Chapter V

FINDING S AND CONCLUSION
The Feminine space in the Vedic literature has been discussed in the previous chapters. The space provided for women in the Samhitas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣats has been covered there. The attitude of society towards women; their rights as preserved in our ancient texts has been tried to be bordered. The dissertation is now resuming to its conclusion.

The dignity of the wife was recognized in the Rgvedic society. She was not only regarded as a generator in the management of the household but was in fact the very home. Moreover several references witnessed that the wife was treated with utmost courtesy and regard. She was recognized as the ornament of the house. One of the verse states as - 'Agni of unattainable brightness, he is an ornament to all (in the sacrificial chamber) like a women in a dwelling.' It has been observed in a verse that the home management was under her direct charge and ordinarily


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her views were to prevail there.’ A verse of Rgveda refers the duties of a wife as ‘She is beheld nigh at hand, radiant as the breast of the illuminator (the Sun) and like Nodhas has made manifest many pleasing objects, like a matron she awakens her sleeping children and of all female who are stirring betimes.’ However a passage of the A.V reflects the attitude of society towards women as ‘As the mighty river (Sindhu) won the supremacy of the streams, so be thou supreme Samrājñī having gone away to their husband’s home’. Moreover the scriptures were prescribed that “The family where women were cheerful; it will prosper, it would come to grief if the women were in sorrow; women have their own respect; they ought to be honoured.” It has been believed that, women are recognized as the support of the universe. The whole universe exists on account of and through them. It has also been observed that Rigvedic society has placed the mother in the house as the model for the womanhood. In this context, mention may be made the name of

2. AV XIV: 1: 43


4. AV XIV: 1: 43 ‘Yatha Sindurnadinaṁ Samrājya susube vrṣā, Eba Tvam samrājya..........

5. Manusmrī - ‘Yatra nāryastu Puṇyaṁ tatra ramante devataḥ’.
Aditi. Aditi who is known as the ideal mother of many Gods and she has been founded as protecting man from distress. Hence, in the Rgveda the motherhood is no doubt, the essential and the most characteristics trait of women and she is placed on a highly respectable in the domestic and social context. From very early times, it was the duty of the mother to respond all invitations. She has to attend all the sacrifices. ‘She has been honoured as a mother, who is the institutress of the ceremony, the mother of male offspring.’ Motherhood therefore has been the cherished ideal of every woman. The ideal love and concord between the husband and the wife have been beautifully depicted in some of the verses of Rgveda. Among the verses, a verse is as follows - ‘May Prajāpati grant us progeny, may Aryāman unite us together until old age; free from all evil omens enter your husband’s abode, be the bringer of prosperity to our bipeds and quadrupeds.’

In Rv, we find certain women referred to with great admiration and respect in the context of domestic affairs, social organizations, education

6. RV X : 86 : 10 'Sahatram Sma purā narē samanam
   Vedha rtasya berene indrapatni mahiyate.

   Adurmangatih Patilokamā biśo sam na bhava......
and spiritual debate etc. Moreover girls in rich and ruling families used to receive some military and administrative training also.

The status to women in the Vedas is known to be raised by allowing her the active participation in the Vedic sacrifices. The principle of a sacrifice is that the sacrifice has to partake with his wife. Therefore TBr states - 'A person who is unmarried ritually he is regarded as unholy.' 8 This verse refers that a widower or a bachelor was not permitted to perform any sacrifice. Hence it has been believed that oblations offered by a bachelor to Gods or ancestors are unacceptable. Therefore, it can be rightly inferred that the society, placed the woman in a honourable position. Specially, the role of a wife was praised highly in brāhmaṇas.

The attitude towards women in society was satisfactory. Women were regarded as an incarnation of Sri or Goddess of Grace. SBr describes the nature of women as, ‘A women is indeed the incarnation of Sri hence, they never kill a women.’ 9

8.  TBr II : 2: 2: 6 Ayajniya vaisa yopatnikah .............
9.  SBr XI : 4: 3: 2 stri Vā esā yat srih ............
It has also been observed that, a verse of the Rgveda has been assigned by the term ‘Dampati’ where we get a glimpse of the happy and cooperative family likes of the Rigvedic period.

