Women as Daughters-in-law:

From the day of marriage, the wife took upon herself the responsibility of the householder's stage of life. Service to the husband and elders in the family was the sacred duty of the housewife. In the period of Rgveda, the women were greatly honoured in her father-in-law's house. Not only she had a respectable position in the family, but had an authority over her husband, father-in-law and brother-in-law.

\[ \text{sāmāraṇī śvadāvārāḥ bhav samāraṇī śvadāvārāḥ bhav} \]
\[ \text{nīnānādīr samāraṇī bhav samāraṇī adhi devāpyu} \]
- Rg Veda X.85.46

She had a respectable position. At the time of marriage, father told his son-in-law that his daughter will be his कुल्पा, and so he is giving her to him. In the Mahābhārata, Draupadi personally looked after her mother-in-law Kunti's needs like clothes, bed, bath, meals etc.

1. नगमस्या वर्षा आदिवाछिस्त्र वृश्चिक सजाम्।
   महायुध इत पर्वतो ज्योत्सं हितस्वास्ताम॥ - Atharva Veda I.14.1

2. एको ते कुल्पा राज्यं तामु ते परं दम्बासिः।
   ज्योत्सं हितस्वास्तात् आ शीर्षाश्च समाध्यात॥ - Atharva Veda I.14.3
In the same epic, the character of Brāhmini is mentioned who took the responsibility of the welfare of the whole family.

- Mbh.चन.233.40-41

Sāvitri was a dutiful daughter-in-law, and in turn was loved by them like a daughter of their own.

- Mbh.चन.206.15-16

Sāvitri as a daughter-in-law requested her parents-in-law to allow her to go to forest with her husband. Then

---

3. सामिवाणि भ्रात्राय भ्रात्राय महाब्रता।
अर्जु गच्छति मे स्तान्ता फलाहारो महाब्रतम्॥
इच्छेयमवनसन्ताना आर्य्यम् व्यायर्न ह।
अनेन सह निर्गत्ते ने वेदम् विरहः श्रमः॥ ॥
Dyumatsena, her father-in-law allowed her to go as it was her first desire after marriage.

Kunti, advised her daughter-in-law Draupadi to be an obedient wife as Indrani, Swahā, Rohini and Damayanti and also to become the mother of virtuous sons. She also advised her to welcome the guests, sacred people, elders, old people

4. यथेन्द्राणि हरिहरे स्वाहा चैव विभावति ||
   रोहिणि च यथा सोभे दमन्ति यथा नन्दे ||
   यथा वैष्णवो भवस वसिष्ठे चाय्यहन्ति ||
   यथा नातायो व्यक्त्रिता तवं नम भर्तुः || - Mbh.आदि.198.5-6

5. जीवसेवासुपुर्द्रि गहुसोधसमस्तिता ||
   सुनगा भोगसम्प्रा यशस्ती पलिष्ठा || - Mbh.आदि.198.7
and also everybody who deserves respect. She blesses Draupadi to have all the happiness on this earth.

पृथिव्यां यानि रत्नानि गुणवत्ति गुणान्विते ।
तन्त्रानुजितं त्वं कल्याणि सुखिनि शादां शतम् ॥

- Mbh. आदि. 198. 11

In the Sanskrit literature, beginning from the vedic tradition, till the Mahabharata period, women as daughters-in-law, had more value in Hindu families. This shows that in the Mahābhārata period, there was harmony in the family, and women were more respected in all the fields.

Women as Mothers:

Motherhood is the highest reach of womanhood. To a Hindu, even the God is revealed as the mother of all creations. In the words of the Manu smṛti, "From the point of view of reverence due, a teacher is tenfold superior to a mere lecturer, a father a hundredfold to a teacher and a mother a thousandfold to a father." Mother has always been praised and respected. The glory of the mother is indescribable. Her place

6. अतिधिनागतवान् साधृतः युद्धानं बालंतया गुरुन् ।
पूज्यान्तः यथान्यायं शक्तृत गच्छन्ति ते समाः ॥ - Mbh. आदि. 198. 8

7. उपाध्यायान्त्रशास्त्रां आचार्यां शांति पिता ।
सहभं तु पितृवंमाता गौरवेणातिरिच्च्यते ॥ - Manu. II. 145
is high. She is peerless and incomparable. She is more respectable than the teacher, preceptor, father and even the God. मातृदेवी भव is a dictum known by Indinas. Observation of rectitude, service of one's own self, religion and desire and endeavour of gaining the knowledge of scriptures - to arouse such tendencies in the minds of children is the duty of the mother. In the Mahābhārata, great ksatriya women like Vidulā always wished her son to fight in the war for victory, as it is the duty of a ksatriya. She scolded her son whenever he was defeated by Sindhurāja in the battlefield. She supported him to try for victory which was suitable for a ksatriya king. She also said that a son, who does not do दान, तपस्या and who does not speak truth, and who takes interest in earning money, is not at all a son of his mother in the real sense.

दाने तपसि सत्ये च यस्य नोचिरतं यशः ॥
- Mbh.उषोग.133.23

8. अनन्दन मया जात द्वितां हर्षवर्धन ॥
न मया तवं न पिता च जातं काम्याण्तो हसि ॥
निर्मस्युपायसंस्कर्पं: पुरुषः कीमसाधनः ॥
याक्षीवं निराशोऽस्ति कल्याण्य धुरं व वह ॥ - Mbh.उषोग.133.5-6

9. मात्रत्मानवमन्यस्य मैमनस्येन वीभतः ॥
मनः कृत्वा सुकल्याणां मा भैरवं प्रसिद्धस्य ॥
उत्तिश्नं हि कापुरुषः मा श्रीवेंष परातितः ॥
अभिज्ञः नन्दद्रवं सर्ववन्निर्माणो हन्युरोक्तः ॥ - Mbh.उषोग.133.7-8
She wishes that no woman in the world should give birth to such a son who does the work which gives happiness to his enemies.

