Chapter III

THE SPACE PROVIDED IN
BRĀHMAṆAS AND UPANIṢATS
SECTION - I

Space provided in the Brāhmaṇas
This chapter is an account of the ancient Indian Civilization as revealed in the Brāhmaṇa literature and in Upaniṣats. A civilization finds expression through social, economic, political, religious and philosophical aspects. In this chapter an attempt has been made to give a comprehensive picture of ancient society revealed in the Brāhmaṇa and Upaniṣat literature.

This chapter is divided into two sections. Section I will be an account of the feminine space reflected in the Brāhmaṇa Literature and Section II will furnish an estimate of the space allowed for women in the Upaniṣat literature.

The Vedic literature consists of Mantra and Brāhmaṇa. The Brāhmaṇas together with the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣats or the other part of the Vedic literature in its wider form. The Brāhmaṇas form a part and parcel of the Vedic literature. Generally the Brāhmaṇa are the explanations of the original text i.e., the Vedas. The term Brāhmaṇa has been interpreted in
various ways. It has come from the word 'Brahman'. Some scholars hold that as the Brāhmaṇa texts are the expositions of the Samhitā Part of the Veda; the term 'Brahman' itself means Veda. Some scholars interpreted the term 'Brahman' as the origin of the word 'Brāhmaṇa' to mean brāhmaṇa or priests versed in the sacred erudition. The great scholar Patanjali, the author of the Mahābhāsyā, has commented as the words 'Brahman' and 'Brāhmaṇa' convey the same meaning.¹

The importance of the Brāhmaṇa literature can never be estimated. The texts are invaluable jewels not only of sacrificial belongings, but also of ancient Indian thought and civilisation which finds expression through legendary erudition, social and political customs, metaphysical thought and so on. Brāhmaṇa literature is a huge bulky one where we find exhaustive description of various aspects of human life. Although the narratives are to some extent full of exaggerations but the actual tuning of society for human life is found there in. Each of the Samhitās have their own Brāhmaṇas which are enumerated below:

1. Aṣṭādhyayi V : 1 : 1 Samānārthā Vetau brahman - śabdho brāhmaṇa - Šabdaśēa

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Ṛgveda has two brāhmaṇas viz., Aitareya and Kausitaki Brāhmaṇa, the latter one is also known as - Śāṅkhyānyana Br Yajurveda has two sections and each section has their Brāhmaṇas namely. Taitiriya Bṛāhmaṇa of the Black Yajurveda and Śatapatha Bṛāhmaṇa of the white Yajurveda to name the most important ones. To the Sāmaveda belongs several Brs. Kumarila Bhatta observed in his ‘Tantravārttika’ that there are eight Brāhmaṇas of the Sāmaveda. These are - Pañcavimsa Br, the Saḍavimsa Br, the Chāndogya Br, Jaiminiya Br, Sāmavidhāna, Devatā dhyāya Ārseyā and Vaṁśa. The last four Brāhmaṇas are the index of the Sāmaveda. Hence, first four are the main Brāhmaṇas belonged to Sāmaveda. Atharvaveda has only one Brāhmaṇa namely Gopatha Brāhmaṇa which is divided into two parts. Purva (former) and Uttara (latter). Amongst these Brāhmaṇas the two Brāhmaṇas viz. ABṛ and S.Bṛ are of the highest importance and are the real source of information. The ABṛ is a collection of the illustrative and explanatory duties of the priests of the Ṛgveda.
The SBṛ belongs to the Vajasaneyi Samḥitā or white Yujurveda. This is the best known, and undoubtedly most voluminous and on the merit of its contents the most important of all the Brāhmaṇas.

The space of women as is depicted in the Samhita period is not the same in the Brāhmaṇa text. The Samhitās of the four Vedas gave a wide space for women. In Brāhmaṇa literature the space for women is full of vivid account in different phases of their life. The ritualistic precepts and regulation made from time immemorial on various aspects of religious practices in the Brāhmaṇas give profuse light on almost every perspective of a woman’s life in Vedic civilization. The different stages of a women's life is enumerated as - Education, Wedding, Role of a wife, Widowhood and last but not least Inheritance and Levirate (Niyoga) system.

The vedic society was a patriarchal society. The father was the head and superior body of the family. It was a joint family where grandfather to grandsons and brother in law to nephews and their wives live altogether. One hymn of AV conveniently place here to describe the
ideal nature of family “The husband and the wife are to be of one mind; the matron is to be noted for the sweetness of speech; brothers and sisters are to be of one accord; sons are to be smart and intelligent so as to carry on and further the work of father.” In this verse, we find a family always believe on son, that he is the protector of the family. In the Brāhmaṇas the attitude of society towards women is different from the vedic era. In brāhmaṇic society, marriage was regarded as a sacrament. It was almost obligatory for every man and woman to marry each other. A man was regarded incomplete without a wife. ABṛ 1-2-5 states that man considers him as a complete whole when he secures a wife. Moreover, it has been said that, Gods do not accept oblations from a bachelor’s hands. Because of this regards, the sacrificer’s wife was regarded as an integral part of the sacrifice. The SBṛ also declares that ‘Wife is the one-half of the husband’, thus no one is regarded as full born but remains incomplete until he married and gets his wife. One attains everything in this world and becomes a complete body when he

2. ‘Tasmād Puruso Jāyam Vithā Kṛṣṇataṁ vātmānam ṛṇyate.’

