



Tracing Femininity through Gender Performativity in the Vedic Scripture Sāmaveda

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ABSTRACT

The paper explores the gender roles of feminine figures in the Sāmaveda through the performativity lens popularized by post-feminist theorists, who assess the status of females in the text from the perspective of their actions, whether they are imposed or self-willed. This paper has used two translated versions of the Sāmaveda and applied an academic approach to find how these religious texts construct heavenly goddesses and earthly women as feminine figures, and how they are empowered or marginalized, and thirdly, how the egalitarian worldview of the Vedic society about femininity can be interrogated through the comparative study of the performances and exposure of goddesses and earthly women. The researcher used Tropes V8.4 (English) Software to locate referent sentences, metaphors, and allusions in the texts, and then critically examined the gender roles of the goddesses and earthly dames to explore how this androcentric text blurred the expected varying status of goddesses and earthly women on the point of femininity, though women were, distinctively, marginalized. The phenomenological interpretation of the translated texts reveals that Sāmaveda uses identical epithets to describe both goddesses and earthly females. However, females were domesticated and subjected to typical performances preferred and imposed by priests or hermits. This sheds light on the apparent egalitarian Vedic worldview that translates women as equal to men and a worldly portion of heavenly goddesses. This study underscores that earthly women failed to reciprocate heavenly goddesses based on the justification of the gender performativity lens, and these goddesses are far less emblematic of power like Indra and Āgni. Thus, the androcentric lens categorizes goddesses as belonging below gods and above earthly women, testifying to the feeble versions of bi-polar gendered politics.

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1. Introduction

The Sāmaveda, one of the four Vedic texts, is abloom with the hymns composed by the Aryan hermits to expose the prowess of Gods and Goddesses, drawing on their performativity principle emerging out of various natural forces like thunderbolts, heavy rains, and free flow of rivers, rays, moonlight, and even dawns (Thakur, 2015). Simultaneously, this religious scripture paints pictures of males as hermits and females as wives and daughters performing their distinctive roles amid the background of nature. This picturesque poetry (Dash 2020, 4) revolves around humans in pastoral settings and heavenly powers in the forms of gods and goddesses through natural forces (Patton, 2000, pp. 240–244). The bottom line, the text posits two sets of binary genders – gods and goddesses in the first place; and men and women in the second place – revealed through their distinctive performance abilities tinged with socially constructed gender politics (Bhatnagar, 2009). The hermits, who characterized gods, goddesses, earthly women, and themselves, deliberately or not, put a sharp distinction among the man-gods and woman-goddess, and male-hermits and earthly females, who are easily indicated according to their performativity principles, by means of which the androcentric worldview of the Yōgis (Syed, 2018) is revealed. Then, the second quality of Sāmaveda entails its poetic endowment, hinting at the unrestricted exposure of powerful feelings and emotions of the poet-hermits (Mahameed & Abuhammam, 2024), whose beliefs are established through the configuration of the characters acting throughout the hymns. Upon considering this text as having the quality of literature, it raises consciousness concerning the probability of the socio-culturally constructed gender discourse (Han, 2021) by integrating human experiences of everyday living of contemporariness. The distinctive positioning of gods and goddesses, together with the omnipresence of *Indrā* and *Agnī* in

the Sāmaveda, may be critiqued as reflecting a partisan theological outlook. However, the sustained presence of goddesses can be interpreted as articulating a political voice of the feminine, a dimension largely absent in many monotheistic religious traditions. Drawing this ideology as evidence, it is generally believed that women in the Vēdic society are endowed with power and voice. However, Kumar (2016) and Desai (2019) postulate that the conventional narrative of egalitarian Vēdic society is a myth.

From the perspective of persisting knowledge gap between conventional discourse and real scenario of women's socio-cultural status, this paper searches some critical issues: (a) how the Sāmaveda constructs goddesses distinctive of gods, (b) how the text constructs homestead dames distinctive of male counterparts, (c) how earthly women fail to complement heavenly goddess with feminine status, and (d) how the patriarchal approach to imposed functionality of genders refutes the conventional narrative of Vedic egalitarian worldview. Here, the constructed narrative uses a dialectical process of displaying gender conformity and contrast to explore gender capacity through inter-texts on the issue of femininity justification of both the goddesses and common females. This study is grounded on the objectives: to identify the socio-cultural pattern of terming females, either a goddess or a commoner, in the Sāmaveda, and to explore whether the conventional Vēdic egalitarian societal narrative can be refuted (Denny, 2013a) on the justification of the gender performativity lens. Recent studies show that the conventional egalitarian Vedic society narrative raises debate in the sense that the Vedic agrarian society sacrificed horses, domesticated animals, and valuable treasures as offerings to please *Indrā* and *Agnī*, two of the important gods in the Vedic texts. These primitive practices have been contextualized within the scope of the cosmic rituals, and these activities are a part of the whole ceremonial schema (Denny, 2013b, p. 4), implying the process of integrating all the

activities into the holy rituals ordained for the holy invisible being. Thus, the study tends to explore whether the imposed gender roles are constructed as a part of the holy rituals, whereas it subjugates femininity and cripples their flourishing.