निरमर्ण मिहल्साहिं निर्विन्नयममितरन्दुम ||
मा सम सीमान्तिनी काचिन्जनवेतु युद्धमीहद्यम ||

- Mbh.उधोग.133.30

That man, who lives coward like women, is not a man. On the part of a heroic mother like Vidulā, it was not right to welcome a son who came home being defeated in the battle. Thus, she emboldened him by saying that she would be more proud of a son who had sacrificed his life in the battle field than the one who returned home defeated. All his arguments which were excused for his cowardness, were refuted by his mother. At last, Saṅjaya engaged again in a battle with the king of Sindhu.

In the Mahābhārata, Gāndhāri told that she never differentiated her sons and the Pāndavas, and told that it was the duty of Dhṛtarāṣṭra to protect Pāndavas.

---

10. आयासें हलयं कृत्या मृगवत्याऽघुर्णवयं ||
    परं विबहते यदमात तमातं पुरुषं उच्चवते ||
    तयाद्विर्यधानमां श्रीवद्य यह जीवनी || - Mbh.उधोग.133.35-36

11. भगवदावनप्रयोगां नैतात्तित्रामग्निनि नरयां ||
    योवेयं कृत्या कौन्तेरशा रक्षत्त्त्वात्तथा ||
    तथैव धृतराष्ट्रेण रक्षित्वम् यथा त्वम || - Mbh.श्री.14.14-15
Mother and father are the visible Gods on this earth. Padma Purāṇa says "mother is the embodiment of all the Tirthas or sacred waters. The father is the living God on the earth. They should be worshipped by their children with greatest effort in all sincerity, love and devotion, even as a Bhakta would worship his favourite deity." The pain that the mother bears for her child cannot be paid off by any means trying even for thousand and thousands of years on the earth.

यं मातापितरस्त्रो क्षेत्रं सहंते समभवे नृणम् ॥

न तस्य निष्कृति: शाक्यं कर्तुं वर्ष्टतेपि ॥

- Manu.II.227

A mother keeps her child in her womb for nine months. Nothing is greater than this. Discarding all her likes and dislikes, she guards and nourishes her unborn child in her womb. Naturally, nobody bears a single minute particle in their body which troubles or pains. But it is the mother who sustains the unborn child in her womb for a long period of nine months. After giving birth to the child suffering great pains, she has to undergo immense troubles in bringing up the child. Hence, the mother is glorified in the Mahābhārata. According to this epic, mother is more respected than the

12. सर्वतीर्थमयी माता सर्वदेवमय: पिता ।

मातार्थ पितार्थ तस्मात् सर्वाल्केन पूज्यवेत् ॥ - Padma Purāṇa
father, as the mother takes care of her child more affectionately than the father.

मातृस्तु गीर्मादन्ये पितुन्ये च मेनिे ।

dhaksar kuruṣe mata visvarhyan jaya prajā: ॥

- Mbh.वन.205.17

Both the father and the mother always wish their son victory (यशा), fame (कीर्ति) and wealth (पौर्णम).

अर्थान्ते हि पुत्रेषु पिता माता च भाल ।

यश: कीर्तिमयेवम् प्रजा धर्म तथेव च ॥

- Mbh.वन.205.20

So according to Dharma, a son must fulfill the dreams of his father and mother to satisfy them.13

From the above discussion, it is clear that the Mahābhārata gives more importance to the mother. But the importance of the father is not ignored. It advises to respect father, mother, fire, Guru and Ātma.

पिता माता तत्वात्मक्रियात्मा च प्रकारः ।

यथेते पूजिता: पार्थ तस्य लोकावृभो जिती ॥

- Mbh.वन.169.14

13. tathārtham tū sakalāṁ kṛtovatiṁ prabhavita ।

पिता माता च राजेन्द्र तुष्यतो यथा नित्येयः ॥ - Mbh.वन.205.21
The mother is an adorable deity and the best preceptor or the best teacher.

Hence, the role of the mother in bringing up the children is very important. It is very well said that great persons became great because they were the sons of great mothers. She plays a very important role in making her child great and also her husband to lead a successful life. It is true as per the dictum "Behind every successful man, there is a woman."

**Education**:

Education is the very heart of the nation. Women are really equal halves of men from every point of view. But unfortunately, society regarded women as 'weaker sex.' Naturally after the vedic age, there was a temporary deterioration in the status of women during the dark period of the Smṛti Age. Manu Smṛti, the most respected and one of the ancient of all Smṛtis, pays the greatest homage to women in ever memorable verse.
Hindu Society has always honoured women. Women have been considered as the equal halves of men and thereby, completing them, like halves of a shell completing the whole shell ("ardha-vrigalamiva") and filling up the void in their lives - not only as equal partners of men but also as infinitely superior to men. In the sphere of education too, women in India have, from the beginning, have equal opportunities with men to develop the full potentialities of their nature in different spheres of life.

The Sanskrit word 'Śikṣā' and English word 'education' are nowadays synonyms to a great extent Śikṣā is a derivative form the verbal root शिक्षा विशेषानि that is to impart vidyā to the disciple. The word 'education' according to the Oxford English Dictionary means systematic instruction of a subject. The word 'education' has its origin in Latin 'education' meaning 'to rear.' But the sense of 'rearing' has been gradually dropped from it and it remained only in the form of teaching or instructing. विशेषानि is a compound of Vidyā + Upādāna. Since it is a verb, so Upādāna must mean to grasp, in other words to learn.

The educational system in India may legitimately claim to be unique in the world in many respects. From the ancient
period, India has recognised only one supreme goal of life, viz., self-realization. Hence, in India, education has never been objective or practical in the narrow sense of the term, that is being confined only to mundane subjects and objective arts and crafts. These should be studied, no doubt, but the final aim of education is Moksha or Mukti - the attainment of a Life Immortal, and not the worldly success and prosperity.