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is blessed with a wife. A vedic passages of SBr states ‘Man is only one half; he is not complete till he is united with a wife and gives birth to children’. The reason of considering the man as incomplete without marriage is, man wants to regenerate but, without a wife, he is unable to fulfil his desires. So long he is not regenerated, he considers himself incomplete. He wants to get the supreme goal by obtaining her as his wife. This verse proved the importance of women and wedding in the social life. Besides, one without a wife was not allowed to access to perform any sacrifice because every sacrifice had to be performed by the husband and wife i.e yajamāna (sacrificer) and yajamāna-patnī (wife of the sacrificer) jointly. The status of women in the Vedas is known to be raised by allowing her the active participation in the Vedic sacrifices. The rules of sacrifice is that the sacrificer has to partake with his wife. The term ‘Patnī’ etymologically means one who helps the husband in performing sacrifice. Thus SBr states one who is without a wife whether a widower or a bachelor was not permitted to perform any sacrifice.

3. SBr. 5-2-1-10, -Ardho ha vā esā a-tmano yajjāyā tāsmād yavajjāyām na vindte naiva tāvat Prajāyate, Sarvohi tāvad bhavatyatha yadaiva jāyām vindate.

4. SBr. V-1-6-10. Ardho ha vaisa ātmanastasmādyābajjāyam bna bindate Ardho ha tavaddhavati Atho yadaiva jāyām - - - - - - - - sarvo bhabati.

5. TBr. II : 2 : 2 : 6 Ayajñiyo vaiso yapathikah'.
Hence it has been believed that oblations offered by a bachelor to Gods or ancestors are unacceptable to them similarly a Vedic verse says that a person, who is unmarried, ritually he is regarded as unholy. The sacrificer has to be a married one. It has been considered that from the religious point of view a unmarried man is not fully eligible to participate in any sacraments. Even now in society this custom continues in rituals. In the absence of the wife, keeping her image aside to indicate her symbolical presence at the time of a sacrifice are due to same reason. Therefore a Vedic passage truly states- the marriage opened a new age of holy life which was to led at the altar of truth and duty.

Therefore, it can be rightly infered that the brāhmaṇic society placed the women in a honourable position. After doing a survey on the space of women as reflected in Brāhmaṇs it has been observed in a verse as ‘Wife is the hind part of the sacrifice’ and the sacrificer wishes his wife to appease him by joining him in sacrifice. It was the rule that the wife of the sacrificer had to sit within the circle of the sacrifice, and

6. RV X. 85. 24. Ṛtasya yośau Sukṛtasya lokeoriṣṭām tvā saha patyā dadhāmi.
7. SBr. 5-2-1-8 “Taghanārdho vā esa yajñasya yatpatnī.
8. SBr. 11-4-3-2 ‘Strē vā esā yat Śrēh.

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she had to access to the sacrificial altar. An important part of each sacrifice was called Patni-Samyāja wherein the wife of the sacrificer had to utter Vedic hymns and perform certain rites. The age of the Brāhmaṇas was an age of sacrifice and all the text of Brāhmaṇa are the ritualistic texts bearing elaborate records of sacrificial accessories. Thus, it may be considered that wedding was regarded as an obligatory ritual in that age, where women occupied a remarkable place. Thus a custom has been maintained by the society that killing of a women was like the slaying of a Brāhmaṇa, which was strictly prohibited, because woman was regarded as an incarnation of Srī i.e, Goddess of grace. SBṛ clearly states that ‘A women is indeed the incarnation of Srī, hence they never kill a women’. SBṛ finely stated the cordial relation between the husband and the wife as - ‘Truth is male, faith is female, mind is husband speech is wife, wherever the husband is, there is the wife too.’

The sweet and holy relation between the spouses are nicely described in some verses of the Brāhmaṇas in this way - just as truth and trust go

9. Vṛśa Satyam, yosā Śraddhā, vṛśamano yosā vāk, yatraiva Patistatra jāyā.
10. ABr. 7-33-1 ‘Patirjāyām Praviṣāti garbho bhūtva sa mātaram Taryām Punarnavo Bhutvā Dasame māsi jāyate, Tarmād ʹʹʹʹʹʹʹʹʹʹʹʹʹ Punah.
together so as mind and speech are inseparable, likewise the relation between the married couple is inseparable. Marriage is recognized as a spiritual bond that exists both in this life and next, which is a union of hearts. The ABṛ clearly describes the true meaning of the term “Jāyā” as- by contact with the husband enters into the body of the wife in the shape of embryo which the wife delivered a baby putting on a new body in the shape of the son. Hence the wife is called Jāyā, as the husband is reborn in her. Available evidence shows that women used to respect their husbands as their Gods. Regarding the indissoluble nature of the wedding ritual a verse of SBṛ can be quoted where we find a married woman Sukanyā by name says, ‘I shall never repudiate my husband to whom my father offered me.’ This verse truly conveys the nature of a ideal girl. Who respects her father’s choice. Sukanyā was the daughter of king Śaryana. SBṛ IV-1-5-9 records that the Brāhmaṇa Cyavana married the Kṣatriya girl Sukanyā who was devoted to her husband. From this statement it can rightly by deduced that, inter-caste marriage was prevalent in the brahmanic society. We find a general