It has also been noticed that numerous references to dicing in the Rgveda and the Brähmaṇas lead us to infer that dicing was an interesting game in the Vedic civilization.

The other side of the coin has also been witnessed where we find in vedic period, it is evident from some adultery that, the plight of women was indeed very miserable. One of the passage from A.V records as ‘When father had physical relation with his daughter, then with the help of earth he released his semen and at that time the righteous devas formed Vartrashak Devta.'

In Yajurveda, we come across some references where the society has been found as humiliating women by depicting her as having physical relation with a betrothed horse. The passage records as “O horse, you are protector of the community on the basis of good qualities, you are protector or treasure of happiness, you become my husband.”

10. AVXX : 96 : 16
11. YV 23 : 19
A study of the marriage hymn of Rgveda, shows that the bride was fully mature and quite grown up at the time of the marriage. She has been described as graceful in youth declining for a husband. The verse runs thus 'Viśvavāsu, we worship you with reverence; seek another maiden, one with large hips; leave the bride with her husband.' This verse refers the maturity of the maiden for women in Vedic age. Moreover, the dialogue hymn of Yama and Yami shows how the concept of marriage had already grown up in the Vedic society and the physical relation between a brother and a sister was highly condemned in the Rgvedic period. However, in another verse, we observe a friendly relation between brother and sister where it has been prayed that "Never may these friendship of you, Indra and of the Rṣi Vimada be disunited; for we know your attachment, to be like that of a sister to a brother, so may the friendship between us and you prosper."
Regarding education in the Vedic age, the participation in sacrifices presupposed Vedic study. And it is found that Brahmachārya discipline and training was as much applicable for girls as it was for boys. During the age of the Bṛāhmaṇas the area the Vedic studies became very extensive. During this period, the age of getting married has been extended up to the age 16 or 17. As a result, society began to insist that those who wanted to undertake Vedic studies must devote a fairly long period of about 12 to 16 years to the particular study. But in bṛāhmaṇic period, it has laid down that they could devote 7 to 8 years to that task. It was quite insufficient for an efficient grounding in the Vedic lore in the age of the bṛāhmaṇas. As a natural consequence, lady scholars became few. The education of the women in the Vedic ages was there. We have found that the references to the Bṛahmavādinis, who shows that women were not only the educated but they could remain engaged with the education but the mass participation of women in education is not mentioned anywhere.
It has also been noticed that during the brāhmaṇic age the sacrifices became very complicated; it could be properly performed only by those who were learned and proficient in Vedic knowledge. As a result, the participation of women in sacrifices gradually became less. A verse is worth mentioning here as ‘Many sacrificial duties that could be once performed by the wife alone, in brāhmaṇic age it came to be assigned to male.’

Some isolated remarks are found scattered in the brāhmaṇical texts regarding the nature of women. A verse states - ‘Women are given to vain things’ i.e. things which display futile and inconstancy etc. Moreover, in the anecdote of Urvasi-Pururava, which attained popularity having abundant sources of poetic imagination and inspiration. In the conversation of Urvasi and Pururava, Urvasi made a remark to her husband Pururava regarding the nature of women as - “Verily, there can be no friendship with women; their hearts are hard as hearts of hyenas”. Though this quotation had made with reference to inconstant ladies who

Tadidam pyetarhi ya eba kaścanapatiṣṭati.

15. *SBr* III: 2: 4: 6 'Moghasaṁhitā eva yosā

16. *SBr* XI: 5-1: 9 'Na vai straināṁ sakhyāṁi santi salavrkānāṁ hṛdayāṁi te.'
are of fickle nature. Urvasī herself is heavenly nymph, a divine damsel and hence she dislikes to settle here in this earth. Besides, it was a contractual marriage. Therefore such kind of statement may applicable to her character. But the assessment definitely hints at the attitude towards, at least a class of women who were not considered to be worthy of friendship.

