Chapter IV

ACTUAL SPACE WITH REFERENCE TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE SOCIETY AND RIGHTS ENJOYED
This chapter deals with the following aspects and divided into three sections:

Section I – Attitude of the society towards women

Section II – The Rights enjoyed by women.

Section III – A comparative study of the Rights enjoyed by male and female.

In this chapter an attempt has been made to present an outline of the attitude of society towards women, as proposed in the hymns of the four Vedas and in the passages of the Brāhmaṇic and upaniṣadic text to trace the space provided for women there in.
SECTION - I

Attitude of the society towards women.
Rigvedic society was founded on the home and the family as well as established institutions with the proper place assigned to women under an advanced system of marriage laws. The Rigvedic expression, ‘the wife is the home’ shows how domestic life and responsibilities centred round the woman. She has been blessed as – ‘Be an empress to your father in law, be an empress to your mother in law, sister in laws and to your husband’s brothers.’ In Rv, we find some verses are assigned to ‘Dampati’. From this term ‘Dampati’ we get a glimpse of the happy and co-operative family life of the Rgvedic period, where newly married couple lived in harmony. In one verse we found a prayer as ‘May the husband and wife with one mind offer libations and purify them with the soma’.

In Rgveda, we find a number of names are used to denote a maiden in her different stages of life, namely, kanyā, kaninikā are for a maiden and ‘Duhitā’ is for a daughter meaning ‘Milkmaid’. The etymology of the name ‘Duhitā’ indicates her principal duty in the Rgvedic family, namely the milking of the cows. The association of the


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maiden with milk is brought out in several instances. The maiden was engaged with the domestic work. And the family bestowed affection on her.

Sometimes we find the maidens are as bearing water in jars. It can be inferred that the girl was mostly engaged with domestic work. Other occupations were also assigned to women. Such as knitting, embroidery, dying the clothes, making baskets and arrows etc.

Ṛgveda has left us details of the exact incidents which preceded and accompanied with wedding and of the religious ceremonies which are dedicated to it. Marriage was looked upon as an institution founded by the gods, the aim of which was the mutual support of man and wife and the propagation of their descendants. It was not meant for the satisfaction of the carnal desires. Thus, marriage was regarded as a religious necessity to both man and the woman. The marriages of girls used to take place at a fairly advanced age, the normal period being the age of

3. Rv. I: 19: 14 'Udhakam Kumbinirib.........
16 or 17. The age of the maiden during the marriage was considered to fall in the post-puberty period. Available evidences showed that the maiden were fully grown up during their marriage is well evinced by the reference to the rite of Viśvavāsu in the verses 21st and 22nd of the hymn 85 of the Xth book of the Rigveda. One of the verse runs thus ‘Rise up from hence Viśvavāsu, we worship you with reverence; seek another maiden, one with large hips; leave the bride with her husband.’ In this reference we find Viśvavāsu took the responsibilities of the girl when all physical signs of maturity including puberty were distinctly developed in her. This makes it sufficiently obvious that the bride at the time of her marriage was in a full grown state and fit to give birth to children and not a immature maiden.

From yajurveda, we find that it was customary for sons and daughters to marry in order of their age.

A few passages in the Rgveda referring to the existence of widows. In a verse of the Rgveda we get convincing evidence in support of the

widow marriage. The verse records thus "who brings you into his presence in the same place as on her couch a widow brings her husband’s brother, as a woman brings her husband."\(^5\)

Available evidence shows that remarriage of widows was permitted in the Vedic age. The custom of niyoga also was prevalent in the society. The reasons for the prevalence of this customs is that widows were not required to die with their husbands on the funeral pyres. How then were they expected to lead their remaining life? It has been observed in some verses of Rgveda, where we find the husband’s brother asking the wife of the dead man to leave the dead body. The verse states – ‘Rise, woman and go to the world of living beings. Come, this man near whom you sleep is lifeless; You have enjoyed your, being as the wife, the suitor who took you by the band.’\(^6\)

In Vedic society, a son by levirate was always preferred to a son by adoption. A Vedic seer declares that ‘an adoptive son born of another is no son at all.’\(^7\) He is regarded as an absolute stranger, he had no


blood of the family. Under the system of Niyoga if a woman’s husband was dead or incapable of procreating children, she was allowed to have conjugal relations till she got a male child. The brother in law of the woman was regarded as the most eligible person for this purpose. Thus, it was felt that for the purpose of Niyoga a woman should be primarily appointed with her brother in law. If the appointment was with the brother in law of the widow, there was likely to be as much affection between the sons born of Niyoga and other rising generations, as generally exists among brothers and cousins.