11. SBr. 4-1-5-9 - Sā (Sukanyā) hovāca, yasmai mām pitā adānaivāham tam Rāsyāmūti.

12. SBr. 1-8-3-6. ‘Samanādeva purusādatta cādyasca jāyate idam hi caturthe puruse trtiye samgacchāmaha iti.’
rule in SBṛ which runs to prove that marriage within the third or fourth step on either paternal or maternal side was in vogue. Society allowed congenital marriages and marriage within the agnates and cognates were not allowed. On the other side marriages within the same gotra was not explicitly prohibited. Marriages outside the paternal relations must have been the appreciable wedding. Inter-caste marriage which was happened within the three higher cast with lower caste was in vogue. Marriages of a brāhmaṇa male with a Kṣatriya female of a Kṣatriya male with a Vaiśya female and Vaiśya with Śūdra female are often found in the later Vedic literature. This custom witnessed the general rule that the position of sexual morality was very high. Chastity of women was regarded as a precious treasure. In certain passage we came to know that the beauty of female was noticed by the people of society. The SBṛ and TBṛ states ‘He thereby bestows on the women beautiful form, where the beautiful maiden is suitable to become dear (to man). It has been observed in few verses of SBṛ which has compared the shape of the sacrificial altar with the shape of a woman. These verses remarked

13. Evamiva hi yosām prāsamsanti Prthuśroni vimrśāntārā sā madhye samgrāhyā.
"They praise the figure of a woman, whose waist will be thin and lower side should be broad." The beautiful locks of the fair female and fashion of nice plaing was referred in other verse- 'That indeed is the perfect figure of women, to wit, fair-knotted and well-braided.' From these above passage it can be infered that women used to maintain their beauty in the society. Hence the society seems to be aware of female beauty and loveliness. Some veritable references witnessed that Polygamy was prevalent in vedic civilization. It was countenanced in society. Available references indicates that the king was legally allowed to have four wives, who were belonged to the three castes. These queens are categorized as Mahisi, the chief queen, the most favorite queen was called Vāvātā, the barren and neglected wife of the king was known as Parivṛktā and the fourth wife Pālāgalī was lower than the other three queens in caste and in social status.

We now proceed to do a survey on the making of king in ancient India and the note of woemen there. Kingship in ancient India was hereditary in nature. Ten types of kingship are found as - Rājya,

14. SBr. 6-5-1-10 Etadu yosāyai samrddam rūpam yat Sukapardā Sukurera svanpasā Samardhayati.'

15. SBr. 5-3-1-6 'Etad vā asyaikam ratnam ---------------- evaitena sūyate tam Svamanapakraminam Kurute.
Sāmrājya, Bhaujya, Svārājya, Vairājya, Pārameṣṭhya, Māhārājya, Ādhipatya, Svavaśatā and Ātiṣṭha, i.e. kingship, overlordship, paramount rule, self-rule, sovereignty, supreme authority, great kingship, suzerainty, supremacy and pre-eminence respectively. The term Rājya refers to Kingship. Some of these terms like Svārjyā i.e., self-rule etc. bespeak of kingship. Different sacrifices were connected with various types of Kingship. It has been believed that one can become a king if he performs the Rājasūya sacrifice and for an emperor, he should perform the Vājapeya and paramount sovereign i.e. ‘Sarvabhauma’ by the performance of the celebrated horse-sacrifice i.e. the Aśvamedha sacrifice.

The Rājasūya sacrifice was connected with the coronation ceremony. In the Atharveveda, the two Brāhmaṇas viz.. ABṛ and SBṛ has a large detail of this ceremony. In this context, we come across one special feature of it viz. the presence of Ratnins or king-makers. The list of king makers comprises the Purohita or royal chaplain, the chief queen, commander-in-chief and subsidiary kings, treasurer etc. The king was
recognized as jewel (Ratna) and the protectors of this jewel were termed as Ratnins. In the coronation ceremony of the king, the Ratnin took place an important rule. The king sought the consent of all the Ratnins. i.e, king makers. When each Ratnin with one accord approve their view, then only the king became eligible for consecration; if they do not ratify or disallow the king an not be declared as a king. Hence, the king regarded each of the Ratnins as loyal supporter. This fact is recorded in clear and unmistakable terms in the Br texts. SBr states ‘It is for him that he is thereby consecrated and him he makes his own faithful follower.’

The king had usually four wives or queens called Mahisi, Vavata, Parivrkt and Pallengal. The chief queen who was duly consecrated was named as Mahisi; who is a counted among of the Ratnins. In this context. ABr states the same-‘The king had three types of wives of which the Mahisi came from higher caste, Vavata was a descendant of middle class and Parivrkt came of the lower cast.’ The SBr clearly observes ‘Aputra vai Patni Parivrkt i.e, the barren wife of the king is the discarded wife. The chief queen was included among the Ratnins.

16. ABr. 3-12-1 ‘Rajjam hi trividhah Striyah. Tatrottamjatermahisi nama, madhyamajater vavatrito, adhamajateh Parivrktirite.’

17. SBr. IV-3-3-6 -Visa vai ksatriyo valavan bhavati.’
which is discussed above and was a member of the royal cabinet. Amongst the Ratnins, the Chief queen Mahisi represented the military or ruling class. Thus it can be infer that women had the right to show their ability in administrative purposes. And they were deserved to represent the ruling class. Thus the references refered that the society was liberal to women. Hence it can be said that there were no such restriction to confined them in house. The brāhmaṇic society has given them the most honourable position as one among the king makers. Besides, the chief queen i.e, Mahisi was indispensable to the king in the performance of sacrifices and religious rites. Moreover, in certain sacrifices like Aśvamedha etc the presence and active cooperation of all the four queens was essentially required. The inclusion of the chief queen among king makers bespeak her constitutional status. This high status of Ratnin given to the queen appears to have been due to the fact that in Brāhmaṇic society women occupied a remarkable position within the common people. It has been observed that the queens, brothers of kings and princes all enjoyed an esteemed position. The inclusion of
the chief queen in the list of king makers and the honourable position she occupied in cabinet amply bespeak her constitutional status. Though the prince was the heir apparent to the throne but the queen is found as an adviser of the king. Besides the chief queen Mahisi, the other queen who is the most favorite of king also enjoyed an honourable position as a mediator between the king and his subjects. If the people failed to show their courage to place their grievances before the king for readjust their demands, they were often appealing to the favorite queen Vāvātā, who become their spokesman and championed their cause. From the religious point of view miserable was the position of the fourth wife of a king. Because she belongs to low caste by birth, had no right to participate in Vedic rituals. Above on the named as discarded wife.