There is no doubt that in Rgveda, girls were often educated along with boys. Though some are confined in domestic chores, girls were not deprived of freedom to continue their studies.

The changes of the position of women which has been observed during the period of Upaniṣat is quite satisfactory. However, we met some lady scholars who were formed as participating in philosophical discourses. Amongst them Gārgi and Maitreyi are the famous scholar by whom the picture of the then society revealed. In B.U we come across a description of philosophical tournament, which held under the patronage of king Janaka of Videha the subtlest philosophical questions
were initiated for discussion by the learned Gārgi.

The earlier mentioned review of the important features of the Vedic educational system will witness sufficient to impress upon our minds how it help to generate learned individuals like Vedic īśis and īśikās. Besides this, in Rgveda we find some references of the women commanders in the battlefield, who were used to fight against enemies when necessary and used to go to battlefield along with their husbands and sometimes they were equal or better than the men. In this connection a verse of Rgveda introduces a lady warrior named Viśpalā, the wife of Khela. The erase records as ‘The foot of Viśpalā was cut off like the wind of a bird, in an engagement by night immediately you gave her an iron leg that she might walk, the hidden treasure.’ 17 Thus, it can be well infer from the above verses that the surgery of the then society was very effective indeed.

As per the references found in Rgveda, it has been observed that the Upanayana (Initiation) ceremony of girls used to take place as regularly

17. R.V. I : 116 : 15 ‘ Sadya jaradhāmayaso Visapatāci dhanī
as that of boys at the usual period. There was no denial of the right to get initiated for women. After getting initiated women were allowed to take part in the sacrifices. They even perform the rites of being active part in the sacrifices especially unmarried one are found offering Vedic sacrifices by themselves. As per the records in vedic age, there were no images to worship it seems. So the offering of sacrifice was the only popular and established method of worshipping divine powers. Naturally therefore it could not be prohibited to women to be part of that, especially because they were all initiated into Vedic studies after their Upanayana. Therefore, they all were could offer oblations to the divine gods after their initiation. Mention may be made here the name of Apālā and Viśvavārā. In the Apālā’s hymn, we find Apālā as ‘offering the drink Soma to Indra.’ In one of the verse we find her praying as “May Indra make us very rich, often hated by our husband and forced to leave him, may we be united to Indra”.

This verse indicates the abandonment women by their husband.

Kubitpatidviso yatirindrena sangamamahe
In another hymn of we come across similar reference where we met another female seer named Viśvavārā getting up early in the morning and starting the sacrifice all by herself. The verse records as - ‘The seer Viśvavārā facing the east glorifying the gods with praises and bearing the ladle with the oblation proceeds to the sacred fire.” 19 Here it is also evident that the women themselves were placed in the highest post of honour.

Regarding marriage the women had the full right to choose her life partner by herself. A verse witnessed that their voice has been honoured to select their groom, which was known as Svayamvara. Besides this, the marriage hymn express the desire that the bride would be able to speak with calmness and expose herself in public assemblies. This statement can be evidenced by a verse, which truly states - ‘May puṣan lead you hence; taking you by the hand; may the Āśvins convey you away in their car, go to your husband’s dwelling; as you are the mistress

of the house; you submissive to your husband give orders to his household’.\(^{20}\) Moreover, there are some verse in Rigveda which refers that the bride was blessed so that she could have ten sons. The verse runs thus-‘Indra, showerer, make her the mother of sons, pleasing (to her husband); give her ten sons.\(^{21}\)

In the two samhitas namely Rgveda and Atharvaveda, we come across some magical charms to destroy the co-wives. A verse shows that there were competition between the co-wives. The verse observes - ‘May I be excellent amongst the excellent to my husbands; and she who is my rival be vile amongst the vile,”\(^{22}\) On the other hand in Atharvaveda we observed some prayers have been referred for protection for the pregnant woman as well as for the unborn and the new born child and similar things. For such kind the book XIV of Av, which contains a collection of marriage texts and which is essentially as second enlarged edition of the marriage text of the Rgveda. But the second kind of this