The ancient Indian educational system lays great stress on the absolute necessity of a personal relation between the teacher and the taught, which was famous as Gurukula. The relation between a teacher and his pupils is no more intimate than that between a speaker in a large meeting and his audience, and accordingly lacks entirely the feeling of living fellowship, the spirit of loving that alone can make education, with the two sides - teaching and learning- fruitful in any real sense of the term. Hence Gurukula system has always insisted on a close personal relation between teachers and students.

The total veneration and dedication of a student to his teacher is found in India in our ancient Gurukula system of education. Such Gurukulas were run by the Rṣis like Vasiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Yājñavalkya etc. Such centres were generally located in forests on the banks of rivers. The students - rich or poor, princes or commoners - used to go and live in the Rṣikula until they completed their education.
Our ancient Rṣis or seers were considered divine representatives dispersing vidyā or knowledge. The Rṣis obtained vidyā by the grace of God. A number of mantras were revealed to them in an 'अपूर्व्यो' form (that is without human agency). And such mantras were imparted to their disciples in succession.

Women in our country have been very highly honoured right from the vedic age. They enjoyed respectful status in the family as well as in the society. In the field of education, the girls on par with the boys enjoyed equal opportunities. In ancient India, education meant vedic education. During this period, women were regarded competent for studying the vedic literature and participating in the sacrifices. No one could recite vedic prayers or perform vedic sacrifice without undergoing the upanayana ritual. This suggests that the upanayana might have been an obligatory ritual even for the girls in the vedic period as it was for boys.

In Rgveda, we find many hymns which have been visioned to female vedic seers. Some well known amongst them, famous for their spiritual attainments are Ghośā, Lopāmudrā, Romāṣā and Apāla. In Rgveda (X.95), there are eighteen mantras in all containing a dialogue between Purūravā and Urvaśī. Out of these eighteen, Urvaśī is said to have composed nine mantras. The Rṣis of Rgveda (IX.104) were two daughters of Kaśyapa.
named Śikhandinī and Apsaras. Both are considered to be Vaikalpika Rsis. This clearly indicates that the standard of female education during that period was very high and excellent.

In Yajurveda, we find that women did not lag behind in the field of education. It has been desired that women may attain the best education, and their progeny may be well-educated and learned. It has been said that a child born of a learned mother is always happy in life.14 The educated women shared the responsibilities of their husbands and also discharged their household duties.

The Atharva Veda speaks high of the maiden who observed Brahmacharya discipline.15 This clearly states that a maiden wins a young husband through brahmacharya or Vedic studentship. This passage is a very important one, being the only Vedic passage which directly refers to women's right to studentship and education. This also indicates that the maidens in that age used to observe the vow of celibacy during the period of their education. The Atharvaveda pays high compliments to the women who were deeply engaged in learning.16

14. अवितादितिलिख्यामि - Yajurveda.X.9
15. ब्रह्मचर्यं कर्त्यं युवां बिन्दुते पतिम् - Atharva Veda XI.5.18
16. शुद्धं पूज्यं योजितं ययिं इमा आपश्चर्वमय सर्वसन्तु शुद्धम् - Atharva Veda XI.1.17
In the Upanisadic age, women began to take interest in philosophy. In Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, we find that Maitreyi, the wife of the celebrated sage Yājñāvalkya exhibited her keenness to study the problem of metaphysics, viz., the immortality, rather than showing interest in the worldly riches. In another instance in the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad, Gārgī, a lady philosopher asked Yājñāvalkya, a very subtle philosophical question. The sage there upon advised her in her interest not to insist on that question and on the advice of the sage, Gārgī agreed to withdraw.

17. TIT ftcfixf ITT WTRiifflvT

18. W^TT^W^2fT^cT ^TT^cT | W^TWl^J iTFfffcT I ITST^^TT aftcTT^T sflcfR^fctl

- Brhadaranya Upanisad.II.4.13

- Brhadaranya Upanisad.III.6.1
In the Mahābhārata, we find Kunti well-versed in the use of the Atharva Vedic mantras which were kindly granted to her by a great Vedic Brahmin in token of the service to him rendered by Kunti.

During the Mahābhārata period, there were women versed not only in the highest philosophy but also in other branches of knowledge. Among the women of the royal families, many were well versed in politics. Gāndhari's immortal saying, "यतो धर्मस्ततो जयः" has passed into a classic truth. She refused to wish success even to her own son Duryodhana as he was moving on the lines of Adharma. Instances are found in the Mahābhārata from which we can say that women of those days were taught arts like singing and dancing. Mādhavi, daughter of king Yayāti, was an expert in music, or Gāndharva Vidya -

Thus, it is clear that in the Mahābhārata, due attention was paid to the education of women, as a result of which, many women of those days were able to reach the highest
level of academic perfection. They also enjoyed equal rights with men in all spheres.

**Religious Activities**

According to the ancient Hindu society, women were regarded as untouchable during her monthly period, and regarded them as religious impure, and temporarily untouchable. The complete isolation of women that was insisted upon during this period was partly due to the desire of ensuring complete rest which is so desirable for them during that period.

Marriage was the ideal recommended to society by vedic religion. It was the woman who managed the responsibility of the religious rituals in the family and she alone did the rites in the absence of her husband. The woman was not an impediment in the path of religion; her presence and cooperation were absolutely necessary in religious rites and ceremonies. This naturally increased her religious value. Man could not become spiritually complete unless he was accompanied by his wife.\(^{19}\) Gods do not accept the oblations offered by a person who is not a Gṛhastha.\(^{20}\) Wife was indispensable from the spiritual and religious points of view. Gṛahini, in ancient India was known as Sahadharmini. In other

---

19. तत्मातुपुर्वो जाया वित्त्वा कृत्तिवित्त्वात्मानं मन्यते | - A.Br.I.2.5
20. अयश्चित्स्यै वैश धार्मिक | - Ś.Br.V.1.6.10
words, she was held to be with her husband not only physically but spiritually as well. In the vedic age, women enjoyed all the religious rights and privileges which men possessed. Her presence and co-operation were regarded necessary in religious rites and ceremonies.\(^{21}\) This principle was responsible for ensuring her a religious status as high as that of her husband. The husband and the wife are equal and necessary partners in divine worship. This principle implies that men and women have equal rights and responsibilities.