The foundation of a kingdom depends on the goodwill of the subjects. This truth was known to the Vedic Aryans and find expression in the Brahmanical texts. SBṛ has quoted this verse 'It is through the people that the king ruled.' Same brahmaṇa goes further and repeated the same
verse as ‘The nobility is strengthened by the subjects’. It has observed that the voice of the queen was highly respected by the subjects. Apart from this, it has believed that the favourite queen Vāvātā, who was beloved to her husband, used to plead for the cause of the people to the king and the lord of the kingdom found to grated her wish. Therefore it can be said that the queens represent the women of the then society. Observing their well-establishment in various activities, it can be deduced that the ancients king had provided all the required rights and privileges and pleased them with a respectable designation as Ratnins and mediator etc.

Therefore, it has been remarked that the position of women in later Vedic literature was satisfactory. There were some professions open to women in the higher sections of society. They were even allowed to represent a military and ruling class. There are some references as recorded in brāhmaṇas refers that women were used to take an active part in administration. The inclusion of the chief queen, Mahisī among

the king makers has elevated the position of women in society. Available evidence showed that in the Vedic period the Aryans were mostly found in military or semi-military activities as they were employed for the purpose of subjugating the order countries. If in warfare the warrior detracted their number they had to depend upon for the co-operation from women, if necessary. 19

This is so far one side of the coin. But the other side of the coin is also there, which reveals the status and treatment of its society towards women. The position which women occupied in the dawn of civilization during the brāhmanic age much better than what we usually expect it to have been. Though there is no doubt a few indication to show that women were sometimes degraded by society and face difficulties in their lives. It seems an irony of fate that where the womanhood should be considered a respected human being, people discriminate them to depend on men only.

19. *Ardho vā es.a ātmanah yat Patri.*
In Vedic society the best place for women was supposed to be within the four walls of her home by the side of her husband. Since her marriage after the Saptapadi rite she enjoyed the status of being the best friend of her husbands. She has been regarded as her husband’s best counsel. This rite has bind the bond of both consort. Moreover in Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa wife has found as the other half of her husband. It has also been observed in a passage of T.S. which describes a wife as ‘the mistress of the household and hence the sacrificer while offering oblations to Gods, he only offers that which has been approved by his wife.’ This kind of honours placed her in a estimable position.

The ideal love and harmony between the husband and their wife have been beautifully described by Vedic society as the dearest friend, the essence of all kingship, the fulfillment of all desires a veritable treasure, the very life itself—all of these are a wife to her husband and vice-versa. there love is uniform both in prosperity and adversity and adjusts itself to surrounding circumstances; if affords the best solace to

each other’s heart; old age does not diminish its flavor. The importance of a marriage is to help the full growth and development of the husbands and the wife and to promote the preservation and progress of society and its culture by enjoining upon the couple the procreation of children and their proper education. To maintain and support his wife is the most sacred duty of the husband, which must be discharged at all costs; otherwise he would have no right at all to be called a husband. Above all, he must be true to his vow of conjugal fidelity; its violation is the greatest sin he can commit. The wife must try her utmost to promote her husband’s happiness.

But there were some obligation which degraded womanhood as whole in society. Such as polygamy, depriveness of inheritance and levirate and so on. In the Brāhmaṇas literature we find that the custom of polygamy was very much prevalent in the society. The ABṛ and Gopatha Brahmana is very explicit on this point. It has stated in clear terms: ‘one man may have many wives but one wife must not have more than


22. Ibid. XII. 144, 20. Sā hi strtyabagantabya yasyam bhāryā me tisyati.
one husband.’ 23 The SBṛ also repeat the same. ‘One man may have many wives’.24 These passages witness that polygamy was a legal issue in those days. There were no rules laid down for this custom. People can have as many wives as they can. Moreover, in M.Samhitā, it is mentioned that Manu has ten wives. Beyond this a king was legally allowed to have four wives. Among the wives the king had to select one to accompany him in the scarifies. But text leave no space for the other wives. Very naturally the selected wife used to get the rights and honour reserved for wife but the others had to remain in the dark. With a detail discussion of the participation of women in some sacrifices, we can understand the position and privileges provided by society towards women. Let us take into account the Aśvamedha the most important one.