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22. \textit{Rv X : 145 : 3} ‘Vitarāham Uttara uttareduttarāabhṛyah Atha Sapratiḥ yā mamādharā Sadharabhyah’
texts consisting of exorcisms and curses are more numerous. These kind of passages refer to rivalry in love and disturbances in married life sometimes. We also find some magic spells by which a woman wants to appease the jealousy of her husband or the verses which are also supposed to get back to a husband his untrusted wife. Moreover in Av, we come across some soporific magic. To ascertain the existence of this particular magic, a verse has cited here as – ‘May the mother sleep, may the father sleep, may the dog sleep, may all people around sleep’ proves that the passage is employed by a serville fellow who wants to steal something or may sneaks to his beloved. It has also been noticed that through the medium of a picture one could harm a person or exercise power over him are found in vedic period also. In Av, we find a passage, where a man wanted to secure the love of a woman she made a picture of mud (earth) and took a bow with a thread of hemp, an arrow whose stock was made of black wood and began to bore through the picture

23. Av. IV: 5
with the arrow a symbolic piercing of the heart of the beloved with the arrow of love god Kāma during which he recited the verse of the magic song as – ‘May (love) the disquieter disquiet thee, do not hold upon thy bed; with the terrible arrow of Kāma (love) do I pierce thee in the heart.’

In a similar way we find a woman who proceeds when she wants to win the love of a man. She makes a picture of the man, by placing the picture in front of herself and throws heated arrow heard against it while uttering the songs of – ‘Send gods, love sickness! He shall be infatuated with love for me.’ Where it is also mentioned – ‘Madden him, Maruts; Maiden him O air, Maiden him Agni; let him consume with love of me.’ It has also been observed that in Av, an unequivocal language of wildness has spoken by the songs, by which a woman is supposed to be made barren.

Hence, it can be said that the magical songs of the Atharvavedа which by virtue of their chief elements are certainly popular in the then society. The magic songs of the Av reveal to us a thought that is entirely different.

25. Av. VI: 130
26. Av. VII: 35
from what we find in the hymns of the Ṛgveda. Here we move into an entirely different atmosphere. There in the Ṛgveda, the great gods of the heaven, who personify the mighty natural Phenomena, which the singer glorifies and praises; to whom he performs sacrifices and to whom he made prayers, obliging, partly exalted beings, mostly kind a radiant deities. Where as in Av the dark demonic powers which bring against to which the magician hurls his curses or which he wants to pacify and banish with flattering words. Many of these magic song belong evidently along with their magic rites to a circle of beliefs and ideas, which spread over the whole earth, reappear frequently in the different peoples with wondering semilarity. We find exectly the same views, conceptions and same peculiar springs of thought of the magic songs and rites as the Atharvaveda has preserved and recorded. Although the influence of wicked magicians; sometimes caused harm to the society, on the other hand, we find a number of magic spells and incantations for establishing harmony, which are between expiatory rules and benedictory charms.

27. Vol. VIII : 31 'Encyclopaedia of vedia philosophy Subodh Kapoor, Cosmo publication
It has been observed that in Brahmanic age the custom of polygamy was prevalent in society. It was common to king and nobles. The AB्र and GB्र states in clear terms - ‘One man may have many wives but a wife must not have more than one husband.' The SB्र also records the same as - ‘One man may have many wives.’ Hence it can be inferred that polygamy was legal issue in society. Even if there are many wives, as it were one husband is a pair with (all of ) them. The King Hariścandra is said to have had hundred wives. The woman’s position in society is reflected in a myth: in the Agni Patnivat libation of the Soma sacrifice as :- “The ghee is thunderbolt and with ghee, the thunderbolt, the gods weakened their wives; so that beaten and weakened they had no right whatever over their own bodies or to any inheritance.”