With Niyoga, the widow remarriage also prevailed in Vedic society. There is no doubt that widow remarriage used to take place not infrequently in the Vedic age.

In one place, the Athavaveda refers to a woman marrying a second time. It lays down a ritual to secure the union of the new couple in heaven. The verse runs thus – ‘Whoever having gained a former husband,
then gains another later one if they dual shall give a goat with five rice dishes, they shall not be separated.  

The status of the women in society may best be measured by the freedom she enjoys for their education, for going out and for choosing her companion.

Let us first know about the rights of education for especially womenfolk. Regarding education, in the Rgveda, the fact that girls received education is evident from the composition of the hymns by the female ṛṣikas. In the Rgveda we come across thirty female ṛṣikas – who send forth their prayers to gods and blessings for the humanity. The foremost of these rsikas is Ghosa, who was credited with two entire hymns 36 and 40 of the Xth book of Rv and several verses of the Rv. There is ample evidences to show that like men, women were also used to offer regularly their vedic prayers both morning and evening. Mention has been made earlier the names of the Bṛahmavādinis in the II Chapter. There are as many as thirty women among the seers of Rgveda. Some of

them, may have been mythical personages; but most of them are regarded as Bṛahmavādinis. The Sadyodvahas used to have a very high excellence in scholarship. In this context, the Av. observes that ‘a maiden can succeed in the marriage only if she has been properly trained during the period of studentship (Bṛahmachārya).’ Moreover, it has been observed that, the vedic age held that Bṛahmachārya discipline and training was as much applicable for girls as it was for boys. In Rgveda we find women had to receive education, some of them even composed the vedic hymns. They could recite vedic mantras. Some women, especially unmarried ones, are seen offering vedic sacrifices all by themselves. In the hymn 28 of the Vth chapter we met with a lady seer named Viśvavārā, getting up early in the morning and starting the sacrifice all by herself in vedic age. In Vedic period, offering of sacrifice was the only popular end well established method of worshipping divine powers, which women were enjoyed they were all initiated into vedic studies

after their upanayana. So they could offer sacrifices to gods and offer prayers. The imitation ceremony of girls used to take place as regularly as that of boys at the normal time.

It has been observed that the parents were anxious to have scholarly daughters born on their families; ordinary well-to-do-families did not neglect the education of girls. In vedic era, education was not denied to girls. We have observed in some verses of Rgveda where parents were found as helping their daughters settling in their life. The dignity of the women was recognised through her studentship as Brähmavādinī and as female Rṣikās in Rgvedic society. In the Sanhitā such as Rgveda and Atharvaveda, very frequently we find the names of women either as Rṣikās or as goddess. In Rgveda, we met the truth, how the daughter in the Vedic age were well-educated and possessed full religious privileges. For all religious purposes, the father of Vedic society could
thus regard a daughter to be as good as a son. Therefore, the father preferred to passing his property to his own daughter in preference to an adoptive son.

In Brāhmaṇic age, we find education was compulsory for the three higher castes, after initiation ceremony or enduing with the holy thread a student had to go to the preceptor’s house or forest institution to do their study. Only the three castes namely, Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya and Vaiśya were eligible for initiation. After initiation they were allowed to study the Vedas.

Regarding the education of women, there is no clear statement about the arrangements to impart education to women. In can be said that education was not denied to them. From the number of educated female seers and their contribution in composing Vedic hymn in Atharvaveda, we can well infer that women were underswent some sort of training under the proficient guidance of teachers. Sometimes the teachers might
have been their father, brothers, husbands or any near relatives. It is undeniably true that the pure Brähmanical texts mention some scholars, whereas names of many learned women scholars appeared in the Samhita portion and Upaniṣad portion of the Vedic literature.

In A Br. we come across a learned maiden obsessed with a Gandharva as ‘Gandharva grhita kumāri’ pointing out the defects in the time schedule of the Agnihotra sacrifice. She says – ‘I shall complain to the manes that the Agnihotra which was performed in two days formerly is now performed in one day.” In this particular sacrifice, the wife of the sacrificer had to utter Vedic mantras during the performance of sacrifice. In this sacrifice, it has laid down that, the mantras were muttered in a very low inaudible voice, she had to learn and master the hymns and utter the same.