In the vedic age, the upanayana of girls used to take place as regularly as that of boys. After a few centuries, however, writers like Manu began to advocate that girls upanayana may be performed but no vedic mantras should be recited on the occasion.\(^{22}\) Manu also explicitly forbids a girl and a married woman to offer an agnihotra.\(^{23}\) No sacrifice no fast was to be observed by women seperately from their husband.

\(^{21}\) Rg Veda VIII.31.5

\(^{22}\) Manu.II.66

\(^{23}\) Manu.XI.36
Mahābhārata commands that for a woman her husband himself is her God. This is clear from the words of Brahmini and Draupadi. Many people in modern India, do not accept this statement. Today also, this statement is controversial. The great sage Vyāsa already proved this through Jayadratha's character. Jayadratha was of the opinion that wise women worship their husbands, only if they possess wealth.

As per the opinion of Jayadratha cited above, it seems that the wealth was more valued than the husband's character or qualities.

Sāvitri, on the strength of her penance and pātivrātya

24. पतियुक्तश्रुणया धर्मोऽः से मे तेवचे ह्रिजः
      देवतेष्यपि सर्वेणु भर्तधके देवतं प्रसूः ॥ - Mbh.वन.206.30
      पत्याध्रोऽहि धर्मोऽः मतः क्षीणं समातनः ॥
      से देवः सा गतिमन्या तत्या का विप्रथं चरेत् ॥ - Mbh.वन.233.37
(fidelity to her husband) followed Yama (God of Death).25 She talked with him26 and by her sweet and intelligent words, she could win over Yama to bring her dead husband Satyavan back to life.27 She also got boons from Yama for the eye-sight and the lost kingdom for her blind father-in-law28 and hundred sons

25. सावित्रि चैव दुःखाया यमेमेहवान्यगच्छति ।
   नियमा:भतसिद्धा महाभागा पतिद्रता ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.19
   तपसा गुरुभक्ष्या च भर्तुः: स्वेताद्र: प्रतेन च ।
   तव चैव प्रसादेन न मे पतिहता गतिः: ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.22

26. पतिद्रतासि सावित्रि तथेऽव च तषोऽन्निता ।
   अतत्स्वामिभमिपामि विधिं मा तव शुमे यमम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.12

27. वरं दुःखे जीवतुः सत्यवाचवः
   यथा मृत्रा ह्ये महं पतिं विना ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.52

28. च्युनं स्वराज्यादु: दलवस्मभिधिको
   विनाहक्षुः: ज्वलशृः ममाः ।
   स लघुचन्दनंवन् अभे ज्वप- ।
   स्तवः प्रसादार्ज्ञलक्षीकसिनिनि: ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.27
   हतं पुरा में ज्वलश्रव्य भीमतं: ।
   स्वयमेव राज्यं क्षितां स पार्थिवं: ।
   ज्वालाः ज्वरं न च मे गुरुग्ध्या
   द्वितीयमेतदः दर्यामि ते चरम् ॥ - Mbh.वन.297.32
to her own and hundred to her father who had no son. Thus, she brought glory to both her families and became adorable.

Draupadi’s devotion, purity and firm faith in God brought about the miracle. Yudhīṣṭhira, during the play of dice staked Draupadi and lost. Duhshāsana dragging her by her hair, brought to the royal assembly. When Duhshāsana started pulling Draupadi’s sāri, she prayed to her God Krṣṇa to save her from this shameful peril. As every sāri was pulled and

29. ममात्मजं सत्यवत्तत्थ्रींति
भवेनुभायसिन्न यत् कोलुद्रहम्।
शतं सतानां बलवीयस्वातितनम्
मिदं चनुर्भ वर्यामि ते वरम्॥ - Mbh.वन.297.45

30. ममानपथ्यः पृथिवीपति: पिता
भवेन्त पितुः पुजयते तत्वीसस्म।
कुलस्त्य सतानकरं च यद् भवेन्त्
तुतीयमेतद वर्यामि ते वरम्॥ - Mbh.वन.297.38

31. स ततं पराकृत्य समासीप
मानीय कृष्णात्मत्वीयेहनेम।
तुः शासनो नाथचतुमनात्वम्
बकर्ष वस्यः कल्लीमिवात्तम॥ - Mbh.सभा.67.31

32. आकृष्ट्यमाणो वसने श्रीप्रचासिततिसं हरेन।
भोक्तिन्द्र ब्रह्मचारिन् कृष्ण गोपीजनप्रिय॥
कीर्ति: परिमृतं मा फिन न जानासिं केशाव।
हे नाथ हे रामनाथ ब्रजनाथपार्थिवभान।
कीर्तिवार्तवत्सः मामुद्रकर्व जनादन॥ - Mbh.सभा.68.41-42
fell on the ground a new sari draped her. Duhshasana out of fatigue sat on the ground. Impressed by this miracle Dhṛtarāśtra gave boons to Draupadi by which she and the Pāṇḍavas were free from the salvery of Kauravas and got back all that they had lost including their kingdom.