15. AB्र III : 12 : 12 and G.B. III-20 ‘Ekasya bahvyo jāyā bhavanti, na ekasyai bahavah sahapatayah.’

16. SB्र IX : 4 : 1-6 ‘Ekasya puṃso bahvyo jāyā bhavantubhyāmbyasat kāreṇa ca svāha kāreṇa ca ..... juhoti

17. ABhra III : 5 : 3 : 47
18. ABhra VII : 13
19. SBhra IV : 4 : 2 : 13
It is undeniably true that polygamy existed in Vedic era. On the other side of coin, we met some references on polyandry too. A verse of Rgveda indicates the existence of polyandry in the then society. The verse records as - "The Gandharvas gave Sūryā to you Agni, with her bridal ornaments; do you, Agni give us husbands our wife back again with male offspring." The reference to the husband in the plural number has been taken to be an evidence of polyandry. Some other verse also convey's the same, amongst them, one of the verse stated as 'Rodāsī', with dishevelled tresses, and mind devoted to her lords; Radiant in form, she has ascended the car of the restless Maruts as Sūryā (ascended the car of the Aśvins) comes hither of the sun.' This verse speaks of Maruts having Rodāsī as their wife. elsewhere in Rgveda we come across another verse, which address as "Two (the Asvins) travel with swift (horse) along with one (bride Sūryā) like travellers to foreign countries." In this stanza, we found the twin Aśvins with one women Sūryā like two persons travelling on their way. This verse has taken as


indicating the prevalence of polyandry in Vedic civilization. However, in A.Br. we come across a different statement as ‘A wife should not have many husbands’ declares its different spirit.

The A.V also speaks of ‘Punarbhu’ i.e a women who has again become a wife in accordance with a sacrifice, which she performs to be united with her second husband in the next world.\(^{31}\) Besides this, a verse of Rgveda explicitly witnesses this custom of polyandry. The verse states - ‘Soma first obtained the bride, the Gandharva obtained her next; Agni was your third husband; your forth (husband) is born of man.’\(^{32}\)

Available evidences witness that spells and incantations were familiar practices during the period of Atharvaveda, which have gathered value for its medicinal practices and society has founded as it strongly believe on the various charms and spells which have made to get rid of various problems and illness such as destroying rivals, who might be a

\[\text{31. } \text{Av. IX : 5 : 27, 28 'Yā purvaṁ Patim Vitvathanyam vnadate Param......daksina jyotisam dadāti.'}\]

\[\text{32. } \text{Rv. X : 85 : 40 "Somah Prathomo bibide gandharvo bibid uttarah. Trtēyo agnisti Patisturiyasti manusyajāh."}\]
co-wife and how to avoid the evil eye and get a male child in the womb of a pregnant lady. A verse has been quoted as ‘Pinga defend thou (the child) in process of birth; let them not make the male a female let not the egg eaters injure the embryo’s; drive thou the Kimidins from here.’

In Rgvedic society, we observed that generally a son inherited his father’s property. It would be well to consider here the legal rights of the daughter and wife to owe her father’s property we do not have very conclusive evidence on wife’s right to property. The daughter however it would seem, had her share in her father’s property. She also inherited the whole paternal property if she is brotherless or single child. It has been observed that, a girl had an assigned share for her in the property as whole and it thus attracted wooer who were gathered in crowds to marry her for her riches. This statement can be compared with Sūryā on whose marriage her father held a Svayamvara and we find grooms were flocked to marry her. Another verse, Rgveda III:31:1 points out to the fact that the daughters son could succeed to the property of his

33.  Av. VIII: 6:25 “
maternal grandfather i.e. 'The sonless gained a grandson from his daughter.'

It has been observed that, the Vedas prescribe a special ritual called 'Punsawan Sanskār' (a ceremony performed during the third month of pregnancy). During the ceremony it is prayed: 'Almighty God, you have created this womb; women may be born somewhere else but sons should be born from this womb.'

So far as the property rights of the wife of her husband's property is concerned the spouse was the joint owners of the household and its property. This custom can be evidenced by an instance of Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣat, where we find Yājñavalkya had divided his possessions to his two wives, Maitreyi and Kātyāyini, when he was supposed to leave his householder life. This short story of BU focus the existence of this custom in the then society.