Apart from this, it has been found that in Brähmanic age fine arts such as vocal music, instrumental music and dancing were cultivated

10. A. Br. 5 : 25 : 4 ‘Vaktāsmo vā idam pitrāhyo yad vaityad Agnihotram ubhayedyurahuya tanye dyurvava tanyedyurvava tadetarhi huyata iti.'
by ladies. Moreover, most of the Bṛ’s prescribed that singing and dancing were women’s pastimes. These two were exclusively reserved for women. It seems in Bṛāhmaṇic society music, both vocal and instrumental was widely practised. The entangled process of Sāma-chant bespeaks the high standard attained by Indian music in the Vedic age. Besides this, dancing was practised by both men and women. Available evidence shows that singing and knitting were recognised as the tasks of women in Bṛāhmaṇa texts also. One of verse of SBr. states that—“It is the duty of women to knit and sew or stitch.”

It has also been found that the sages and Bṛhmaṇcārins used to put on garment made out of the hides of black antelope’s skin and this custom is prevalent in the epic age too as we have evidenced by the description of the female ascetic called Śabarī in the Rāmāyana as ‘Krṣṇājināmbaradharā’ the term bears the meaning of one who putting on a garment made of black deer’s skin.

11. S. B. 12-7-2-11 ‘Tad vā etat striṇam karma yudūrnāsūtram karma.'
Available evidences witnessed that, in brahmanic period, ladies belonging to both middle class and high class used to put ornaments of gold and silver. Nobles were found to use gold ornaments, because it has been believed that, 'gold is a symbol of aristocracy.'\textsuperscript{12} One of passage conveys a reference of wearing gold ornaments and gold necklaces by the four wives of the king.\textsuperscript{13}

The women were provided great honour in society. Her presence and co-operation were absolutely necessary in religious rites and ceremonies. The participation is religious rites elevated her religious value.

In ABr we find some verses, where it has been said that, 'Man could not become a spiritual whole, unless he was accompanied by his wife.'\textsuperscript{14} Moreover, another verse has been ascribed as 'Gods do not accept the oblations offered by a bachelor.'\textsuperscript{15} It has also been believed that, 'the husband alone cannot go to heaven'\textsuperscript{16}, i.e., if he does not accompanied

\textsuperscript{12} S. B. 13-2-2-18 'Ksatrasya etad rūpam yad hiranyam.
\textsuperscript{13} S. B. 13-4-1-8 'Mahisi Vāvātā parivrkta pālāgalē sarvā niskīnyah alankrtah.
\textsuperscript{14} A. Br. I : 2 · 5 'Tasmatpuruso jayām vitva kṛtsnātormibatumananm matyate.
\textsuperscript{15} S. Br. V : 1 : 6 :10 'Ayajñīyo baisa yopatnikah.
\textsuperscript{16} S. Br. V : 2, 1, 8.
by his wife, while doing the sacrifice he cannot attain heavenly pleasures after his death he has to call upon his wife to accompany him on the occasion.

However, the society has laid down a principle that religious prayers and sacrifices have to be offered jointly by the husband and the wife. In Rv. we come across several references to couples growing old in their joint worship of gods. The wife used to take an active and real part in family sacrifices. Like the husband, she too had to perform a special upanayana on the occasion of some sacrifices.

In the early vedic period, the duty of chanting the sama songs seems to have been performed by the wife. One of verse of S. B. states – ‘The Udgātrīs actually perform the duties of their wives.’ But it did not continue longer time, later on, the custom chanting the sama songs by the wife, transferred to a class of male priests called Udgātris. The society prescribed that the wife has to arrange sacrificial rites, give

17. S. Br. XIV : 3 : 1 : 35 ‘Painikarmeba elealra kurbanti yududgatarah.'
bath to the animal which has to be immolated, when alter was to be established she has been found as participated with her husband in the preparation of the offerings of the pious uses along with the consecration of the fire and the concluding ceremonies. She herself had to do some prescription. But sometimes these recitations had to be prompted to her. But, it not only happened with her but the case was same with her husband also, women’s participation in vedic sacrifices was thus a real one; they had enjoyed the same religious privileges as their husband had even if the husband was away. Sometimes the wife alone has to perform the various rites, which the couple had to do jointly. This has been evidence by the instance of Indrâni. In a verse of Rgveda, we find her as, ‘The wife of Indra goes first to the united sacrifice to battle, and is honoured by the praisers’. Hence, it can be well inferred that some of the learned ladies of Vedic age whose hymns have been honoured by their inclusion in the Vedic Samhitā, they could have done as Indrâni

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18. S. Br. III : 8, 2, 4 ‘Tāṁ bacayati nameste ātāṁ eti.
did. It has been found that if the co-operation of the husband in any sacrifice was unavailable for any reason, the wife could offer the oblations in the sacrifices all alone. It can be said that they had the capability to do the sacrificial rituals without any help of their husbands.