The Aśvamedha sacrifice is called king of all sacrifies and also known as ‘Horse sacrifice.’ This sacrifice is regarded as the famous and most important sacrifice as people have faith in this sacrifice that

23. ABṛ. 3-12-12 and G. Br. 3-20 ‘Ekasya bahvyo jāyā bhavanti, na ekasyai bahavah sahapatayah’.

24. SBṛ. 9-4-1-6 ‘Ekasya Pumso bahvyo jāyā bhavantuubhyam byasat kārena ca svāhakārena ...... ca ...... junoti.'
whatever they wish after performing this sacrifice, they can have those. In the words of Eggeling,\textsuperscript{25} "this sacrifice is a great state function in which the religious and sacrificial element is closely and deftly interwoven with a varied programme of secular ceremonies. The Āśvamedha involved an assertion of power and a display of political authority which a king of undisputed supremacy alone could have asserted and hence its celebration was an event of comparatively rare occurrence. The Āśvamedha was an elaborate and complex ceremony as described in detail in the Brahmanas. This sacrifice is discussed in VS \textsuperscript{26}, SB\textsuperscript{tr} \textsuperscript{27} and TB\textsuperscript{r} \textsuperscript{28} The Yajurveda\textsuperscript{29} contains the formulas of this sacrifice which only a king can perform. Its objective is to acquire power and pre-eminence over neighbouring kings and the general prosperity of the kingdom. The horse is eulogised and made the horse to roam freely over the country. The varied numbers of attendants as described in the SB\textsuperscript{tr} \textsuperscript{30} speaks of the military strength of the king.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} \textit{SBE XLIV. Pt. V intro XV}
\item \textsuperscript{26} \textit{Vaj. sam – XXII – XXIV}
\item \textsuperscript{27} \textit{Ch. XIII.}
\item \textsuperscript{28} \textit{TB\textsuperscript{r} III : 8}
\item \textsuperscript{29} \textit{YV - Ch. XXII - XXIV}
\item \textsuperscript{30} \textit{SBr. - XIII : 4, 2, 5}
\end{itemize}
this sacrifice the queens played an important role. They were found as decorating the horse, caress it, lie down by the horse’s side and perform various. The SBṛ states that 'the king’s wives came with water for washing the feet - four wives and a young maiden as the fifth and four hundred female attendants.'\(^{31}\) It has been found that Mahisī - (the chief queen) has a hundred daughters of several kings attending upon her. The Chief Queen has to anoint the horse first and aided by other queens. Vāvātā (the favourite queen) has 'a hundred rājanya (noble women) attending upon her and the Parivṛktā (the discarded wife) is attended by daughters of heralds (the sūta) and headmen of villages (the grāmani) comprising hundred in number. Pāḷāgalī, the fourth wife, the lowest of queens in social status is attended by a hundred daughters of chamberlains and charioteers'.\(^{32}\) From this description we learn the constitutional status and dignity of the queens in the vedic age and also in brāhmaṇic period. In the sacrifice we found the chief queen as played an important role in the rites. In this sacrifice, when the horse is suppose to death, the chief queen Mahisī, seems to be found lying by the side of horse with a

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31. \(SBṛ. - XII : 5 : 2 : 1\)

32. \(SBṛ. XIII : 5 : 2 : 5 - 8\)
blanket covering both the horse and the queen, and gets herself unites with the horse while the priest utters the verse of wishing the ejaculation of horse’s semen to the chief queen. However SBr. states the other characteristics of lying of the chief queen, reflectantly with the horse, with the objective of facilitating the birth of a virtuous and powerful son.\(^{33}\) When the queen performs this rite, different Priests are found to gratify in obscene humors dialogues with several female attendants; Adhvaryu had a conversation with the maiden who accompanied the chief queen the brahman priest talks with the chief queen the Udgatr with Vāvātā and Hotṛ with Parivṛktā and Ksattr with fourth wife of the king called Pālāgalī. This rite runs counter to decency and the obscene slang dialogues, referred by the priest is not in keeping with the sublime influence of surrounding the sacrifice.

**Mahāvrata Sacrifice:**- This is a kind of sacrifice, in which we find some maidens used to carry pitchers full of water and dancing around the fire. Moreover, the sound of drums maintained the time with their stumbling movement. In this ceremony these activities were regarded

\(^{33}XIII:1:9:9\)
as a part of this ceremony. In this ceremony, we observed the participation of dancing girls was raised their position in community but at the same manner, we find a practice where a conversation happened in abusive and slang language. Besides, in this sacrifice, we find wishing about fertilization between a student and courtesan. The abusive dialogues are followed by sexual intercourse between the student and the prostitute in real life.

**Gosava Sacrifice:** This is another kind of sacrifice in which the performer complements the ox for fertilizing all of its female relations and tries to imitate the breeding bull's mode of sex including illegal physical relations with mother, sister and other female relatives. Therefore, it can be infer that incestuous relations was allowed in some section of people of the then society. In such kind of references sometimes humiliates womanhood to some extents. Here the references of women having intercourse with animals indicates attitude of the existence of humiliating women as lowest being on which anything can be heaved.
Available evidence showed that king Janaka of Videha did not perform this rite as he could not approve of these illicit and highly objectionable illegal acts. In civilized society this rite bore excessive sense of decency and fundamental principle too. Thus we observed, the objectionable rites were influenced by some sections of aboriginal people. However it would appear that in brāhmaṇic society, some customs humiliate women and their each character in particular rituals. In ancient society, sacrifices are the reflection of the civilization where we can get a glimpse of the society. It can be said that no study has so potent an influence in forming a communities thoughts and their customs as critical and careful study of its religious rites.
SECTION - II

Space provided in the Upaniṣats
The term ‘Upaniṣat’ is derived as Upa-ni-ṣat, upa means near, ni i.e. down and sat means to sit, i.e. - sitting down near. The derivative meaning of the term Upaniṣat is the knowledge which is to be obtained by sitting near the preceptor. Upaniṣats deal with the secret doctrines which leads us to knowledge. Knowledge par excellence. The Upaniṣads have been admired by every sections of people, for different reasons at different ages. It gives us the most efficient, intimate and convincing views on the secrets of human existence. The Upaniṣats reveal to us a world of rich and varied spiritual experience rather than a world of abstract philosophical categories. The number of Upaniṣats have been growing from early times. Though their number exceeds two hundreds but Indian tradition puts it at one hundred and eight. Amongst them, the principal Upaniṣats are known to be ten but Saṅkara commented on
eleven. They are - Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chāndogya, Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Svētāśvatara.