34. Av. VI: 11:3
The changes which were observed during brahmanic period in the position of women were gradual. Their proprietary rights continued to be unrecognized, the only exception being in favour of marriage gifts of moveable property. In the higher sections of society the sacred initiation (Upanyana) of girls was common and they subsequently used to go through a course of education. There was, however, a gradual decline in female education as the period advanced. The system of sending out girls to famous teachers came to be discouraged; it was laid down that only near relatives could teach them. Therefore, religious training became possible only in the case of the girls belonged to rich and cultured families. It has been observed that only in cultured families women used to chant their Vedic prayers regularly morning and evening.

In the Br literature, we observed that the custom of polygamy was very much prevalent in the society. The ABr is very explicitly expresses ‘One man may have many wives.’
It has been observed, there are some references which refers that in Vedic society, monogamy was the normal principle where as polygamy was only an exception. Though the society allowed the customs of polygamy. But it has pointed out that the beautiful relationship of wife and husband is comprehensible only if monogamy ruled the society. In a hymn 145 of the Xth maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda, we find a very conclusive and convincing evidence of polygamy.

On the basis of the above verse, it may be asserted that the society has maintained the custom of polygamy. The S.B states as ‘One man may have many wives.’ These passage witnessed that Polygamy was as legal issue in brāhmanic society. There were no rules laid down for preventing this custom. People can have as many wives as they can. Apart from this, a king was legally allowed to have four wives. Among the wives the king has to select one to accompany him in the sacrifice. But text leave no space for the other wives. Very naturally the selected and the chief wife used to get the rights and honour reserved for wife
but the other had to remain in the dark. With a 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, sacrifice the most important one. In this sacrifice, we find that, the chief queen is playing important role. She has been found to anoit the horse aided by other queens. In this sacrifice, when the horse is supposed to die, the chief queen named as Mashisi seems to found lying by the side of the horse and when the priest utters some verses, the queen get herself unites with the horse. This rite runs counter to decency and the obscene dialogues, referred by the priest is not in keeping with the sublime influence of surrounding the sacrifice.

In Brāhmaṇas, it has found that, the Rājasuya sacrifice was connected with the coronation ceremony of the king. In this context, we come across one special feature of it viz, the presence of Ratnins or king- makers. The chief queen was included among the Ratnins i.e., Kingmakers. The
king sought the consent of all the Ratnins. SBr states - "It is for him that he is thereby consecrated and him he makes his own followers. 35

Though the king had four wives. But the chief queen was called Mahisi, enjoyed the most honourable position as a body of kingmakers. So, the inclusion of the chief queen bespeaks 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. Besides the chief queen, the other queen, who is most favourite to the king, named as Vāvātā, also enjoyed an honourable position as a mediator between the king and his subjects and the advisor of the king. She played the role of the spokesmen of the subjects. From the religious point of view, miserable was the position of the fourth wife of the king because she had no right to participate in Vedic rituals, due to her lower caste. Knowing their well establishment in various rituals, we can infer that the society had provided all the required rights to women.

35.  SBr V : 3 : 1 : 6 'Etad va asyaikam retnam .......... kurute.'
Thus the position which women occupied in the Brāhmaṇic age is much better than what we usually expect it to have been.

The picture of society as revealed in Ch. U. and BU. through their series of episodes and chapters, we find some lady character namely Maitreyi, Kātyayani, Vācaknavi Gārgi and Jābālā whose contribution made the status of womanhood in a remarkable position of a dignified statute. In one less popular Upanisad named ‘Prāṇāgniḥotra Upanisad’ has beautifully described the nature of a women as ‘buddhiḥ patnī’. The term ‘buddhiḥ patni’ refers some section of women were appreciated of there talent and skill. Another factor responsible for the relatively satisfactory position of women was the influence of religion. But a different kind attitude we experience in one upanisad named ‘Yājñavalkyopanisad’ where the great seer and philosopher Yājñavalkya has commented on women as, ‘women are naturally attractive, they are root cause of fickleness of mind, they are the great hindrances to the ascetics; the women are like puppets made of flesh and blood; it contains only bones, nerves, veins..... what it remains within, which can be called...
the object of beauty’? This statement represents the position of women in the then society.