The women who has been recommended as an idol of great honour in the society sometimes she has maltreated by some section of men. The attitude can well be known if we go through the hymn 34 of the Xth book of Rigveda. This hymn is known as Aksa hymn.

Gambling was prevalent both in the vedic and later vedic age. The hymn started with praising of dice as an irresistibly enticing game providing infinite pleasure, exhilarating like a drink of soma and endowed with magic power to keep men engaged, then the composer described the pitiable plight of the gamester. His wife, whom he had to sell to pay gambling debts laments their fate. One of the verse records as – “This my wife has not been angry with me, nor was she overcome

with shame; kind was she to me and to my friends; yet for the sake of
one or other die, I have deserted this affectionate wife."20 Serious losses
at dicing are referred to in this verse.

In the Mahābhārata we find the reference that the wretched habit of
gambling of the royal personages of the society marred the virtues and
darkened the brightness of many royal court. And the attitude of staking
the wives at the game was exist in epic period too. This dice play
caused even the most virtuous king Yudhiṣṭhira to keep his own consort
Draupadi as wager.

Another verse beautifully describes the result of the game, which
every looser face in their life as—"The deserted wife of the gamester is
afflicted; the mother grieves for the son wandering wherever he likes;
involved in debt, even in fear, anxious for wealth, the gambler goes
forth by night to the dwellings of others to plunder."21

In brāhmaṇas also, we came across the existence of dice play. SBṛ
makes mention of the term kṛta,22 i.e., the four point was called kṛta in
dice play. In the Rājasūya sacrifice, a game of dice was compulsory.

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21. Rv. X : 34 : 10 'Jatyā tapyate kitabasya hīna mata putrasya caratak kva svit
........ naktameti.
22. SBṛ XIII : 3 : 2-1 Catsuṭomena kṛtena ...... (Basu P. 53)
It has been observed that gambling and hunting were in full swing as early as the Rgveda as a matter of great amusement in the then society.

In the Aśvamedha sacrifice, we find the chief queen is playing an important role. She has been found as pouring the oil to the horse, which was aided by other queens. As this sacrifice was popular in the then society, the participation of the queens has made the status of women honourable. But on the other side of society, we experienced a different reality revealed from some passages of Upaniṣats. However, available evidences showed the picture of the Upaniṣadic Society which has found as of male dominated. One of the passage of BU. refers that as a wife the women was completely under the husband’s fist. A versed of BU. referred that when a man invited her share his bed and tried to impress her by presenting various gifts; if she refused to accept that then she would be thrashed with hand or sometimes beaten with a stick into subjection.23

23. BU. VI : 4 : 7 Sà ced asmai na dadyāt kāmam enām yastya vā pānina vopahatyātikramaṃ. indriyena te yasaśa yaśā ādade ; ...... bhavati.
Moreover, there are some references which focuses that the society had laid down a written direction about how a man can conquer and enjoy a woman he wishes merely to enjoy and not to beget a son-in and it is also prescribed that how to get an unwilling woman to satisfy him.

This passage reflects the pictures of the society, that if a woman does not give him his desire (lust) he should impressed her with various gifts, if she still does not accept his desire, he could punish her by beating her with a stick or with hand and overcome her with manly power. Thus she became devoid of respect or on the contrary, if she satisfied him, the husband says, “I give you glory."

SECTION - II

The Rights Enjoyed by Women
Regarding the rights enjoyed by women, Vedic literature has provided some privileges to women. Available evidences witnessed that the maiden seems to have been free to make her choice of husband as appears from the following verse. 'If the girl be both good and fair of features she finds herself a friend among the people.' This verse indicates that the maiden of the Vedic age had naturally an effective voice in the selection of their grooms. This has been well brought out in the custom of Svayamavara. The custom of Svayamvar seems to have sprouted in the Regvedic period. This truth is evidenced by Surya’s hymn. In the hymn, we came to know that, when too many Gods aspired for the hand of Sūryā, her father the God Sun, arranged for a Svayamvara assembly, where the gods assembled, assented to the condition that ‘in the race which followed the Aśvins were victorious thus winning the bride in full glory.’ In another verse, the same sort of choice is evidenced “For the sake of honour, the damsel, came through affection

   Bhadrā badhūrbhavati yatsupesah svayaṁ sā mitram banute jane cit.
to you and acknowledge your (husbandship) saying “You are my Lord”.³

Again we come across another verse which truly indicates the customs of Svayamvara as “He hastens like a gallant to a mistress, like a bridegroom to the bride to sit upon his stations”.⁴