1.1 The Background of the Problem

The Hindu cultural patterns, the Vedic cultural representations in general terms, exceed the Vedic provisions (Sahgal, 2018), tending to gender nullification in the guise of celestial ordination. The Vedic period is governed by four Vedas (Rīg, Sāma, Yājur, and Athrvā Veda), and has a few sub-texts: Aranyākas, which describe the rituals; Brahmanās that make commentaries on the described rituals; Sāmhitās embedded with prayers; and the Upānishads, which are the philosophical narratives of rituals and prayers. It goes that 1500 to 500 BCE was the period that was the essential time for the emergence of these Vedic scriptures - whether they were *śruti* (spoken) or *smṛiti* (written) (Mark, 2019). The theologians and researchers introduced the term Vedic society (Lahiri & Bacus, 2004) quite recently to mark the cultural dichotomous tendency of the Hindu religious belief in modernity. However, this term expanded its scope for discussion out of the temporal ranges of 1500 to 500 BCE; rather, the Vedic society or Vedic culture expounds the totality of the beliefs and practices of the Hindus. The Vedas, remarkably, churned out a culture and a societal ecology following the culture ordained by the Vedas. However, cultural changes and social shifts took place, which can be detected through the division of the Vedic period into the early Vedic period, the later Vedic period, and the post-Vedic period (Lahiri & Bacus, 2004). When the feminist thinkers question the feminine victimhood at the sight of Sītā in the Ramāyanā, and Drāpadī in the Mahābhārata, the conventional response to the fact that social shifting led to brandish feminine presence as Shah (2012) states, women had a distinct valued position in the Vedic texts, and the society revealed

shifting tendencies toward gender issues. In reverse, the search for variances in the performativity of the male and female is not the only identified clue to designate the stark distinction between the male and female in the Vedic scriptures. Rather, Singh (2023) has made a significant dichotomy of the presentation of the Goddess and feminine identity in consideration of the illustrative addresses in Vedic Hinduism. He addresses that the Hindu scriptures tend to reveal women as they are the nurturers who possess the quality of affectionate and caring nurses, along with the quality of warriors, who fight against the defamed darkness of the globe. The dialectical presence of Sītā and Kālī in Hindu mythology verifies the stance of the researcher, who terms this dichotomous presence of women figures as the Nurturant-Warrior prototype. Though the referent female figures originate from the Hindu mythologies, which were developed in the post-Vedic period, the general conception alludes to this representation as a deviation from the normative societal trait in the Vedic society, exposed through the Sāmaveda. This critical situation lets this study turn back to the Vedic scripture to explore whether the invisible figures, as the Vedic Nirākāra (Invisible) Brahmā (Knowledge), succeeded the post-Vedic Swākāra (Visible representation) Gods and goddesses in the mythologies (Jyotirmananda, 2006, p. 58) to testify that the post-Vedic dichotomous leveling of women as chaste and Pandora's Box (Snyder, 2008) traces back to the Vedic gender narrative for its root, where femininity was grounded on gender politics and configured through androcentric lens.

Thus, the problematic narratives about feminine identities range from warrior and savior Goddess, Durgā and Kālī, to marginalized and humanized females like Sītā and Ahalyā in the Aryan cultural history. Hence, this study sets its journey to delve deep into the Vedic scripture, especially Sāmaveda, to locate the extent of feminine representation to verify whether it aligns with the conventional claim of the egalitarian

societal shape of gender performativity, or the in-depth analysis through the Hermeneutic approach (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014) refutes the conformist claim. Hence, the researcher has outlined the objectives of this study as to whether the Sāmaveda reflects the dichotomous status of female identity for goddesses and common females, culminating in outlining goddesses and women in unequal parallels. This search stands against the general narrative regarding the Vedic scriptures, which translate that these represent the golden period of female status (Zaidi et al., 2009), which could highlight females in the sky and on the earth possessing equal treatment in terms of importance, mobility, and contribution.

The problem stated previously invites a few questions, which claim a reasonable solution. The first question that pops up is, 'How is the status of the female reserved in the Vedic scriptures, especially the Sāmaveda, one of the notable Vedas? This 'How' inquires whether the goddesses and common females preserve the distinctive representative roles concerning the exercise of freedom and power.

Then the last question asks, 'Does it reveal the marginalization of females outlined in the literary text of Sāmaveda? Thus, the research paper tends to find solutions to these problems by designating the state of the Vedic text in the case of the misogynistic representation, so that the text translates into a valuable asset in the history of the socio-cultural mystification of matriarchy in the guise of egalitarianism.