Available evidences indicates that in upanisadic age too a man was allowed to have many wives. It was common among the king and wise man. Mention may be made to the great seer Yājñavalkya. Who has two wives namely Maitreyi and Kātyayani. Thus polygamy prevailed in society.

In the Chandogya Upaniṣat we come across the story of Satyakāma Jābālā in the sections Third to the Eighth of the Fourth Chapter. In the story of Satyakāma Jābālā we came to know, how he was recognized with his mother’s name. This story conveys that on the basis of truthfulness the seer Haridrumata Gautama accepted him as his disciple.

In the Sixth and Eighth Brāhmaṇa of the III chapter of the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣat we come across the discourse between Gārgi and Yājñavalkya. The Sixth Brāhmaṇa of this chapter narrates the episode of Gārgi and Yājñavalkya’s conversation, where we find that Gārgi’s

36. Yaj. U. Verse No. VIII
query about the ultimate knowledge reached at a point where the great seer Yājñavalkya was not in a position to answer and become annoyed and told her 'Gārgi, do not ask anything more,' lest your head will fall off.' This statement can be interpreted in different ways, one dimension can be that do not cross the limit. It is the limit of knowledge that a women can ask a man. A statement could have been interpreted because, we can not think that the great sage like Yājñavalkya do not know the answer; it is only a check to the womenfolk. It only provided a full stop to the questioner put forward by Vācaknavi Gārgi.

And in the Eighth Brāhmaṇa of this chapter we met a discourse between Yājñavalkya and Gārgi. The story runs thus: The king Janaka of Videha arranged a debate in which all the brāhmaṇas, nobles and kings were attended in the assembly. The great seer Yājñavalkya was one of them. In that assembly, the king Janaka wanted to find out the person who would know the best of the science of the Absolute. Eventually none of the attended scholars compiled any queries. Amongst
the attended people only Gārgi raised her queries to the great seer Yājñavalkya. She asked - ‘Since everything is woven like, warp and woof in water, on what is water woven? ’ Yājñavalkya replied; On air. Frequently she put her queries and Yājñavalkya replied all of her queries. Her quarries came to a certain end when she asked on what the world’s of Brahman woven like warp and woof? To answer her queries the great seer Yājñavalkya taught ‘the morality of the supreme self’ to Gārgi. Finally Gārgi herself bowed to the seer and proclaimed that there is no one who can be more greatly learned in the vedic lore than the great philosopher and seer Yājñavalkya.

In the IVth chapter of Ch.U we come across the episode of Raikva, which refers the story of the king Jānaśruti Paūtrāyana.

In this story we find Paūtrāyana dreamt a dream where he came to know about a sage of great knowledge and power through the dialogue of two swans. The story introduces that the king wanted to learn spiritual knowledge from the sage. When the king approached to the sage and


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asked of knowledge, to which the sage refused with harsh words. A different spirit we find here is when the king added his daughter to the gift list to the sage passionately looked at the face of the girl and said ‘Merely by this face, you would make me speak.’ Eventually the sage became ready to teach the king.

The story refers that a girl can be present to any body for any purpose, that the king Jānaśruti Pautrayana presented his daughter to a wicked sage, as a gift. The girl exploited her life for her father’s foul play.

In Vedic age, we found certain practices relating to the relationship between wife and husband. A wife could not take her food in the presence of her husband. As a rule the husband used to dine in presence of the wife and the wife should catered food to her husband and in-laws. ‘She is whose presence the husband does not take food bears a vigorous son.’ This verse refers that, there is an exception to this rule that in the case of husbands desiring heroic or vigorous sons, he should not eat food in the presence of his wife.