As the society was allowing the maiden to choose their husband freely so the union after a free choice was recognized as ‘a blest alliance’. The prayer for an ideal bride is expressed in this verse as :- ‘O Pushan send her on as most auspicious, her who shall be the sharer of my pleasure; Her who shall twine her loving arms about me and welcome all my love and embraces.’⁵ The idea is brought out in the following verse: ‘As a women who has no brother repairs to her male relatives; and like one ascending for the recovery of property and like a wife desirous to please her husband, displays her charms.’⁶ I case if the maiden failed to secure a worthy husband, she had to live the rest of her life in her parent’s house. But it has been observed that the unmarried daughter was given a share of paternal property along with the

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3. Rv. I: 119:5 आ बाम पातितवाम साक्षाया जाग्मुसि योश्रृंिन जेिन् याबाम पाते.
4. Rv. IX: 101:14 सराज्जारो न योसानाम बारो न योनिमासादम।
5. Rv. X: 85:37 तम पुसाङ्खिबोता मांमरायसवा यास्यांम बेजान्म मानुष्यांम बापांति....
6. Rv. I:124:7 ‘अभ्रातेवा पुंसा एति प्रतेचे गार्तारुगिबा सनाये धानानाम।
Jāyeba Patya uṣāte Subāsā uṣā hastreba ni riṇete apsah.
brothers for her independent support and livelihood. But in the case of
the maiden who has no brother an epithet, i.e. Abhrāṛ is found in two
passages of the Rgveda. These verses refer to case where daughter is
only child. One of the verse runs thus - 'She seeks men, as she who has
no brother mounting her car, as it were to gather riches.'7 The verse
indicates that a brotherless maiden used to come back to her father’s
house. It has also been observed that, in case the girl failed to secure a
worthy husband she had to live the rest of her life depending on her
father or her brothers. The verse records as 'you restored leaders of
sacrifices, Visnapu(his lost son) to Visvaka you bestowed Aśvins a
husband upon Ghoṣā growing old and tarring in her father’s dwelling.'8
Another verse also records the same - 'As a virtuous maiden growing
old in the same dwelling with her parents, claims from them her sup­
port. So come I to you for wealth;'9

It was not compulsory for a maiden to get married. We
often find the term 'Amajur, i.e unmarried maidens. This epithet used

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7. Rv. X: 86: 2.0

   yo. .... Ghoṣāyai citpi trṣade-durāne patim juranyta aśvinābadattam.

three times in Rv.\textsuperscript{10} The term \textit{Amājur} denotes another term \textit{Pitṛsad}, i.e. Who sit with their father. In Rv. we come across a verse states that ‘the bride was taken by her groom to her new home as its mistress.’\textsuperscript{11} The term \textit{Mistress}, i.e. ‘\textit{grhapatni}’, shows how she fared well with her position and prestige in the administration of the whole family. The new bride is blessed to be treated like an empress. We admit that the wife’s power and position in the day-to-day administration of the house was fully recognised in \textit{Ṛgyedic} age.

However in ancient civilization, the proprietary rights and privileges were recognized very late in all civilizations. Let us now contemplate the proprietary rights of a women.

In the Vedic period, girls were fairly well educated and very often they would remain unmarried either by choice or by the reasons of circumstances. In such cases it was recognized that they ought to be

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textit{Rv. II : 17 : 7, VIII : 21 : 15, and X : 39 : 3.}
  \item \textit{Rv. X : 85 : 26}
\end{itemize}
allowed to have a share in their father’s property. Usually, daughters used to get married and then they did not get any share in their patrimony. A Vedic passage runs thus - ‘A son born of the body, does not transfer paternal wealth to a sister; he has made her the receptacle of the embryo of the husband “If the parents procreate children one is the performer of holy acts, the other is to be enriched with gifts.”’

Here enriched with gifts means, the other is to be made herself wealthy with dresses ornaments and the like which the other is the performer of rites mean is the heir. Some passages of Rigveda witnessed that the champions of the daughter’s claim were mainly depending on the statement of a verse of Rv, The verse runs thus - ‘The sonless father regulating the contract, refers to his grandson of his daughter and relaying on the efficiency of the rite, honours son-in-law with valuable gifts; the father trusting to the impregnation of the daughter, supports himself with a tranquil mind.’

This verse appears to refer to an agreement by the

12. Rv. III : 31 : 2 Na jāmaye tānvah rikthamāraik cakara garbhaih .......
Yadi mātaro janayanta vahnimanyah kartā sukrtoranya rindhan.