The Chāndogya and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka are the earliest Upaniṣats with the largest number of episodes. We concentrated on these two mainly to get a picture of contemporary society of 800-700 B.C to find out to what extent the space for women is there. The picture of society as revealed in Ch.U and BU through their series of episodes and chapters we find some lady characters namely, Maitreyi, Kātyāyani, Vācaknavī and Jābālā. Whose contribution made the status of womanhood in a remarkable position of a dignified statue: In one less popular Upaniṣad named Prāṇāgnihotra has beautifully described the nature of a woman as ‘buddhiḥ Patṇī.’ Here in this verse “buddhiḥ Patṇī” refers the intellectual attitude towards a women. Another factor responsible for the relatively satisfactory position of women was the influence of religion. Available evidence showed that women was allowed to offer the ordained sacrifice to Gods for procuring happiness and prosperity.

1. Pr. U. Verse No. XXVI ‘Asya Sarir yajñasya yuparasanāsobhetasya ātmā yajomānoḥ buddhiḥ Patnī.’
Wife was regarded as an absolute necessity in the religious services. Thus, the participation in rituals naturally helped to raise her status.

From available evidences it can assumed that the family of Upaniṣadīc age was joint or extended family, where the members were united closely together. The respect of parents and affection for children were found to be praised. It has been observed that in society, continuity of the descendents was regarded as obligatory. In BU we find an instance of it, where a dying father has been found as hand over his properties, fame and his power to his son, saying that ‘you are the Brahman, you are the sacrifice and you are the world; Being thus the all, let him preserve me from this world.’ The Son answers: ‘I am the Brahman, I am the world,’ verily, whatever has been learnt all that taken as one is knowledge (Brahman). Whatever sacrifices have been made all those taken as one are the world. Therefore the dying man believes that whatever wrong has been done by him his son will free him from it all, therefore people desire a son.

2. *BU I : V : 17* ‘Yadā Praesyan manyate, atha putram āha, tvam brahma tvam yajñāh, tvam loka iti.

From this passage, it can be assumed that by a son a father stands firm in this world. Then into him enter those divine immortal breaths.

It has been observed that in the Upaniṣadic age, in the family women’s place was subordinate to that of man, to justify her status a myth was invented which claimed that the creator Prajāpati placed the women below the man. Moreover Prajāpati proclaimed that ‘one should adore women bellow.’ This passage indicate the difference between the man and women.

In Upaniṣats, we met with a reference, which refers the existence of the custom of polygamy. A man was allowed to have many wives. It was especially common among the kings and nobles. Mention may be made to the great sage Yājñavalkya who had two wives namely - Maitreyi and Kātyāyani. Hence it can be remarked that polygamy prevailed in society. Some episodes which we met in Upaniṣadic literature were deserved to be mentioned. We mention the name of Maitreyi in this context.

**Maitreyi** :- She was the wife of the great sage and philosopher Yājñavalkya. His second wife was Kātyāyani. Both were devoted to their husband and of lofty character. However Maitreyi had a higher regard for spiritual knowledge and devotion to God than Kātyāyani. The IV chapter of the Vth Brāhmaṇa of BU narrates the conversation between Maitreyi and her husband Yājñavalkya. The Brhadāraṇyaka upaniṣad relates that the sage Yājñavalkya wanted to renounce householder life and accept the Sannyasa in order of life and wanted to divide his possessions between his two wives. Maitreyi then asked to herself, what great thing in this universe must have found if he is willing to give up his householder life. Therefore, she asked her husband; 'If indeed, this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, do I become immortal by it or not?'

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5. *BU IV : V : 3* 'Sa hovaca Maitreyi : Yan nu ma iyam, bhagoh, sarvā Prthivi Vittena Pūrṇā Syāt, Syām nvaḥam tenamrta?'
Yājñavalkya replied - “Certainly not, all the happiness and conveniences from wealth will not lead you to God, there is no hope of immortality through wealth.” Then Maitreyi said ‘What shall I do with that by which I do not become immortal? Venerable Sir, explain me what is the way to immortality’.

The Yājñavalkya said - ‘You have been truly dear to me, now you have increased your dearness, by asking this; Therefore, I will explain it you.’

Then Yājñavalkya explained to her as ‘Verily not for the sake of husband is the dear but for the sake of the self is the husband dear; in fact, not for the sake of all is dear but the sake of the self is all dear; the self indeed, Maitreyi, is not to be seen, to be heard, to be reflected on, to be meditated upon; when the self is seen, heard and know, then all this is known; Brāhmaṇhood deserts him who knows Brāhmaṇ in anything else than the self; this Brāhmaṇhood, the gods, the Vedas, all

6. I bid IV : V : 3 - ‘Neti Neti hovaca Yajnavalkyah; Yathaivopak-aranavatām jivitam, tathaiva te jivitam syat; amrtatvasya tu nāsasti vitteneti.

7. I bid IV : 5 : 4 - ‘Yenāham nāmrta syām, kim aham tena kuryām ................. ad eva me brūhiti.’
these beings in this world, all are the self." Thus, Yājñavalkya taught her the divine knowledge of the immortal self.