38. Ch. IV : II : 5
39. KBṛ VII : 9
In Bṛāhmaṇic literature, we find the attitude of husbands and wife in a verse which truly conveys as ‘women showed follow their husbands.’ Besides this, Śatapatha Br. introduces a similar verse as ‘This fellow has brought the wives of the gods to the place of their assembly; his wife will be following him to the assembly.’ \(^{40}\) In this passage, we met the attitude social disapproval to such a possibility and signified the inferiority of women throughout the imagery as ‘A pretty women is apt to became dear to her husband.’ \(^{41}\) To enrich her nature the bṛāhmaṇic society has provided immense honour to a wife. The society believed that a women never mean any harm to society, rather she cherished her family and community as a whole. To go further for describing her role in family a verse has cited as ‘The wife is one’s other half; therefore as long as one does not get a wife one can not beget children and is incomplete..., therefore one calls out for a wife.’ \(^{42}\)

Moreover, in Bṛāhmaṇas we find some references of conjugal life to which blessings are offered. The verse stated as ‘Through good works

\(^{40}\) SBr XII : 2 : 2 : 4
\(^{41}\) SBr XIII : 1 : 9 : 6
\(^{42}\) Ibid. V : 2 : 1 : 10
may the wife be associated, may you two be at the yoke of the sacrifice, being of one mind may you defeat your enemies, and obtain the unfading light in heaven."^3 It has also been noticed that the women as a wife used to look after household affairs. She has been founded as doing cooking, sewing knitting, rearing of children and the like works that include to the mother's part. A verse of the SBṛ states 'Knitting and sewing are the duty of women.'^4 Besides this, some brāhmaṇical text records that music, fine arts and dancing were under the categories of women.

The space of women in Brāhmaṇic society is known to be raised by allowing her to participate in Horse sacrifice (Aśvamedha). In other sacrifice which is known as Mahāvrata sacrifice we find a different spirit of women. Here we met some maidens are carrying some pitchers full water dancing around the fire with the sound of drums. But at the same time we find an instance of corrupt practice, which has placed the women in a lower position by a certain custom. As a part of the ceremony

43.  _TBr III : 8 : 5 : 52_
44.  _SBṛ XII : 7 : 2 : 11 'Tadvā etad strinām karma yat ārnā sutram karma.'_

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a we find a chat takes place in abusive and obscene language bespoken fertilization between a student and a courtesan. This indecent conversation is followed by a real physical relation between the student and the prostitute, which is indeed perverting the status of women.

In JBr 2 -113 we come across a reference of a sacrifice, known as Gosava 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 life including incest with mother, sister and other female relatives. King Janaka of Videha did not perform this rite as he could not approve of these illicit and highly objectionable incestuous acts. It has been observed that this rite outrages all sense of decency and fundamental principles of civilized society. It can be well inferred that the objectionable rites were influenced by some religion of some aboriginal people.

Thus it can be said that, the Sarñhitās, the Bṛāhmaṇs, and the Upaniṣats present a full length portrait of women's life. The social position of an
individual was vitally connected with the position which religion assigned to the person for its rights. Hence where society has provided the privileges to women will therefore throw light on their position in society. Generally, the role of a wife has been praised highly in Vedic literature.

In this first decade of the twenty first century the movement of feminism is still on. To earn 'equality' with the other section in still a day dreaming. Our objective was to explore the actual space provided for women in the vedic text. Our survey of the vedic text has revealed the fact that Natality Inequality is not a problem of the present day it was very much there in those days also. Mortality inequality, so far has not shown its ugly face there. Basic facility inequality was there as it is still there in present days. The right of initiation was gradually denied to the womenfolk. We mentioned negation of this right particularly as this was the starting point of the border line of denial of all other social rights to women. Professional inequality and social opportunity
inequality perhaps was not the need of the then society. But ownership inequality was there. On Right of Inheritance, Vedic society has done a good exercise in the introduction of Niyoga system. In household duties only the Vedic text has given the womenfolk a wider space, where she could dwell upon a wide space of course under a male domination.

At the end of this dissertation our humble submission is that A study of the feminine space in Vedic literature reveals that the space provided for women in the Vedic literature is a big canvass where bright pictures as well as the dark hollowfull pictures could be found for women which verily represents a life full of life.