13. Rv. III : 31 : 1 Sasadvahnih duhiturnaptyain gadvidvain rtasya digitim saparyan. ....

Pitā yatra duhithuh sekarṇjantsam sagmyena manasā dadhanve.
father of an only daughter with his son-in-law to effect that his first son will returned to the maternal granddaughter to continue his family line. But unfortunately, it does not refer to any right of inheritance of daught- ter, who had brother as well.

The general opinion of the society was that sisters should not get any share in the patrimony, if they had brothers. Moreover, in Regveda, II:32:4, the term ‘Dāya’ is mentioned, which has been explained by Sayana as ; possessed of plentiful heritage or wealth.’ Another term ‘riktha’ occurs in the sense of inheritance in the verse of Rv.14 Th term’ Dāya’ has also been mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas in the sense of ‘Pater- nal wealth’.

In a verse of Rgveda, we come across the truth that a father had a strong prejudice against adopting a son for heirship. The verse runs thus-’One not acquitting debts, although worthy of regard, yet begotten of another, is not to be contemplated even in the mind (as fit) for accept- tance; for verily he returns to his own house; therefore let there come to us a son, new born, victorious over foes.’15

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14. III : 31 : 2 ‘Na Jāmaye tānvo rikthamāraika ..... 
   Adhā cidokah punaritṣa etya no bājyabhēṣāddhetu nabyaḥ.
In household, the wife is regarded as the mistress of all she has to survey. At the marriage ceremony she is addressed with dignity as- ‘Go to the house to be the household's mistress and speak as lady to the gathered people.’

In Vedic literature, so far the right of inheritance for a wife is concerned we have no conclusive evidence on wife's right to property, the daughter however, it had her share in her father's property. She also inherited the whole paternal property in the absence of her brothers.

It has been found that, the dignity of the wife was recognized in the Rgvedic society. She was not only an inferior in the management of the household but was distinctively present in the very home. To describe the nature of a woman a verse has been recorded as - ‘A wife, O Maghavan, is home and dwelling.’16 In some verse we find the term auspicious has assigned to the nature of women. A verse states thus - ‘The streams of Ghee incline to Agni as devoted husbands, auspicious and smiling to a husband.’17 In another verse we find a blessing of happy family as-


Gṛtasya dhārāḥ samidho nasant tā juṣāno haryati jātavedāḥ.
Many you never be separated, live together all your lives sporting with sons and grandsons."  The verse contains the blessing of having sons and grandsons.

This statement of this verse can be instanced as the happy Aryan life. Besides this, the very ideal of an Aryan wife has been brought out in a verse of Rv.  

The women had active participation in the Vedic sacrifices. The rules of sacrifice is laid down as - the sacrificer has to presoak with his wife. Because, it has been believed that if the wife is unable to be with him, while offering oblation the husband can keep a idol who would resemble his wife. The society has a laid down such principle which a sacrificer should follow. Thus women enjoyed the right to leading a part of sacrifice, whose presence is absolutely necessary.

In Brāhmaṇic literature we find that, the king had usually four wives or queens called Mahīṣī, Vāvātā, Parivṛkta, Pāḷāgalī. Chief queen who was duly conserated was called Mahīṣī; the most favorite wife of the king was termed as Vāvātā; the neglected or discarded wife was called Parivṛkta and the fourth wife was known as Pāḷāgalī. The chief queen was included amongst the king makers as Ratnins. Hence, she was member of the royal cabinet or mantri-parisad. The chief queen was indispensable to the king in the performance of sacrifices and religious rites. In certain sacrifices the presence and active cooperation of all the four queens was essentially necessary. It has been observed that, in the horse sacrifice all the queens played an important role to perform respective task assigned to them. The inclusion of the chief queen amongst the king makers bespeaks her constitutional status. The favorites queen who is named as Vāvātā also enjoyed an important position as a go between the king and the people. She has been found as a mediator. If the subjects failed to gather courage to place their grievances before the king, they appealed to the queen Vāvātā who become their spokesman and championed their miseries.
Thus, the queen enjoyed an esteemed position. The recognition of the chief queen as a Ratnin, and the important role she played in the horse sacrifice amply bespeaks her constitutional status. The second queen who was named as Vāvātā, most beloved of all wives, she has been found as she pleaded for the miseries of the subjects to the king and the king condescended and granted her prayer.

Thus, from this passage, it can well infer that women enjoyed a honourable position in Brāhmaṇic society. But it appears that the general privileges and better status which women enjoyed in the Vedic literature were largely due to men being involved in the attitude of accompanying the women in every ritual and provide them what they deserved.

