
“...is no hope_ for that family ..Or country__ where__there may be no___ estimation of women,. wherein they live in ___.Sadness.
For this reason, they have ___to be raised ___first and foremost ......”

Vivekananda’s warning on NOT TO HATE PROSTITUTES

Since time immemorial the women attempting to earn a living for her family by adopting unusual and clandestine ways have been compelled to encounter the social stigma, have been targeted with squalid remarks especially if she has been a sex worker. Prostitutes have been contemplated as a sinner and viewed as most licentious predicament of the society. They have been invited to perform in the palaces before the kings and the courtyards to satisfy and quench the thirst of sexual desires of men. However as per the Vedas it has been considered as a social service provided to men by women.

Once when Swami Vivekananda came across a beautiful prostitute he initially urged to ignore her and found it immoral to meet with her but the chastity and the pure mind of the woman melted the heart of Vivekananda and he spoke to her in the usual rather saintlier manner

The woman provided a rendition of a poetry by the renowned poet Surdas . the euphonic lyrics was so poignant that Swami ji pondered over introspection and retrospection , realizing that it can never be wise enough to frown at the sight of the prostitute as the body can be used but a soul can still remain pure therefore it really would be inhuman to hold animosity against the prostitutes12.

Women have been reigning with the status of reverence in the society in the biggest Indian Epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata and simultaneously were slammed and had to face remarks which were opprobrium in

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itself. A character like Draped sets an ideal example or Site who had to prove her chastity by entering into the fire.  

Vivekananda also elucidated on the divine power that is connected with womanhood as mother is the first manifestation of the power and is positioned a higher idea even than a father. The Mother is the ultimate energy related with the divine power that protects us, guides us, looks after us and takes us to the right path. That is the divine mother called Kundalini (a coiled up power). That is the real and ultimate energy that is worshipped, no power is as superior as her and she is the omnipotent and omnipresent.  

The only wish Swami Vivekananda had was to support and strengthen the idea of Women Education and Women Empowerment as he sincerely believed that the women living since centuries ago to the modern era, are blessed with high potentials to be the metaphors in their own skies. And as he dreamt, the wheel of time moved ahead and produced the reaps of the seeds sown by such great reformers.

How did the Constitution of India embolden the Rise of Women Empowerment?

There have been several provisions in the form of Articles, have been incorporated in the Constitution of India to give prime importance in regard to the equal protection and equal rights in the eyes of law, lawmakers, people and the entire society for that matter. Some essential articles are that are Art. 14,15,15(3),16,39(a),39(b),39(c),42. As per some of the important articles herein-

Art.15(3)- “Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from making any special provision for women and children”.  
Art.39(a)- The state shall, in particular direct, its policy towards securing – That the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood.  
(d)- that there is equal pay for work for both men and women  
Art.42- The state shall make provision for securing just and humane condition of work and for maternity relief.

B.R. Ambedkar’s contribution towards Women laws and Women Empowerment 
Dr. Baba Saheb Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar is called as the Father of the Indian Constitution, he has been the Chairman of the drafting committee. Not only that, his scholarly, intellectual mind forged him to draft the legal document which lays the basic foundation of the rules but also he contemplated on the laws that held the capacity to educate and empower women. Dr. Ambedkar advocated on his realization that mere enacting laws for women would not pave ways to their ultimate freedom to live with dignity and be proud of the gender they are born with, therefore he enacted the legislations in such a manner that satisfied the urge of women to be equalized with men and put forth some special laws in this regard that enervated the nexus between the legal issues with the political issues in the country that in any way could tantamount to triggering a controversy. The provisions enshrined in the Constitution of India laid emphasis on Art.14,15 and 16, elucidating on equality of sexes and also

13 https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/201032/10/10_conclusion.pdf  
14 C.W., Vol.8, p. 61
including the Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of the State Policy and Fundamental Duties.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar once very beautifully quoted

“Unity is meaningless without the accompaniment of women. Education is fruitless without educated women, and agitation is incomplete without the strength of women”\(^\text{15}\)

**Right to Education**

Jyotibai Phule, one of the pioneers in the educational front in Maharashtra believed that the lack of learning is nothing but gross bestiality. It is through the acquisition of knowledge that she loses her lower status and achieves the higher one. Jyotibai Phule setup the first ever school for women, venerating the importance of receiving education, her deeds prove that education will only be received and not achieved unless we educate other women by educating ourselves.\(^\text{16}\)

**Legislations enacted for Women on Education in Independent India: A driving force to Women Empowerment**

In respect of right to education, the contents and parameters is to be determined in right of articles 41,45, and 46. It means free education up to 14 years of age to every child and after 14 years of age rights get circumscribed by limits of economic capacity of state mentioned in

Unni krishnan, J.P. vs. State of Andhra Pradesh.