These above mentioned instances prove that always women prayed Gods during their difficulties, which is seen in

33. ततस्तु धर्मोऽन्तर्तितो महात्मा
   समाभ्रोणः वै विचित्रः सुवर्शः
   आशुत्रयमाणे वरसेन ग्रीवाचार्यविवाह्यते।
   तद्रूपान्त वरस्वं पादुरारीस्येकः। II
   नानासागिरिगणि वरस्वायं वै प्रभो।
   प्रादुभाविन्ति शतांश धर्मस्य परिपालनात्। II - Mbh.समा.68.46-48

34. यदा तु वास्तवः राशिः समाभ्रोणे समाविष्ठः।
   ततो दु:शातरां अन्तः ग्रीवदितः समुपश्यताः। II - Mbh.समा.68.55

35. ददति चेदत परं महो वृणोऽमि जतत्तत्वः।
   सर्वभूर्युः श्रीमान्दशोऽस्तु युम्हितिः। II
   मन्विन्यमान्तत्ति मैवं ब्रुयः कुमारकः।
   एथ वै दशसुऽहि प्रतिविर्भिः मन्विन्यम्। II - Mbh.समा.68.28-29
   राज्यास्वः पुरां भूत्वा यथा नान्यः पुमासु क्षिप्तः।
   राजनिविविष्टेष्वर्या न युक्ता दशायता। II - Mbh.समा.68.30
   सर्वो जनान्याः च भीमसेनेन्यन्तरही।
   यथि च पर्ये राजादशास्त्रो ज्ञानाधृतम्। II - Mbh.समा.68.32
present day also. This dedicated worship to God saves the worshipper from difficulty. No doubt, women have done greater service to religion than men by preserving the old religious tradition in Hindu society. So, men ought to be grateful to women for preserving it. An effort has to be made to spread the knowledge of principles of Hinduism among women so that they can become the representatives of our culture. Mahābhārata helps in attaining this goal.

**Spiritual powers:**

In the Mahābhārata, women, on the strength of their spiritual power acquired by pativrata, could save themselves in difficulties by cursing the guilty. When Damayanti, forsaken by Nala, was wandering alone in the forest, a lust-stricken hunter advanced towards her, and she like flame of fire, uttered the curse with the vow as "If I have never even mentally thought of any person other then Nala, may this mean hunter fall down dead." 36 With this curse, the hunter fell down dead

36. स तु पापमति: शुद्र: प्रफर्ययितुमातुरः।
धृष्टं तक्षयामास दीतामयितः।
दमयन्ती तु हृताचल प्रतिनियतता।
अतीतवाक्ये काले प्रकाशिन्ये लघुनिता।
ये नेष्ठादर्श्ये मन्त्यापि न चिन्तये।
तथायं पत्तां शुद्रों परापुरुषाविवेचः।। - Mbh.वन.63.36-38
then and there only.\textsuperscript{37} Similarly, she cursed Kali to face more difficulties than her husband Nala. With her curse,\textsuperscript{38} Kali, who had taken resort in Nala, had to leave him.\textsuperscript{39}

Yudhiṣṭhira awed by the lustre of Gāndhārī's spiritual power was afraid of her curse which could burn down the Pāṇḍavas for killing her son by fraud.\textsuperscript{40} When angrily
summoned by her, he nervously fell down at her feet and she could see through the covering on her eyes, only the nails of his toes which turned black by her sight.\textsuperscript{41} For ignoring the tremendous loss of life in the war, though she had the power to stop. She cursed Kṛṣṇa that his family would also be destroyed completely by internal feuds.\textsuperscript{42} During Mahābhārata period, women had the power to curse which never failed. But women used it with great caution and self control. People

\textsuperscript{41} सा भि नित्यं महाभागा तपस्त्रोप्रेण कहिला।
पुष्पीवर्षं भूता चूरं नं समधाल्यै। \textsuperscript{Mbh.शत्य.63.24}

\textsuperscript{42} पतितुपूर्ध्वया यन्मे तपं कृतिकुपालवितम्।
तेन त्वं हुस्येन शाप्ये चक्रमनुभार। \textsuperscript{Mbh.श्री.15.29-30}

\textsuperscript{41} तत्स्याबनतदेहस्य पादोपरिपतिः।
युधिष्ठिरस्य गुप्तोपरिपतिः दीर्घस्वर्णी।
अंगुलिण्यदो देवी पञ्चम्सतेन स।
तत: स कुन्तीभूतो दर्दनीयनशो नृप। \textsuperscript{Mbh.श्री.25.42-46}
were afraid of the extra-ordinary power of such highly evolved women.

In the Mahābhārata, another woman Brāhmani, who cursed Kalmāṣapāda is an example of a lady who had extra-ordinary power. In the course of his wanderings through the forest as a Rākṣana, Kalmāṣapāda happened to come across a Brāhmaṇa youth engaged in amorous pleasures with his wife Āṅgirasi.43 The king caught hold of the youth and killed him.44 His wife, the Brāhmāni wept loudly and after cremating her husband's body in a funeral pyre, jumped into it and burnt herself to death.45 Just before her death she pronounced a curse on Kalmāṣapāda that if he touched any woman in future he would die immediately.46 The curse of great women never failed.

43. स कदाचित् श्रुताभिषो मुग्यन् भक्तमात्मनः ||
   ददाय सुपरिविलंकरितं च प्रकटिं च ||
   ब्राह्मणान् प्रकटाणां चैव मिथुनायोपसंगति ||
   तीतं वीक्ष्य सुविक्रमकृतार्थः प्रतिधिती || - Mbh.अदि.181.9-10

44. भतारं भक्तवामास्त व्यास्रो गुरुगवेयसितम् ||
   तत्तया: क्रोधाभिमुखत्या यात्रा यथृष्टमपतः मुखः || - Mbh.अदि.181.16

45. एवं शाप्वा तु राजां सा तमाणेनर्ती शुभः ||
   तत्वैव सन्निधो दीपसुप्रिविष्टे ज्वलावातः || - Mbh.अदि.181.22