In the Vth brāhmana of the IVth chapter of Brhadārṇyaka Upaniṣad we come across a anecdote of ‘Maitreyi - Yājñavalkya’. Where Yājñavalkya wanted to renounce household life and wanted to divide his possessions between his two wives- Maitreyi and Kātyayani. This refers to women’s rights to have their husband’s property in Upaniṣadic Age.
SECTION - III

A Comparative study of the rights enjoyed by Male and Female
The status of the women in any civilization may be truly judged by the way in which the birth of a infant is celebrated. It has been observed that the family of the Vedic society was Patriarchal. In ancient civilization in patriarchal families, the birth of a girl was generally not welcomed as boys. Everywhere the son was valued more than the daughter. He was a economic asset of the family for lifelong. The parents always believe that their son will perpetuate the name of his family. The birth of a male child was very much welcomed in the society. This statement can be true if we compare this following hymn of Rv as ‘May a tawny - hued well grown son, the bestower of food, active, manly, a worshipper of the gods, be born; May Tvasta prolong for us a continuous line of progeny.’

On the other hand, there are very less references of welcoming a female child. In the later Vedic literature, the birth of a female child was not very popular. In several hymn of the Atharvaveda we come

1. Rv. II : 3 : 9 Pishan grupah subharo byodhaḥ ..... sruṣṭi bīro jāyate debakāmaḥ.

Prajaṁ tvāṣṭa bi syotu nābhimasme athādevānam pyetu pāthah.
across various charms and rituals to have a son. Numerous prayers have been made to avoid a female child. One of the verse cited as - 'May God put elsewhere woman birth; but may he put here a male.' 2

Again in another verse, we come across similar prayer for a male child as - 'Unto your womb let a foetus come, a male one, as an arrow to a quiver; let a hero be unto there.' 3

Besides this, we find various passages where the birth of only male child was prayed for and the difference between male and female children crept in. In TS a method has been found to avoid birth of a female child which is cited as - 'He should not spread (the bunch) in all directions. If he were to spread it in all directions, a daughter would be born to him.' 4 Here this verse, refers that if the sacrificer spreads the bunch of sacrificial straw in all direction a girl baby would be born to his family. It can not be totally denied that female child was not welcomed.

It has been observed that in Vedic society some families were found to be celebrated the birth of female child and glad to have a daughter.

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2. A.V. VI: 11 : 3 Prajāpati ranumatih senibāhyaoci.
3. A.V. III: 3 : 2
4. TS. II: 6 : 5 : 4 'Na viśhvaṇḍham vi yuyādyā dvīśhvaṇḍham viyuyāt stryasya jāyeta ......

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Though there was a preference of a son but sometime parents were found to wish for a scholarly daughters too. Prayers for the birth of a healthy child might not always be meant for wanting a male child only. It is undeniable true that some references of Rv shows the space for the women in the society was of affection and well acceptance. We find a mother was decorating her daughter as a bride and was praying for her well being. Her feeling towards her daughter reflects her love. The verse stated as - “Radiant as bride decorated by her mother, you willingly display your person to the view.”

The limit of liberty given to women by Vedic society to take part in its public life gives a good idea of the nature of its administration and enables us to know how far it had realized the truth that women too have contribution of their own.

The Brāhmaṇa literature reveals the fact that it was a society of generally male dominated, women were naturally supposed to attend upon men and follow them. Available evidence witnessed that a family

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Bhadra tvamūso bitaraṁ byuccha na tatte anyāuṣaso nasanta.
always celebrate the birth of male child grandly TBṛ observes ‘The son is one’s heart, seek a son, O brahmins, this is the world’s advice.’ Due to patriarchal basis of the family the birth of girls was given secondary importance than the birth of boys. A Vedic passage runs to show the real picture of society that the birth of a male child has sought to keep in this earth and for female child, they were sought to take place elsewehere. Thus ABṛ truly states - ‘A wife is a comrade a daughter is a misery, and a son is a light in the highest heaven, so a man without a son can not attain heaven. In this context, it is important to state why daughter is described as source of misery? Because, society has a general prejudice against female education; it was believed that to make a girl educated is a waste of time and money. The ordinary families, however, could not afford to make their daughters educated. Daughters had to be married at a certain age and she has to leave her parents.

The Av. speaks of family concord which was highly stressed upon. It shows how the members of a family where eager to live united with

7. T.S. 6/5/10/3
8. ABṛ. VI : 3: 7 : 13 ‘Sakhā ha jāyā krpanamhi duhitajyotirhi putrah parame byaman.’
9. Av. III : 30
common interests and mutual love and respect among themselves. The joint family system was an order of the day in the vedic period and three generations might have lived under the same roof. Sons and daughters had their free choice in their marriage affairs.\textsuperscript{10} And the son lived with his parents even after marriage. From the use of some words parivividāna, and Parivitta we may surmise that brothers and sisters were married according to seniority and sometimes an unmarried sister lived under the guardianship of her brother and his wife in the absence of her father.