1.2 Literature Review

This section situates the three key conceptions of the research title. It is pertinent to explain what is the scope of femininity in this study, how this study uses the Vedic text, and how gender performativity theory is incorporated here.

1.2.1 The Scope of the Vedic Scripture Sāmaveda Sāmhitā

The Sāmaveda is the collection of songs, which eulogizes the creation and the creator, where the Heavenly power is revealed through the natural forces of the surroundings. The prime thing is the offering of prayer through the form of songs. All four Vedas cover 20379 hymns, whereas the Sāmaveda Sāmhitā comprises 1875. Though 75 hymns are unique for this scripture, the rest of the 1800 hymns replicate the Rīg Veda (Stall, 2017; Witzel, 2008). The females are identified in the scripture with specific roles of the Goddesses, the wives of the Gods, and earthly women. The female figures, thus, gained their presence sometimes directly as goddesses and sometimes indirectly as earthly women through simile and metaphor. For instance, a hermit calls upon Somā (the God of Water),

Hey, my daughter grinds the oats, my brother manages the business, and I, am engaged in religious ceremonies. Let you accomplish your task; you pour down as raindrops for Indra (the king of Gods) (Thakur, 2015, p. 22).

Here, the hermit has drawn a picture of distributed daily activities to emphasize the respective duties of every God for the harmonious operation of the world. Again, this reference leads the reader to visualize gender roles where the daughter is ordained to look after the agro-based homestead activities. Thus, the feminine presence, except for the Goddess or the wives of Gods, is traceable (Kumar & Choudhury, 2021), being an essential entity in the agrarian ecology. The earthly females, thus, thrive under feudalism. Due to this agronomic association, this Sāmaveda Sāmhitā can be renamed as a pastoral poetry (Kumar & Choudhury, 2021; Roebuck, 2004). All the flora, fauna, foliage, and natural forces are attired with human passions, emotions, and feelings. Differently, the sketches drawn here are surrounded by multitudes of shapes (landscape, skyscape,

forestry, marine scape) un-ravaged by urbanites. However, the underlying significance of the justification of Sāmaveda as a piece of poetry is to trace out the performing characters and their characterization throughout the text. The gods emerge with their might of procreation, preservation, and destruction; the goddesses appear with their scintillating glow; men arise as hermits to offer Naibedyā for placating the gods; women situate with their distributed roles of assisting the hermits in their rituals. To sum up, this study considers the Vedic text as a piece of pastoral poetry, where all the natural forces align with human feelings and emotions. Hence, gods and goddesses are not considered alien to humans. Rather, they uphold equal human passion and feelings. Next, this text draws a picture of feudal society, and the females get prominence against the backdrop of feudalism.

1.2.2 The Femininity in the Sāmaveda Sāmhita

Femininity is mostly a socio-political code, sponsored by patriarchy. The women in the *Beowulf* are characterized by their domestic code though they were queens and princes (Halder & Phillips, 2019). They are mead-bearers, carers, on-lookers to the comforts of the guests. They just sustain their coded lives. Now, is a woman, growing in the pastoral surroundings like the women in the Sāmaveda, coded? Denton and Collins (2004) have referred to females of the Vedic period passing their golden time having sexual rights and ascetic life by their self-choice. They drew this conclusion along with the references from Rīg Veda. However, there remains a vacuum to determine whether these rights and ascetic lives can be verily dignified. Because, women do not have voice, and their living and practicing rituals are imposed. The goddesses and earthly females are constructed by the hermits, who created the gods of creation, nourishment, and destruction. Hence, there prevails a scope to interpolate gender performances.

Feminist critics tend to show disbelief in the design of the domestic coding, implied in the texts of the religious scriptures, social pamphlets, or literary texts, which let women expose within their borderline of upbringing, growth, and identity. They state that males write the history of females. The extent to which females enjoy rights in sexual behavior is permitted as they are born for this and possessors of the attitudes dictated, verified, and vilified by the patriarchy as if females' identity necessitates the blooming of the males, who have presently decided what the feminine characterization looks like (Snyder, 2008, p. 176). Here, Snyder (2008) terms this feminist attitude toward claiming the secured position of a female in the texts and contexts. A female turns out to be a victim when she is dehumanized, and her performativity is dictated by the patriarchy. The research on the socio-political dynamics of the Vedic scriptures tends to appraise the provision of education for women, participation in religious activities, and rights to choose partners for marriage. However, the research fails to address whether the women have self-exposed identities and identical performativity as their male counterparts, both for the females on earth and goddesses in the sky. Females have biological determinants, in which a man can never participate, and a female is unique in that performativity. However, the designation of a female as an assistant in the religious rituals, and the goddess as the edifice of procreation, whereas gods are like forces, raise questions as to the cause of this distinction and divisions.