46. कल्पाणपदः राजर्षिममविद्ये प्रहणी रुपः ||
   यस्माद्वायुक्तार्थार्थः प्रत्येके श्रुद्ध गृहसंबन्धः ||
While the pāndavas were leading forest life, the hermit Märkandeya told the story of a noble Brahmin named Kauśika to Dharmaputra. Once this Brahmin burnt down the bird with anger only by looking at it, as the bird had passed excreta on the head of the Brahmin. Once he reached the house of a Brahmin for alms. The wife of the Brahmin asked him to wait for sometime as she was busy in serving her husband. The Brahmin got angry and spoke cruel words to her. She argued that the noblest deed was to look after her husband. She requested her to forgive her as she considered her husband greater than God.47

The wife of the Brahmin with her divine vision acquired by pātrivratya could see the past action of Kauśika, that he burnt down the bird.48
She advised him that no Brahmin should get angry immediately. Her words explain the duty of a Brahmin which are most inspiring.49

**Social Activites**

In ancient times, the social status largely depended upon religious privileges and disabilities of women. The ideal before women in social life was to help society in procuring prosperity in peace and victory in war. The war of expansion required a numerous army; women cheerfully accepted the responsibility of rearing a large family. In Yajurveda, it is clearly stated that the women had a prestigious place in society.50

---

49. अपेय: सागरः क्रोधात् कृतो हि लघुलंकः।
तथैव दीपोपसां मुनीनां भवितात्मकाः।।
वेष्रृ क्रोधास्पिदाय पुरुषके नौप्रायति।
| ब्राह्मणाः परिमलद्वा वतापिः | सुदुरालम्बाः।। - Mbh.वन.206.26-27
| र्वाध्यायाममतो वै तं देवा ब्राह्मण विदुः।
| यदु ब्राह्मणाः कुशलं तदेवां परित्तयते।। - Mbh.वन.206.38

50. तस्मि नमनं जनयः सुप्रभोवतिव पुत्रं विनमात्स्वेनः।। - Yajurveda.12.35
The vedic marriage hymn requires the bride to be shown to all the assembled guests at the end of the marriage ritual. The hope was further expressed that the bride should be able to speak with composure in public assemblies down to her old age. The presence of ladies in social and public gatherings was a normal feature. In vedic times, this was quite welcomed in the society.

During Mahābhārata period, some kind of purda was observed in certain royal families, which was probably on account of a notion of prestige, that royal ladies should not come within the sight of vulgar eyes. This type of observation occurs in the Mahābhārata at the time of Dhritarāśtra's departure to forest.

या नापशचन्द्रमा नैव सूभों समा: काशिचिताः सा तस्मिन्नरेन्द्रे: |
महावन्तं गच्छति कौरवोऽन्त्रे शोकेनात्ता राजमार्गं प्रधपेदुः: ||

- Mbh.आश्रमवासिक्ष.15.13

51. सुमंगलीरियं वधूरिमा समेत पवयत ||
   तौमायमस्तयं दत्तायायास्तं वि परेतन || - Rg Veda X.85,33

52. वरिष्ठीं त्वं विद्मधमावदासिः - Rg Veda X.85,26
   अथ जिन्त्यिद्विद्मधमावदासिः - Atharva Veda XIV.1,21

53. जुष्ठ नेतु समनेतु वमु: - Atharva Veda II.36,1
From this it is clear that women in those days were in the habit of avoiding themselves from mixing in the public. This type of behaviour of the women is also seen in the ancient period prior to Mahābhārata. Women who felt themselves to be in helpless condition, would often avoid going out in public. Such was the case of widows and maidens without proper guardians, and of married women, whose husbands had gone out on a journey.\textsuperscript{54}

During the Mahābhārata period women were an important member of the society. There were occasions when women came in contact with outsiders. The king was made responsible for the safety of women. The king was to be more careful for the safety of maidens when the country was attacked by enemies.

In the social structure also, the killing of a woman was banned right from the very ancient times. In the Mahābhārata, in the words of Brāhmin's wife, and in so many instructions, slaying of a woman was a great sin.

\begin{poem}
कायम्व उपाच

\begin{itemize}
  \item मा बधीस्त्वं स्धियं भीरं मा शिशुं मा तपस्विनम्।
  \item नायुदयमानो हन्तव्यो न च ग्राहा बलात् हियः।।
\end{itemize}
\end{poem}

\textsuperscript{54.} क्रीडां हर्त्संस्कारं समाजीलक्षधारिनम्।

हास्यं परिचुः यानं ल्येन्प्रोशिष्टभूतका॥ Yājñavalkya.1.84
Though the killing of a woman was sinful, there were exceptions in a man's case but never in a woman's. The feeling against the killing of women is so strong that the Brähmin woman of Ekacakra hoped that the rāksasa Baka, being conversant with the Aryan law would not kill her.55

During the Mahābhārata period, women had along with freedom, restrictions to keep them safe from perils, and to maintain a high moral standard of the society. Thus, by establishing freedom and restriction according to circumstances, an attempt was made to keep the society's purity intact.

**Economical Activities**:

Right through the ages, the status of Hindu women in society is changing. They had the privilege of leading a full

55. अवध्या ब्रियामियाहरुम्भर्मिण्ड धर्मनिर्देशये।
धर्मविज्ञान राष्ट्रसानाहृन्न हन्यात् त च मामपि।।
निष्कृतवसिः वचः ध्रुवां ध्रुवां संस्कृति वचः।।
अतो मामेव धर्मस्म प्रत्यापितमहार्थिः।। - Mbh.अदि.157.31-32
family life as long as the desire to do so was there; but this they got at the cost of their economic rights. However, they won economic independence and lead a successful life.