Several references indicate that the society expected man to live longer carefully and live his full span of 'a hundred years and not to waste away life purposelessly.'\textsuperscript{11} The Vedic society believes that man is born with three debts; that to the gods he repays with sacrifices, to the sages with learning for the learner is called 'the keeper of the sages, treasure and the debt to the fathers, he redeems by begetting sons.'\textsuperscript{12} Among these, the learner Bṛahmacārin has a deep mysterious signifi-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{Av. VI : 112 : 3 T.Br. III : 2 : 8 : 11 M.S. IV. 1,9}
\item \textit{S.Br. X : 5 : 6 : 7}
\item \textit{Ibid. I : 7 : 2 : 2}
\end{itemize}
cance. Moreover, in the Mahābhārata we come across some references which refers the sons are regarded as one’s self within.\(^{13}\)

Under these circumstances we can assume that there is a world of difference between the son and daughter. In this context an 11th century writer should have observed that ‘The son is bless itself incarnate, the daughter is the root of misery’\(^{14}\). It has further to be pointed out that the prevailing view that the daughter is less desirable than the son, the reason was not much hatred of her sex, but of incapability continue the family line. A young girl will eventually get married and have her own family with her husband, in which her primary work will be taking care of her husband and her childrens. She will be at home only. But there are cases on record where daughters like Gārgi and Maitreyi who had excelled men by their intelligence and spiritual knowledge.

It must be, added here that to a cultured parents both was equally welcomed. But cultured and rich families are naturally few in society to provide the necessities of a girl.

\(^{13}\) \(1 : 173 : 10\) Ātmā putrah sakhe vāryā kṛcchri tu duhitānriṇam.

\(^{14}\) Kathāsaritsagar 28, 6: Sokakandah kva kanya hi kvanandah kayabānsutah.
The widows fate was observed as pitiable in society. In a verse we come across a prayer as - "May I be a non-widow like Indrani."\textsuperscript{20} A curious social custom proclaimed that 'the husband should not dine with his wife near him.'\textsuperscript{21}

On the whole the woman's role was subservient to the man's. She was indispensable because apart from being useful in the household she has to delivered sons which was important for the continuity of the line and the wealth also because her ritual presence-mute and passive was conventionally required at a sacrifice. Beyond this, she was treated as a useful but inferior being to be tolerated everything, but also kept under strict surveillance and subordination; this is quite clear from the tone and overall attitude of the brähmanaś. It has been noticed that, a prosperous man had four wives, a maiden and four hundred maid servants,\textsuperscript{22} all for his enjoyment, having many wives was a 'symbol of high status.'\textsuperscript{23} It strengthen the power of a monarch.

\textsuperscript{20} TBr \textit{III} : 7 : 5 : 51.
\textsuperscript{21} SBr \textit{X} : 5 : 2 : 9
\textsuperscript{22} SBr \textit{XIII} : 4 : 2 : 8
\textsuperscript{23} SBr \textit{XIII} : 2 : 6 : 7

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In Upanisadic society also, we find the great sage Yājñavalkya had two wives namely Kātyayani and Maitreyi. This truth refers to the existence of polygamy in society. In the IVth brāhmaṇa of the VIth chapter of B.U. we find some prescription have been laid down as how a man can subdue and enjoy a women he wishes, for having enjoyment if she denied how to subjugate her and how to get an unwilling woman to fulfil his desires. All these features have been observed in a verse. In B.U. we come across some method of having a daughter. The passage records as - ‘If one wishes that his daughter should be born, who is learned, that she should attain a full term of life, they should have rice cooked with sesamum and eat with butter.' Apart from this, several references made for begetting a fair complexioned, tawny-brown complexion, dark complexion with red eyes, long lived son, leaned and master of all Vedas, who would shine in assemblies and speaks sweet words etc. Most importantly for the last kind of son, the wife has to be fed with rice cooked with meat and eat that with clarified butter.

25. B.U. VI : 4 : 17 ‘duhita me paṇḍitā jāyeta, sarvam āyur iyād iti, tilodānam pācayitvā sarpiṣmantam.....
26. B.U. VI : 4 : 18 ‘ya icchet putro me paṇḍito vigitah, samitiṃ gamah, ्śuśruṣītā m vācam bhasitā jāyeta, .... māmsodanam pācayitvā