Barbie (Gerwig, 2023), an American fantasy comedy film, has strived to break down the imposed feminine domestic code. Barbie, the protagonist, creates self-imposed identity and exercises it. However, this new identity, somehow, fails to accept the general roles of a woman in a society. It harms gender performativity. Hence, Barbie creates a mirage of feigned identity (Halder, 2025). However, the arguments employed in the post-feminism sensibility underscore females

as principally biologically different from males and configure femininity within the scope of performativity, which females enjoy performing and strive to accomplish. The song by the *Spice Girls*, "I'll Tell You What I Want" epitomizes the new realism of feminine identity (Riley et al., 2018). The text, *Sāmaveda*, accommodates females in the form of goddesses and earthly girls. The reporting on the girls in the text, *Sāmaveda*, is rarely enough, and the performativity of the female goddess or females in this text has not been justified. Consequently, females may probably gain imposed identity rather than self-assertion of performances for both the goddess and the girls on earth.

1.2.3 Gender Performativity

This paper is developed with the central idea of females' performativity in the view of post-feminist sensibility. The approach of gender performativity (Hurley, 2015) relies on the performances of genders irrespective of social determinants for females. Thus, gender performativity humanizes women, demystifying the stereotypical identities of white and black women, rich and poor women, and chaste and unchaste women (Anchietta, 2018). Judith Butler first used this concept in her book *gender trouble* (Hurley, 2015). Butler (1990) tries to project that persons, both male and female, do not perform their distinctive roles in society as per the biological determinant. Rather, they learn to behave according to the expectations of society imposed on them. Thus, they turn out to be Barbie dolls (Gerwig, 2023) in a society that acts according to the programmed way. Thus, the paper considers the gender performativity theory to justify the dichotomous gender roles for both goddesses and women in the *Sāmaveda*, and to identify the extent of humanized or objectified roles females play in the text. Drawing on this theoretical framework, the researcher can situate the roles of gods and goddesses, and men and women, so that the researcher can find the answers to the questions about the issues of androcentric

discourse, egalitarian worldview, and the politics of marginalization beyond the guise of idolization of female figure.

2. Materials and Methods

The research based on a religious text follows two approaches: the academic approach and the religious approach. The objective of this study is academic, where the researcher tends to deconstruct religious discourse to gain knowledge on the research questions. As the academic approach analyzes a religious text based on the social contexts of activities, attitudes, and behaviors of the actors in the texts (Gourlay, 2008), the researcher chooses an academic approach for this study. Again, the research questions tend to ask for explanations about the gender roles of the goddesses and females within societal boundaries that validate the appropriateness of this considered approach (Vardi, 2013). In explanation, Vardi (2013) states that an academic approach leads the investigator to dive deep into the complexity regarding the problems, which the researchers tend to solve through questioning, comparing with other shards of evidence, and reaching a new level of knowledge. This new knowledge can change the course of the established conception. Hence, the investigator needs to be free, open-minded, and non-predisposed to any conception that they are seeking to find out.

The researcher has considered the two translated versions of the *Sāmaveda* as the primary sources of the study: *Sambod-Samhita* by Thakur (2015) and *Hymns of the Samaveda* by Griffith (1895). The first book is a Bengali translation, and the second book is an English translation. This researcher cross-checked two of the versions when clarification of the meaning of a hymn was necessary. The researcher converted the digital publication of *Hymns of the Samaveda* by Griffith (1895) into a "txt" file and imported this into *TROPES V 8.4 (English) software* to identify the references for the women and goddesses to identify the

sentences that helped to develop discussion through the lens of gender performativity (Maclaran, 2017). *TROPES V8.4 (English)* displays the results of the text (Griffith, 1895) in various categories like “women”, “goddesses”, “wife”, and “offspring”. This

research, purposively, uses the data displayed in the category of women and goddesses. The extracted texts in the categories of women and goddesses are shown below to demonstrate the nature of references:

Table 1. Extracted References of Earthly Females

References of Woman	References of Mother	References of Dames
7. In the two kindling-blocks lies Jatavedas like the well-cherished germ in pregnant women -- Agni who day by day must be entreated by men who watch provided with oblations. 8. Agni, from days of old thou slayest demons: the friendly Lady makes the light. 2. These morning sacrifices call you, Asvins, at the break of day. As wives embrace their lord, the comely bridegroom, 5. Breath of the mighty Dames , the Child, speeding the plan of sacrifice, the friendly Lady makes the light. 2. The Sun ascending, XVIII Soma Pavamana 1. Breath of the mighty Dames , the Child, speeding the plan of sacrifice, VI Indra-Agni 1. Glorify him who compasses all forests with his glowing Dame . To war that wins a thousand spoils. 2. The dames of Trita with the stones urge forth this golden-coloured one as lover to a dame , to take his station suitor-like. 3. That hero who produces strength, As youth to damsel , VIII Sarasvan 1. We call upon Sarasvan as unmarried men who long for wives , let my ladies full of sacred oil come nigh to thee, and bringing forth the Dame , the great Sire's daughter, Holding aloft the radiant lights of Surya, as messenger of heaven he shines with treasures. 3. Attendant on the blessed Dame the blessed hath come: He, with the triple Dames red-hued, hath won life-power, And sacred songs which bear the Dames of Gods have supplicated him. And measure out to us, thou lover of man-kind,	Thou liest in the logs that are thy mothers : Rapidly hath moved he along his mother earth: Agni, the sire of Kasyapa by faith, the mother , Manu, Sage. A joyful Priest, thy splendour drives our foes afar 5. Taught by seven mothers at his birth was he, for glory of the wise, the streaming mother of the liberal Maruts, pours her milk, 3. The new-born Vritra-slayer asked his mother , Thou and my mother , O good Lord, appear alike, thee as mother -kine unto their calves. 9. Come now the Goddess mother brought thee forth, the blessed mother gave thee life. 11. As, in the morning of its life, the mothers lick the new-born calf. 7. They for the bold and lovely one ply manly vigour like a bow: As son be sets the name of mother and of sire in the far distance, The tawny-hued goes bel- lowing on. 2. The young and sacred mothers of the holy rite have uttered praise, As mothers , Pavamana, lick the new-born calf, the Goddess mother brought thee forth, the blessed mother gave thee life. 2 The Goddess mother brought thee forth, the blessed mother gave thee life. The Goddess mother brought thee forth, the blessed mother gave thee life. as a child, with lauds and sacred gifts 2. Like as a calf with mother cows, mother kine, Him who bath double strength, strong,	the friendly Lady makes the light. 2. These morning sacrifices call you, Asvins, at the break of day. 5. Breath of the mighty Dames , the Child, speeding the plan of sacrifice, the friendly Lady makes the light. 2. The Sun ascending, XVIII Soma Pavamana 1. Breath of the mighty Dames , the Child, speeding the plan of sacri- fice, VI Indra-Agni 1. Glorify him who compasses all forests with his glowing Dame , To war that wins a thousand spoils. 2. The dames of Trita with the stones urge forth this golden-coloured one as lover to a dame , to take his station suitor- like. 3. That hero who produces strength, let my ladies full of sacred oil come nigh to thee, and bringing forth the Dame , the great Sire's daughter, Holding aloft the radiant lights of Surya, as messenger of heaven he shines with treas- ures. 3. Attendant on the blessed Dame the blessed hath come: He, with the triple Dames red-hued, hath won life-power, And sacred songs which bear the Dames of Gods have supplicated him. And measure out to us, thou lover of man-kind, all riches hitherward from men VI Dawn 1. This

Then, the researcher used Bengali-translated text to make a critical analysis of the referent sentences and metaphors, identified in the extracted texts through the software. The researcher used a phenomenological description approach during critical analysis of the roles of goddesses and females (Eberle, 2010).

Thus, the gendered roles of goddesses and females are phenomenologically dictated through a comparative study between the activities of goddesses and the performances of females, and the roles of both entities have been analyzed, critically reviewed, and justified.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 The Construction of Goddesses

Sāmaveda enumerates Indraṛ (god of thunderstorms and heavy rain), Agnī (god of fire), and Somā (god of ambrosia) as the gods, whereas Indraṛ claims the supreme position due to his ability to kill the enemies that hamper the peaceful living of the hermits. Again, Rātri (night), Ūsha (Dawn), and Swarasvatī (goddess of flowing river) assert a central position as the goddesses. Here, the configuration and distinction of them are achieved by aligning them with varied natural forces or natural elements as if there lies a

cosmic relation among the three spaces and the forces, emerging through them on earth, in waterways, and in heaven. No gods and goddess have claimed their emergence without being associated with natural elements or forces (Choudhuri, 2002). The gods and goddesses in the Sāmaveda appear unearthly in the sense that the Greek gods and goddesses have humanistic character traits, feelings, and emotions truly perfect for the human heart (Lashly, 2023). However, the Vedic gods and goddesses reside within the

phenomena surrounding the homesteads, where the hermits, priests, or devotees were living. These divine characters take birth in the cognitive mind of the earthly populace, inscribed in the hymns, and they supersede the prowess of the earthly men who generate them. The earthly human beings are prone to destruction by the invasion of their enemies (Doniger, 2024), and the celestial powers are invoked to compensate for the inabilities of the mundane community.