The proprietary position of women in Hindu law may be determined with reference to its rules concerning their dominion over diverse items in the household. Manu mentions several lawful means of acquisition of property.\(^{56}\) Property rights of women were hardly recognized in ancient India. They themselves were looked upon as an item of the movable property of the husband or the patriarch. In vedic age, wife was generally regarded as the co-owner of the family property along with her husband as the term Dampati would show. The husband was required to take a solemn vow at the time of marriage that he would never transgress the rights and interests of his wife in economic matters.

\[\text{र्ग वेदा X.85.13} \]

Regarding the theory of joint ownership of the couple, Yājñavalkya concedes to wife a third of the husband's property,

\[\text{र्ग वेदा X.115} \]

\(^{56}\) सस्योपापस्याः धम्म्याः तथायो व्यवहारः क्रयो जयः ।

\[\text{प्रयोगः कर्मण्योगच्छ सत्प्रतिग्रहः एव च} \]

56. सस्योपापस्याः धम्म्याः तथायो व्यवहारः क्रयो जयः ।

\[\text{प्रयोगः कर्मण्योगच्छ सत्प्रतिग्रहः एव च} \]

- Manu.X.115
in case she was superseded unjustly.\(^{57}\) A wedding hymn in the \(\text{Rgveda}\) containing two verses indicates that gifts were sent with the bride to the bridegroom's house.\(^{58}\)

Women were given away as gifts in the vedic age, as would appear from several hymns, which glorify the gifts of generous donors.\(^{59}\) In the \(\text{Mahabhara}\), we find Dhritarashtra proposing to give hundred female slaves of Krsna as a token of his regard for him.

\(\text{\textbf{ autrespamapragatanaa} shubhano} \text{\textbf{ rucmvarcasaam} }\ |
\text{\textbf{ shatamam pradarsyami} dasaanaamapita tawatam} \ |
\text{- Mbh.76.8}
\)

The husband was deemed to have a natural proprietary rights in the wife. It is on this undisputed assumption that Dharma proceeds to stake Draupadi in the gambling hall. Even this proud queen does not think of disputing this right of her husbands, when she is dragged to the court of Dhritarashtra. She did not think that she had lost her freedom because the

\(\text{57. Aajnasampathini daska viro} \text{\textbf{ priyavadinim}} |
\text{tajnavyaspatriyamamrasyo bharaa} \chi\text{\textbf{ yikh} II - Yaynvalkya.76}
\)

\(\text{58. somo aasa pralabh ku}\text{\textbf{ urte} chanj} \text{\textbf{ oapak}} |
\text{suryaah abhivno varapratyasitaal puromak II - Rg Veda X.85.8}
\)

\(\text{59. u ca suryaah vijnanadanta bhaswinnto dhaa ryastraasru} |
\text{ - Rg Veda VI.126.3}
\)
husband has no right to sell or stake away his wife. She only wanted to know whether her husband was a free man, when he had staked her.

In the Mahābhārata period, women of respectable families were not expected to earn money, on the other hand a man living on the earnings of a woman was condemned. Draupadi did the service and earned money, but this was allowed for women of noble families only at the time of adversity. Draupadi had complete knowledge of the vast treasury of her husbands.

In the Vanaparva of the Mahābhārata, when Nala was losing in the gambling with Puṣkara, it was Damayanti who sent information to the ministers about how much was lost and how much remained.
And when the loss was complete, she started planning for
the future.

Thus, the woman, though not an earning member of the
family, was an important asset in monetary matters during the
Mahābhārata period.

The Mahābhārata states that the assembly began to hiss
loudly when king Yudhiṣṭhira proceeded to stake his wife in
the gambling hall. According to Draupadi, only intoxicated or
inhuman persons could think of exercising it.

60. एवंकै तु वचने धर्मराजेन भीमता ।
धिमित्येव वृद्धान्म सम्यान विमिता नितिति ॥ - Mbh.भ.86.40

61. कस्य लेवं वदसि प्रातिकामिनुः को दिन्येद मार्यवा राजपुजः ।
मृदुः राजा चूतमदेन मतो द्रुपदान्यत्र कैत्यवर्मां किंवति || - Mbh.भ.67.5
Another woman character mentioned in the Udyoga parva of the Mahābhārata, Vidulā advised her son to earn Dharma and Artha. She told that wealth comes and goes. So, man should always try to protect his wealth and also to earn back the lost wealth by Dharma.62 The Smṛti writers declared that women and children can not be the objects of gift or sale under any circumstances.63

**Daughter's Right for Inheritance:**

In the later Vedic literature, we find the view that women have no right for inheritance.64 In the third mandala of Rgveda, we find a verse in which a brother is advised that he should not give any share of his wealth to his sister as she is, after all, to migrate to a different family.65 The evidence of Rgveda and Taittirīya Samhita referred above shows that the practice of the division of property amongst sons were well-established in the Vedic age.

---

62. 3^ ^TTclMiR^r: I
    अभूत्वा हि भवन्त्येऽभूत्वा मन्यन्ति चापे ||
    अर्धंषेष्व चाप्यथर्व नास्तथ्यथः युवाहित्यः || - Mbh.उ.च.135.25

63. 3T3fcn f| -jqcFrzpfrf '3f«rr
    स्यं कुटुम्बन्यों देयं दासस्तार्तः - Yajñavalkya.II.175

64. cTT (fm:) JTTriRTtSTcT ^ %TcT I - T.S.VI.5.8.2
    तस्मात्तिनेब निरित्विविग्यं अद्याव्यः - T.S.VI.5.8.2
    ता (शिक्ष.) नामनस्वब्धेऽन दर्शयेऽचैः - Ś. Br.IV.4,2,13

65. *r srptf l - Rg Veda III.31.2
    न जामेये तात्यो रितमारेक चकार गर्भ समितुंरिचानम् - Rg Veda III.31.2
In the earlier period, however, girls were fairly educated, and very often they would remain unmarried either by choice or by the force of circumstances. A vedic stanza expressly refers to an old maiden claiming her share in her patrimony.\textsuperscript{66}