**The Special Laws for Women in India**

1. The Family Courts Act,1954
2. The Special Marriage Act,1954
3. The Hindu Marriage Act,1955
4. The Hindu Succession Act,1956 with Amendment in 2005
5. The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act,1956
7. Dowry Prohibition Act,1961
8. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act,1971
9. The Equal Remuneration Act,1976
10. The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act,1983
12. The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act,2005

1. *Women: Reservation*

Reservation of 50% of posts in the favour of female candidates not arbitrary this was well decided in the case of Rajesh Kumar Gupta vs State of Uttar Pradesh, AIR 2005 SC 2540.

Reservation of certain posts exclusively for women is valid under article 15(3), article 15 covers every sphere of State Action.\(^\text{17}\)

Clause (3) of article 15, which permits special provision for women and children has been widely resorted to and the courts have upheld the validity of special measures in legislation or executive orders favouring women. Provisions in criminal

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\(^\text{15}\) Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 3, Department of Education, Govt. of Maharashtra.


\(^\text{17}\) Union of India vs K.P.Prabhakaran, (1997) 11 SCC 638:1998SCC(L&S)327(India)
law, in favour of women, or in the procedural law discriminating in favour of women have been supported. Decided in the case of Girdhar vs State, AIR 1953 MB 147:1953 MB LJ 529. (Section 354, Indian Penal Code) 

Women Reservation in Educational Institution.


Women and Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment of working women amounts to violation of the rights guaranteed by Art.14, 15 and 23 (equality and dignity), the court issued detailed direction on the subject Vishakha vs State of Rajasthan.

Beauty contests: Are they an insult to Womanhood?

It has been held that beauty contests, in their true form, are not objectionable. But, if there is indecent representation of the figure of the women or if there is any matter derogatory of women, then it would offend the Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986 and also Art.21.

Still exists GENDER DISCRIMINATION

According to the survey conducted, Research says that history repeats itself multiple times to reflect the brutal kind of treatment, harassment women were subjected to the barbaric acts that ousted all kinds of peripheries relating humanity. In India where women are worshipped in the forms of goddesses during the time of Navratri, the same country includes states like Rajasthan, Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh exhibiting the statistics about the torture, discrimination, inhuman behaviour which are still prevalent in the norms of some orthodox, parochial minded blood. Although mostly of these are existing as cultural norms in the society of rural areas or semi urban areas however the disheartening aspect of the issue is that the women are still a part of the male dominated society in some way or the other.

Which are the most dangerous states for women in India to live in?

The research says, the states of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan can be held accountable for bearing almost more than half of the nation’s total crimes committed against the females revealed out by the National Crime Records Bureau. There is a visibility of increment in the heinous acts against the women in the country by up to 10% within a period of couple of years and a majority of these are cases of abduction and domestic violence, says the NCRB’s Crimes in India report.

In total 3,59,849 criminal cases against the women are registered across the entire nation. Uttar Pradesh topped with 56,011 cases, carrying on with the freely moving perpetrators followed by Maharashtra and West Bengal, however the number has declined compared to the previous data produced.

However, the Union Territories and the North-eastern states also showed lesser

19 Chandra Rajkumari vs Police Commissioner, Hyderabad, AIR 1998

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number of cases registered against the criminal activities against the women there. These included Arunanchal Pradesh, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, and the seven sisters according to the NCRB data.20

Big Role of Technology and Digitalization in safeguarding the Safety of Women

Living in India as a woman is challenging especially while confronting with the hike in crime rate state wise. It is impossible to turn a state, city, district or area “Woman free”, as not only it will infringe their fundamental rights guaranteed under the Constitution of India but the move will be deemed as an insanity in itself. Moreover, the rise in crime rate should not prevent women from voluntarily residing in any part of the country and earn their own living. Therefore, we must realize that the process of globalization has enhanced the connectivity that fosters advanced technology and digitalization that ensures we have safety applications for Women in India.

Some of them like My Safety Pin, Citizen cop, Himmat, Shake 2 Safety, Bsafe so and so forth. The basic idea is to enabling virtual tracking via GPS, if it is not functioning, location can be identified via SMS or Voice call, some features like Timer alarm to keep contacts informed about the user location. The apps also have the potential to function offline and indicate the Police Stations, Hospitals, Fire Services, Pharmacy or ATM and also allows to report robbery, accident or any natural calamity so that it eases the job of authorities to facilitate and render service.21

Existence of Gender Biasedness in the 21st Century: Is this a Modern Era that we dream of?