Table 2. Extracted References of Heavenly Goddesses

References of 'Usha' (Dawn)

thou bright-hued refulgent gift of **Dawn**, Agni, this day to him who pays oblations bring the Gods who waken with the morn!
With those who come at **dawn** let Mitra, DECADE III Agni 1. Agni is awakened by the people's fuel to meet the **Dawn** who cometh like a milch-cow, thou makest fame increase like means of nourishment. 5. At **dawn** let Agni, much-beloved, 7. Indra, accept at **break of day** our Soma mixt with roasted corn, With groats, with cake, with eulogies! red **Dawn** hath shone from far away, the friendly Lady makes the light. 2. These morning sacrifices call you, Asvins, at the **break of day**. Thou waxest great. 3. O heavenly **Dawn**, awaken us to ample opulence to-day, Even as 5. **Dawn** drives away her sister's gloom, and the Law, The brilliant one, hath sent forth hither all the **Dawns**: thou shinest brightly o'er the **Dawns**. XIV **Dawn** 1. Advancing, sending forth her rays, together with the **Dawn**. O **Dawn**, at thine arising, XV Asvins 1. These morning sacrifices call you, Asvins, at the **break of day**. As **Dawn**, like the comings of the **Dawns**, And, with seven priests, the sacrifice. 7. Pressed for the gladdening draught the drops flow forth abundantly with song. Flow with the stream of savoury juice. 8. Winning Vivasvan's glory and speeding the light of **Dawn**.

References of Morning

Agni hath shone forth at the flush of **morning**.
9. Agni advanceth with his lofty banner: 4. Now **Morning** with her earliest light shines forth, dear daughter of the Sky: Come to us quickly both at **morning** and at eve, As like the **Morning**, As, in the **morning** of its life, the mothers lick the new-born calf. 7. They for the bold and lovely one ply manly vigour like a bow: art lightly showing forth thy splendour in the streams. 6. Far-seeing Soma flows, the Steer, the Lord of hymns, the furtherer of days, of **morning**s. XVII Soma Pavamana 1. Far-seeing Soma flows, the Steer, the Lord of hymns, the furtherer of days, of **morning**s. being purified, hath made the **morning**s shine, with brilliancy they mount up to the height of heaven. 3. The foremost spotted Steer bath made the **Morning**s shine: Swift runs this giver of delight. 2. The **Morning** knows all precious things, like the **Morning**. Come hither quickly both at **morning** and at eve, thou rules over wealth VII Asvins 1. Now **Morning** with her earliest light shines forth, dear daughter of the Sky: hath yielded up a birthplace for the **morning**. 2. The fair, the worshipper's most healthful guards from trouble. 3. Yea, come at milking-time, at early **morning** at noon of day.

References of 'Ratri' (Night)

thee the sacrificer's sister hymns Have come to thee before the wind. 4. To thee, illuminer of **night**. O Agni, day by day with prayer, Bringing thee reverence, one form is bright, one holy, like Day and **Night** dissimilar in colour. to our libation with thy bay steeds, Come with bay steeds to the flowing juice 7. Presented strengthening gifts have sent Indra away at sacrifice, With **night**, unto the cleansing bath. 5. Ye rich in strength, through your great power vouchsafe us blessings day and **night**! 2. Close to thy bosom am I. Soma, day and **night** draining the milk, O golden hued, the silvery shines by **night**, by day the golden. 4. Like cars that thunder on their way, like coursers eager for renown, have flowed Soma drops forth for wealth. 5. Forth have rushed they from holding hands, Lord of the brave, preserve our singers both by day and **night**! chasing black **night** he comes with white-rayed morning. 2. Having overcome the glimmering Black with beauty, Agni, far-spreading with conspicuous lustre, hath covered **night** with whitely-shining garments. Agni, shining of thyself by **night** and when the morning breaks, Burn, VI Soma Pavamana 1. Then thou, made beautiful by **night**, interest into mighty deeds, **Night**, sent away for Savitar's uprising, **Night** and Dawn clash not, and when the Sun is setting, By day, at

Moreover, the phenomenological description of the goddess posits that they comply with the association of light, night, and life – the identical relationship linked to the women on earth. One thing that is unlikely between these two groups of identical sexes is that the goddess seems liberated from the gods for their evolution, which seems uncommon for the earthly women, as the women, bright and kind, had to provide support to their priest-husbands in their ritualistic tasks (Dubey, 2016). In both cases, goddesses and earthly females are not sources of light; they are,

rather, the carriers of light. Arūn (the sun) and Agnī (fire) tend to be the source of light, and Ushā (Dawn) and 'friendly lady' distribute it (Choudhuri, 2002, p. 200). Thus, the Vedic goddesses are liberated, and they have self-identity. And yet, they are, somehow, glorified by the assistance of gods. They are a part of the grand schema of the godly world. Gods are godly, whereas goddesses are womanly at times, underscoring the revelation of gendered distinctiveness in the configuration of gods and goddesses.