In the Sixth Brāhmaṇa of the IIIrd Chapter we come across a discourse between Gārgi and Yājñavalkya, which is worth mentioning.

Gārgi:— She was the daughter of Vācknu hence she was known as Vācaknavi. As she was born in the line of Gārya Gotra, she was named as Gārgi, by this name she became well known. The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad explained how she raised her queries to great seer and philosopher Yājñavalkya in the court of King Janaka, where the king arranged a debate on the spiritual knowledge. In which the King Janaka wanted to find out the person who knew the best of the science of the Absolute, the winner will be gifted with 1000 decorated cows with horns plated with gold. Eventually none of the attended nobles brāhmaṇas compiled and could not be up to the task. But, amongst the attended people only Gārgi raised her queries to the great seer Yājñavalkya. However, Yājñavalkya answered the questions which he was asked by

8. *Ibid IV : 5 : 6* - 'Na Vā are Patydh Kāmāya Patiḥ Priyo bhavati, atmanas tu Kāmāya Patiḥ Priyo bhavati,.......... ātmā vā are drastavyah Srotavya......... maṁtavyo.......... Sarvam Viditam.'
the attended nobles and scholars as well, finally, Gārgi’s turn came to
place her queries to the seer Yājñavalkya. The questioner put forward
by Gārgi is being placed here. Gārgi asked to Yājñavalkya- ‘Since
everything is woven like warp and woof in water on what is water
woven?’ 9

Yājñavalkya replied - ‘On air, water is woven.
Again Gārgi asked - On what air woven?
He replied - On the worlds of the sky air is woven.
On what then, are the words of sky woven?
On the words of the Gandharvas.
On what then, are the worlds of the Gandharvas woven?
On what then are the worlds of the Sun woven, like wrap and woof?
On the worlds of the Moon.
Then on what, are the worlds of the Moon woven?
On the worlds of the Stars.
On what then, the world of Stars woven, like warp and woof?

9.  BU III : 6 : 1 ‘Yad idam sarvam apsv otañ ca Protam ca, kasmin nu khalv
āpa otas’ ca protas’ cetti; vayau, gārgi, iti.

Then on what are the worlds of the Gods woven like wrap and woof?

On the worlds of the Indra, O Gārgi.

On what then, are the worlds of Indra woven?

On the worlds of Prajāpati

Then on what are the worlds of Prajāpati woven?¹⁰

On the world of Bṛāhmaṇ O Gārgi.

On what then, are the worlds of Bṛāhmaṇ woven, like warp and woof?

Gārgi’s query about the ‘Ultimate knowledge’ reached certain at a point where Yājñavalkya was not in a position to answer he become annoyed he told ‘Gārgi do not ask anything more; lest your head will fall off’¹¹ and thereupon Gārgi Vācaknavi kept silent.

This can be interpreted in different ways. One dimension can be that ‘do not cross the limit.’ It is the limit of the knowledge that a woman can ask a man. Things could have been interpreted because, we can not

¹⁰ I bid ‘Kasmin nu khalu Prajāpati lokā otās’ ca protaś ceti, Indra lokesu gārgi, iti.
¹¹ I bid Sa hovāca, ‘Gārgi matipraksīh, mā te mūrdhā vyapaptat, anatiprasnyā m vai devatām atiprechhasi.’
think that the great sage like Yājñavalkya do not know the answer; it is only a check to the woman folk. It only provided a full stop to the questioner put forward by Vācaknavi Gārgi.

In the Eighth Brāhmaṇa of IIIrd Chapter of same Upaniṣad, we come across another episode where Gārgi’s wisdom point out in the court of the king Janaka, when she raised her queries towards the great sage Yājñavalkya. Gārgi placed her question to Yājñavalkya: ‘O Yājñavalkya, of which they say, it is above the heaven, it is beneath the earth that which is between these two, the heaven and the earth, which the people call the past, present and the future across what is that woven, like warp and woof? 12

To which Yājñavalkya replied - ‘That which is above the sky, that which is beneath the earth, that which the people call the past, present and the future, across Space is that woven like warp and woof. 13

Out of curiosity Gārgi again asked ‘Across what is space woven

12. BU III : 8 : 3 Sa hovāca : yadūrdhvam, yajñavalkadivah, yadvāk prthivyāh, yadantarā dyāvāprthiveimē, yad bhūtainca bhavacca bhavisyacceti ā cakṣati; kasinistad otām ca protam ceti.

like warp and woof? 14

Though it was inexplicable to make any body understand, but Yājñavalkya laid open to the charge of non-comprehension and replied her queries.

To interact with Gārgi, Yājñavalkya said; 'O Gārgi, the knower’s of Bṛāhmaṇ it ‘the Imperishable’. It is neither gross nor fine, i.e without any shape, neither adhesive like water nor bright like fire, neither air nor space, it is unattached, without any form and it is tasteless. It is without radiance, without breath, and body organs, having no within and no without. Infact, at the command of this Imperishable, the Sun, Moon, Heaven and Earth stand in their respective positions. He who knowing the Imperishable departs from this world, is Bṛāhmaṇ. By the command of that Imperishable O Gārgi, men praise those who give the Gods are desirous of the sacrificer and the fathers are desirous of the darvi offering’. 15
Finally, Gārgi bowed to the great seer Yājñavalkya and proclaimed “Venerable Brahmanas, you may think it a great thing if you get off from him though bowing to him. None of you will defeat him in arguments about Bṛāhmaṇ.”