The rituals that these overly conservative and not-bohemian society believes to lie in the heart of extreme biasedness towards the concept of a son who is blessed with all the manly powers and the only gender to have the ultimate hegemony in the community, society, city or state. Initiating from the sex determination during the hours of gestation period to the time a woman goes into labour the only wish and prayer which comes out from the core is to be gifted with a “son”. This iconoclastic approach has moulded the men in the saga of male hegemony in such an influential manner that as soon as they reach puberty or turn into a complete adult, subconsciously they develop the swaggering ego of being better, smarter, stronger and highly sufficient than women. Research says that this kind of egotist psychology is common in Asian men. That may not be similar in Western countries as women are far more capable and self-sufficient, less dependent on men and are successful single mothers as well, as men find it arbitrary to act like a thwart in the personal and professional front to quench the thirst of satisfying their ego.

Global Gender Gap Report: India’s Rank

YEAR 2006

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**Women who have carved niches, Reputation Skyrocketed**

It is so heartening to realize that women in all the spheres in the country are excelling in their respective profession. The outstanding dedication and commitment exhibited by them itself creates an aura of celebrating the success of these extremely talented women who have set their goals in the right direction, reached and cherished it with due time. Gone are the days when a jamboree was thrown to welcome the birth of sons, now is the era of women, the time to embolden them since the nascent stage, to support them mentally, physically, psychologically and legally. Be it sports, music, politics, medicines, technology, economy, business, law, literature, army or academics women have set their benchmarks in every field, in every arena being a philosopher, a writer, a novelist or a cop they have emerged as a warrior. Some of the examples will surely accord with its true testimony of being the champions.

**Fields**

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Source:
Sportswomen

Saina Nehwal, Badminton
Mithali Raj, Captain of Indian Cricket Team

Politicians

Sushma Swaraj
J. Jayalalitha

Conclusion.

There has been not a single Era when women failed to prove their mettle in every possible way they could. This research work neither subscribes to the views of pseudo feminists nor does it portray biasedness towards or against any particular gender. The straightforward objective has been to reveal out the status of women from era to era. The research reveals out the truth evident from the historical background of Women, the rights and privileges enjoyed by them in a period and showed how the invasion of foreign bodies deteriorated the revered status of women in India. Sins and barbaric acts replaced the thrones of the women who were reigning some centuries back. How the brutality enhanced the audacity of the perpetrators who illegally acquired the Indian territory, tortured, harassed and killed the dignity of the women all across the country. However, the bloodshed of the fighters was the cause of rebellious attitude in women and that firmed the determination to be vindictive and fight for one’s freedom. By the time the darkest era in the history of mankind was on the verge of ending, people were emboldened enough to welcome the new sun at its first dawn. The women themselves started movements, fought for the freedom and ultimately turned themselves independent along with their contribution towards the nation. Transformation in the thought process of men and women was apparent. Enactment of legislations furthered the rights and royalties of Women. But still prevails some maverick notions that in a way shackles women to fulfil their dreams. Another objective to write this research paper has been to outshout and voice against the gender injustice done to me. The pain of being a victim of unfair biasedness towards a particular gender has strengthened me to pen down the ground realities and reveal out to all those educated nevertheless biased grandmothers who believe that only the grandsons deserve the privilege of bringing laurel and glory to the family, they are the ones who further the generations after generations; soiling the feelings of granddaughters. If a birth of a son in the family is the reason of grand celebration then the birth of a daughter should demand a jamboree too, as they certainly deserve the equal rights, love, care, attention. I feel, we, being the law students and the future of this country, should start taking initiatives to focus more and more on Women Empowerment and the Special Women Laws, by taking small steps from schools to colleges in different districts and states and reaching it to the University level. Spreading legal awareness among our friends, families, society and communities and this needs the tremendous support of all our respected law professors all across the country, legal scholars, honourable judges to encourage these thoughts and imbibe in ourselves first before imparting it to the rest of the world because women today are no more suppressive they do know to fight and win, all they need is the support of their people, the judicial system of their nation; Lastly I
would like to wrap up with a quotation which I formed a couple of days back.

As the history shouts out the woman is someone who was SHE

“She was taunted and teased, harassed and displeased,
She was abused and discriminated, was brutally beaten and polluted,
She has won in all, be it sports, science, law or dance,
Women are blessed to over win themselves if given a Chance”.

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Manu-samhita

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