3.2 The Construction of Women

The *Hymns of the Samaveda* capture 19 references to women in the *Tropes V 8.4 (English)*. Here, a specified category of women, who are dames, damsels, ladies, pregnant women, and mothers, are cherished in the texts. Two remarkable issues are noticeable. Firstly, the use of epithets – mighty, glowing, and blessed dames, friendly and radiant ladies – before the qualifying names, and secondly, the recognition of those women on the justification of their biological determinants – perhaps appealing complexions, which tend to soothe the eyes of the beholders, who were writing the hymns imagining these metaphors living nearby (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015). Here, the gendering, whether it exposes the brightening or darkening feature of femininity (Rubin et al., 2020), emerges through male conformity biases.

However, it is unlikely to seek the complete evolution of women in this Sāmaveda as it purposefully writes to express human impressionism towards natural forces and the power intertwined (Larson, 2014). A pregnant woman is blessed, and societal ecology expects her to give birth to a blessed boy, as the hermits offer their prayers to Agnī so that they can father a baby boy (Kumar, 2019). The texts underrate the girl child in the case of ritual performances, though the Goddess acquires a distinct place in the text, even in the form of a mother. The underlying truth behind it is that a baby boy sometimes is positioned as qualified as a mother goddess. The hermits pray to Indrā for the gift of a baby boy as mighty as Indrā so that they can protect their homestead and community from their enemies (Thakur, 2015). Thus, a baby boy necessitates being purposeful in the ritual, protection, and idolization as a demi-god close to goddesses in earthly performances.

The data reveals two important essential tasks ordained to the women, firstly, *'the friendly Lady makes the light'*, and secondly,

the women *'bring refreshment to the liberal devotee'*. Hence, the unrhetorical confession exposes the fact of a woman's task being a candle bearer – who enkindles the homestead with light – and an attendant to help the devotee (her husband, or male members in the family) prepare all ingredients for prayer, and make the pulpit ready. The state of living and life referred to here falls in a simplistic domesticated state of affairs surrounded by foliage (Kumar & Choudhury, 2021). Again, the binary performances are disposed of through meditation, the oblation of fire, and homa (havan) for the priests – males in general – and lighting fire for the pulpit, helping to prepare havan and kindling the houses at dusk (Bermúdez Figueroa et al., 2023) having attired with the domesticated feature and permeated with their evolution surrounding the domesticated ecology. The Vedic women, according to the discussion, are honored as a mother figure. When this society idolizes a boy, it is assumed that the mother of a baby boy and the mother of a baby girl are, distinctively, prioritized.

3.3 The Limits of Mortal Femininity

Hindu mythology configures goddesses with dual characterization. They are fatal and amicable. On the flip side, Sāmaveda characterizes goddesses as nurturing and amicable. They stand for caregiving as the hymn reads,

“Arunā (the sun) never quits. Rather, he rests at the abode of Ratrī (the night)”. Then, Ūsha (the dawn), the sister of Ratrī, arrives at the scene. Ratrī departs without much ado and lets Arunā have communion with Ūsha. In addition, they flicker beams so that the world gets the spirit of activity” (Thakur, 2015, p. 56).

Here, Ratrī and Ūsha align with the Heavenly dames, Ūrvashi, for instance, who please gods with their hypnotizing power. Under the guise of the story of love-struck, the hermits juxtapose the feminine dual in these

goddesses, as if they had been living on earth and competing with each other in the chase of winning the heart of one dreamy prince. Again, the natural phenomena get gendered revelation: 'sun', the preserver of strength, power, and freedom, can choose where to lie down. On the other side, 'night' and 'dawn' are the epitome of hypnotizing entities, and they are enlightened with borrowed rays from the sun (Roebuck, 2004). Nevertheless, the texts put a sharp distinction between the Nurturant goddesses and the glowing, kind women in terms of possessiveness. The blessed women are possessed by their priests, and they expose the way the priests want to be, though the Nurturant goddesses are "self-manifested" (Sharma, 2020). Ūsha leads *Arunā* to come out, and his dazzling light begins to provide life to the foliage. Swarashvāti lets rivers flow, and all living organisms get food for sustenance. It reveals the narrative of a gynocentric worldview (Bhandari, 2024), which engulfs the knowledge space, and the feminine identity is constructed through the lens of a parochial outlook.

3.4 Refutation of the Vedic Egalitarian Worldview

The core argument, necessary to place here, is that the females – whether in the forms of unearthly goddesses or forms of earthly dames – are conserved to be possessed with soft natural phenomena like let there be light, let the organisms provide water for drinking and planting, keeping aside the possibility of bloodshed, killing, and destroying. The findings of Durham (2019), however, comply with the identical tendencies of ancient Greece in the treatment of females and goddesses. The stark difference between the mythological women and goddesses was the question of freedom. The Greek females did not enjoy freedom, though it had exception in the matter of sexuality. It says they were devoid of observing religious rituals and getting a formal education, though the Vedic females surpassed the Greeks in the question of contributing to the observances of