Hence, Gārgi proved that in Vedic civilization, it was not unexpected for women to become a competitor in the spiritual lore nor that they could not discuss such topics in public assemblies with nobles. However, the references which we find in the text of the upaniṣats. Gārgi is a luminous scholar among the learned who represents the womanhood as a whole in Upaniṣadic society.

In the Chāndogya Upaniṣat we come across the story of ‘Satyakāma Jābālā’ in the sections third to the eight of the fourth chapter.

16. I bid II : 8 : 12 ‘Sa hovacā ; Brahmanā bhagavantah, tad eva bahu manyedhvam yad asmān namaskarena ........ imām kaścid brahmodyam jetiti.’
The story narrates how Satyakāma became wellknown by his mother’s anem. The story records as - Once Satyakām Jābālā was suppose to lead the life of a Brahmachārya. Therefore, he addressed his mother - ‘Mother, I desire to live the life of the Brahmachārin; tell me of what gotra am I ?’\(^{17}\) She answered; ‘I don’t know, of what gotra you are; resorting to many as serving women in my youth. I got thee. Therefore, I don’t know what family you belong. However, Jābālā is my name and Satyakāma is their, so you may speak of yourself as ‘Satyakamā Jābālā.’\(^ {18}\) After knowing this Satyakāma came to Haridrumata Gautama and said: ‘My Lord, I wish to become a student of sacred knowledge. May I become your disciple.’ Haridrumata Gautama asked : ‘Of what gotra are you ? Satyakāma answered; Alas! I do not know my gotra Sir, I asked my mother, she answered me, as in her youth when she went about a great deal as a maidservant to many, she conceived me; So she

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does not know of what family I belong.” 19 Satyakāma repeated accordingly what his mother narrated him. Haridrumata Gautama said: “None but a Brahmana could dare enough to explain this; My son bring the fuel, I will receive you as my disciple; Thou has not departed from the truth.” 20

So the story opens and simple as it seems. Its appears from this story as from others that, although the system of the four castes was firmly established, it counted as no obstacle in the pursuit of knowledge and spiritual advancement. And accordingly when Satyakāma approached the seer Haridrumata Gautama and introduced himself as ‘Soham Satyakāma Jābālaosmi’ bhoh, iti.’ What is striking is that the seer accepted him as his disciple on the basis of his truthfulness. The great poet Rabindra Nath Tagore has stated very beautifully in his poem ‘Satyakāma’ the sad plight of Jābālā as- “Joubane dāridra dukhe, Bahucaryā Kari Peyechinu tore, janmechis Vartṛhīna Jābālār Krode, Gotra tabo nāhi jāni tāto.”

19. I bid IV : 4 : 3, 4 ‘Brahmacaryam bhagavati vatsyāmi;....... tain hovacā; kim gotra nu saumya asiti : Sa hovacā nāhametad veda ...... aprccham mātaram, sā mā pratyabravīt,....... bahvaham caranti paricārini...... Jābālā tu nāmāham asrm, satyakamo nāma tvam asiti.’

20. I bid IV : 4 : 5 ‘Naitad abrahmana vivaktum arhati; samidham saumya, āhara, upa tvā nesye, na satyād agā iti.’
In the IVth chapter of Ch.U we come across the episode of Raikva, which refers the story of the king Jānaśrutī Pāutrāyana.

In the story we find, Jānaśrutī Pāutrāyana, the great grandson of Jānaśruta dreamt a dream where he came to know about a seer named Raikva of great austerities and power through a dialogue of two swans. Next morning when he woke up and he turned to his attendant and asked to find out the sage Raikva. Accordingly the attendant met a man with skin disease who introduces himself as Raikva. Then Jānaśrutī took with him six hundred cows, a gold necklace and a chariot with mules and approached the seer and said – ‘Raikva, here are six hundred cows a gold necklace and a chariot with mules; Now sir, please tell me the deity whom you worship.’ The seer refused with crude words. The king Jānaśrutī again came again and approached to the sage, this time the king added his daughter in the existing gift list and a village too in which the seer can dwell. The sage lifting up the daughter’s face toward himself, said – ‘Merely by this face you would make me speak.’ Finally

21. **Ch. U. IV : 11 : 2** “Raikvemāṇi ṣat satāṇi gavām, ayaṁ niśko’yam aśvatarī rathah, anu ma etām bhagavo devatām sādhi….. yām devatām upassa iti.’

22. **I bid. IV : 11 : 5** ‘Tasyā ha mukham upadrhnann uvacā: ahaḥreṁāḥ śūdra anenaiva mukhenatāpayisyathā iti.’

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he became ready to teach the king. Therefore, the daughter was the price in the bargain. This bargaining recorded here, indicates to the sad plight of a girl where we noticed that the father unhesitately gave his daughter as a gift to the old sage. Miserable was the lot of that girl who sacrificed for her father’s ignorancy.

From this episodes, we can infer that Upaniṣadic society has placed the women in a honourable position. They were neither neglected nor imparted from education. The Upaniṣadic society has introduces some scholarly women like - Matreyi, Gārgi, Jābālā, Katyāyani and others but a different spirit we experienced in one less popular Upanisad namely ‘Yājñavalkya Upaniṣad’ where the great seer and philosopher Yājñavalkya has shown a very beautiful dissection of women, stating as ‘women are naturally attractive, they are the root cause of fickleness of mind, they are the great hindrances to ascetics, the women are puppets made out of flesh and blood. It contains only bones, nerves, veins; What it remains within, which can be called the object of beauty?’

Though it is a less popular Upanisat, it is represented by the text that women are assigned a statute which is in no cases can be called a dignified one.