The earliest literary compositions of the Vedas are the most important and valuable contribution of the Êryans to the Indian culture. The term ‘Veda’ or ‘Vedic literature’ refers to the sacred literature of the Vedic and the Brîhma,ical religion. The Vedic literature consists of four different classes of literary works: the Sanhitas, the Brîhma,as, the Ēra,yakas and the ÚpaniÂads. The major portion of the Vedas is in the form of hymns and these hymns are divided into four different collections called Sanhitas. They are the Êgveda Sanhit¡, the Yajñveda Sanhิต¡, the Sîmaveda Sanhit¡ and the Atharvaveda Sanhit¡. Each Veda contains its own Brîhma, as, and they help to understand the origin and ritualistic meaning of various hymns. Brîhma,as are namely the Êgveda Brîhma,a the Yajñveda Brîhma,a, the Sîmaveda Brîhma,a and the Atharvaveda Brîhma,a. The Ēra,yakas are generally called ‘forest books.’ It contains little of the exalted mysticism of the ÚpaniÂads, being mainly concerned with the same theme as the
Bṛhmaṇas. The Upaniṣads contain the secrets of the mysterious doctrine of the Ēryans. The Vedic literature is properly considered ‘āruti’ (literally it means, “what is heard”), i.e., something that arises from beyond beings and is merely heard by them. According to the traditional Hindu belief, it was not composed by any living being but was revealed to certain sages by the Ultimate and they passed that knowledge orally from one generation to another. Due to this reason, this literature is regarded as the most sacred and it includes the Vedas in its fold. The Vedas are mostly religious in character and give us a little insight into the social conditions of the people of that period.

In modern times, the social status of a class generally depends upon its education, economic condition and political privileges. In contrast, the social status of every Indian citizen largely depended upon religious privileges and disabilities in the Vedic times. Both religion and social life were so mixed together that nobody could distinguish one from the other. The religious and social welfare of women first begin to take definite shape during this period.
The position of women in society varied over time and age. It was same in the Vedic literature. When one asks the question and offers answers on the position of women, there is an implicit assumption that the position ascribed to them is something that is given by others. So, it is said that women were accorded respect, or high status. The underlying notion is that women were passive recipients of various social honours during the different stages of their life as infant, daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, etc.

Serious historical scholarship in the Vedic age acknowledges that men hardly are a useful category of analysis. In this world, there are many kinds of men, rulers, priests, merchants, craftsmen, peasants, hunters, fishermen, herdsmen and so on. In other words, the homogeneity of the category of men is broken down by complex social, political and economic realities. These divisions are often further complicated by various categories based on cultural, religious, and regional traditions. So while studying about the women in the Vedic age, it is important and necessary to ask which category of women were focussed on, how their histories were shaped, and in what ways these were different from identical to those of men and women who belonged to other categories.
While analysing the position of women in Vedic literature, it is evident that women did not occupy high positions. It is necessary to go beyond chanting the names of a handful of women seers. It is not a wonder that India had a past where the position and status of women were deplorable in the areas of caste, religion, family and tradition.

The topic of this research is “The Position of Women in Vedic Literature – A Study.” The main objective of the study is to examine the socio-cultural and political status of women in Vedic literature against its historical background. This study is an attempt at highlighting the role of women in Vedic literature. In this attempt, an effort has been made to rearrange and deal with the already known facts of history. Hence, it is found that there are long and inexplicable lacunae, primarily on account of the absence of recorded history that any sweeping generalization may imperil the truth. Further observation is that women who mattered in religious and social life were generally exploited by either the holders of power or the seekers of power. Consequently, women always played second fiddle to men in the socio-political life.
The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is an introduction of the various aspects of the cultural formation of India. It discusses in particular Vedic literature and culture on the structure of Ēryan tribes. As the male community was the dominant figure and holder of property, the structure of Ēryan tribes became patriarchal. Family was the basic unit in the Ēryan society.

The second chapter analyzes the position of women in the Sanhitas. Nowhere can anyone see any equal opportunity in the society given to women in the Sanhitas. The women had no property and funeral rites such as pi, da.

The third chapter explicates the role of women in the Brähmaṇas. In Brahmanical texts, the religious rituals are extravagantly described and mythologically justified. Throughout Indian social and intellectual history, women were seen to have played comparatively a minor role in the formation and development of social, religious and philosophical thinking.

The fourth chapter evaluates the social rank of women in the Ēra, yakas and the Upaniṣads. The references in the Ēra, yakas and the Upaniṣads consider women are the medium through which man manifests himself. Gender equality is absent in Bhadraṇa, yaka.
Upaniṣad and this inequality is a noticeable phenomenon in Bhādarāyaṇa Upaniṣads.

The fifth chapter on the position of women in Vedic literature is an analysis of the status of women in the Vedic India, the tradition of learning and the education of that period. In early Indian society, there were women seers who composed Vedic hymns. This has been held up as a symbol of women's status. But, assessing the level of education on the basis of these women seers and their status is more complicated.

The sixth chapter brings together the findings of the study and concludes with suggestions and remedial measures. This study is an attempt at highlighting the role of women in Vedic Literature. In this attempt, an effort has been made to rearrange the already known facts of history. For this study, both primary and secondary sources have been extensively evaluated to analyse the position of women in Vedic literature.

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