religious activities and getting an education. However, the goddesses, both in Greek mythology and Sāmaveda have self-existing faculty, which lets them emerge without godly contextualization – favor or fear imposed on them by the manly dictum, which Diesel (2004) regards as an androgenic perception about gender. Yet, the representation and treatment of the goddess, Amman, in the Hindu Dravidian culture brings out gynocentric narratives of gender performativity. This goddess possesses ambivalent features and disseminates the power of procreation and destruction over the society that the myths translate. In reverse, the Aryan Goddesses, which the Vedic scriptures bring out, are relegated to the status of below-Amman goddess. This castigated performativity brings forth the patriarchal narratives of the distributed standard of gods and goddesses (Diesel, 2004, p. 7) drawn by the priesthood that constructs binary opposition (Rahman et al., 2023) in order to brandish and subjugate females as amicable, nurturers, carers, and service providers within the boundaries of domestic code.

The Vedic goddesses are not ambidextrous, though their possessed light enlightens them. In contrast, females on earth are portrayed through the roles of praiseworthy mothers and blessed wives more prominently than the roles of the light bearer for the family and protector for the clan, for which the sons claim the topmost favor in this scripture. Thus, the females are bound to the domesticated circles. They can never glow out of this domesticated tenet. The identity of a female is notably relational and emerges through the relationship status of 'wives', 'mothers', and 'daughters'. Thus, the Vedic goddesses possess freedom of expression without having a consort by their side, and they are the prototype of the nurturing feature of womanhood. More notably, they appear as couriers, who, Ushā the dawn, for instance, pass the light of Sūryadeva to the living beings of the earth. Thus, there remains a hierarchy between gods and goddesses, and

hermits and women. Again, the goddesses and women represent amicability, caring, and breeding. However, they are not identical in configuration. The goddesses are self-manifested, whereas the women are identified through relational status. Hence, the prominence of goddesses does not necessarily reflect that women are stratified as godly.

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Sāmaveda does not avail with gods and goddesses as well as the mundane activities of earthly men and women (Saxena, 2018). It draws pictures of a society remote from the hustle and bustle of human activities in a township (Dash, 2020). Nevertheless, the text traces the acted upon gendered roles played by both genders - masculine and feminine, for sure. As the research questions tend to focus on the feminine spaces - 'gender performativity' (Butler, 1990) from a post-feministic point of view- this paper strived to dig out the possible arenas the goddesses and females on earth were wandering about. The prime distinction the text weaved through its letters was that 'goddesses act upon: females are acted upon' (Rawat, 2014). The universal treatment of mythological politics concerning gender is that femininity is suppressed and marginalized concerning their choice, freedom, and voice (Rahman et al., 2025), as Helen and Cassandra were objects and prizes in the man-dominated discourse. Drawing on the insight from the universality of gender politics in scriptures and mythology, it can be rejected that the Vedic scriptures offered lineal justice to the female actors (Zaidi et al., 2009), earthly women, and heavenly deities, according to the principle of gender performativity standing above social construction (Denny, 2013b). Even this scripture cannot ensure a utopian state (Brenner & Haaken, 2000) based on parity in the performances of men and women, gods and goddesses. Alternatively, the in-depth critical study (Morselli, 2019) proved that goddesses have claimed a dignified position in the Sāmaveda with their freedom of

performance, whereas women on earth are ordained with the tasks necessary for enlightening the homestead and for the preparation of their husbands or sons to offer ablation and havan to their gods and goddesses. Goddesses are nature; women are nurturers (Ballard, 2002). If the text cannot refer to the homestead and the presence of the priests, the nurturer women have no roles to play in that society. Thus, the results retrieved through critical evaluation of the Sāmaveda may be the beginning of a journey to delve into the problem of reverse placement of goddesses and females (Jayan & Sankaranarayanan, 2017) in the later mythological Hindu society.

Implication for Future Research

This is not empirical research (Patten, 2016, p. 3) in the sense that the researcher has not used the personal observation method on the phenomenon. The researcher has applied socio-psychological theories for this sort of qualitative research based on the religious text. First, the author has used translated versions of the Sanskrit text, which, in no way, can ever be the justification of the primary text due to the varied nature of connotations of the vocabulary based on time. Then, the researcher has not considered the whole articulations of the texts; rather, the paper has narrowed down its scope only to verify the performativity of goddesses and damsels on earth. Thus, the paper may not predict the whole of the text.

Yet, it is an effort to apply a multidisciplinary approach to the textual interpretation, which will lead the researchers to view a religious text from the socio-political perspectives. Again, language, geography, and culture are not barriers to research. A well-formatted methodology and convincing approach can help to delimit the barriers of research addressed in the limitations part of the paper. Any text has some contextual value, which details the social and cultural practices and behaviors of that time. Thus, the intervention of a multidisciplinary approach to evaluate

this religious text may be justified and placed to the next generation of researchers for further research.

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Conflict of Interest

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