When marriage became obligatory for girls, it was naturally laid down that reasonable expenses in connection with them should be a charge on the family property. If a father died before the marriage of his daughter, the sons were bound to spend reasonable amounts for their suitable marriages, out of the joint family property. A general rule, however, has been laid down that a brother should spend for his sister's marriage an amount equal to one-fourth share.\textsuperscript{67}

Among the female heirs, the brotherless daughter was the first to succeed in establishing her right of inheritance. For all religious purposes, the father during vedic age could regard a

\textsuperscript{66} 布施सिंहस्य भगवत: \\
कृति प्रकृतत्वम् मात्वम् भव द्विभागं \\
तान्त्र व चेन मामह: || - Rg Veda II.17.7

\textsuperscript{67} असंसर्कृतान्तु संस्कृताय भ्रातृमित: पूर्वसंस्कृतैः \\
भगवार्दश निजादशास्त्रवां तु तुर्गकम् || - Yājñavalkya.II.124 \\
सब्धो अंडोभस्तु कन्यामय: प्रदुभूतात् पृथक् || \\
स्वास्त्याश्च बुधभागं पंतित: स्वपितताः || - Manu.IX.118
daughter to be as good as a son. He had a strong prejudice against adopting a son. He therefore, preferred property passing to his own daughter in preference to a stranger, who by a religious fiction, was to be regarded as an adoptive son. He could also usually arrange for the reputation of his own family by making an agreement with the son-in-law that he should send back his first son to continue his maternal grand father's family. One of the early hymns of Rgveda refers to a brotherless daughter getting her share in patrimony. The vedic age puts a high premium on the son, and sons-in-law were unwilling to allow their first born son (व्येणपुत्र) to revert back to the families of their maternal grandfathers. In those times, marriage was not easy for a brotherless daughter and she often remained a spinster.

The Mahābhārata maintains that, it would be manifestly unfair and unequitable to allow a subsidiary son to get an inheritance when there was a daughter to claim it.

यथेवात्मा तथा पुत्र: पुत्रेण दुहिता समा ।
तत्स्यामात्मनि तिन्नुन्यो दशमयं धनं होतेऽ ||

- Mbh.अनुशासन.80.11

68. न हि प्रभायारणः सभेयोन्न्योऽयामः मनसा मन्त्रव उ । - Rg Veda VII.4.8
69. अभ्रतेव पुत्र एति प्रतीची मतिरिव शतहयं धनानाम । - Rg Veda I.124.7
70. अमुर्वः सति जामयः सर्वव लाभितासस्तः ।
अभ्रत इव योवास्तिष्ठतु हतवर्मनः || - Atharva Veda I.17.1
She must get at least half the property; if not the whole.\textsuperscript{71}

It is known from the Mahābhārata, that women are the wealth of the house and hence they are to be respected.

\begin{quote}
धिष्य एता: बियो नाम सत्कार्यं भूतितिच्छता।
पालिता निगृहीता च श्रीं: सत्क भविति भारत॥
- Mbh.अनुशासन.46.15
\end{quote}

It states that a son is entitled to get a part of money from his mother which is given to her as \textit{stridhana} by her husband.\textsuperscript{72} But if a brahmin's wife gets some money from her father, only her daughter is eligible to get it.

\begin{quote}
खियास्तु यद भवेद बितं पित्रा दसं युपिपिर।
प्रायोग्यास्तवेत् कन्या यतां पुनर्तथा हि सा॥
- Mbh.अनुशासन.47.25
\end{quote}

A man should earn money according to Dharma, and should use it in performing Yajña and other religious

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{71} अभ्रातूका सम्बाहारं चाचर्हेत्यपरे विदुः॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.88.22
\item \textsuperscript{72} खीरणु तु पतिदायायमुग्धव्ययत्त द्वृत्तम्।
नापहारं खिय: कृप्यां पतिवित्तात् कर्मचन॥ - Mbh.अनुशासन.47.24
\end{enumerate}
activities.\textsuperscript{73} It is told previously, that according to the Mahābhārata, a kṣatriya wife is not equal to a brāhmin wife. So, a brāhmin's wife's son is greater than the son of a kṣatriya wife, and gets a major part of his father's property.

\begin{verse}
न तु जात्या समा लोके प्राणण्या: क्षत्रिया भवेत्

प्राणण्या: प्रथम: पुत्रो भवान् स्याद् राजसत्तम

- Mbh.अनुशासन.47.38

भूयो भूयोष्पि संहार्यः पितृवित्तादू युधिष्ठिर
\end{verse}

**Widow's right of Inheritance**

In early times, the custom of niyoga was very common; so widows without sons were very few. A vast majority of widows therefore used to get their husband's shares, if not directly as their heirs, at least indirectly as the guardians of their minor sons. Very often they used to marry, and so the question of giving them a share in their dead husband's property would not arise at all. Manu lays down that the property of a sonless person will first devolve upon his father, then upon his brother, and finally upon a sapinda and a sakulya in accordance to his propinquity. When none of these is forthcoming, first a preceptor, then a desciple, and finally

\textsuperscript{73} एवमेव समुदिष्टो धर्मो वे भर्तर्भ

एवं धर्मनृत्वं न वृथा साधवेत् धनन्

- Mbh.अनुशासन.47.26
the king should take it away.⁷⁴ Further Manu recognises the mother also as the heir,⁷⁵ the widow is however, nowhere mentioned as possessing any right of inheritance. In the Anusāsana parva of Mahābhārata, it is stated that the widow can only utilise the income of the property she has inherited; she can under no circumstances dispose it.

\[ \text{Śrīrāma tu pātīdārāyaḥ pūparaṅgovāṅkal śmṛtām} | \\
\text{Naapārārā śīvām: kuśūrān: pātīvitāntakṛtān} || \\
\text{- Mbh.अनुसारन.47.24} \]

Yājñavalkya allows the widowed mother a share equal to that of her son.⁷⁶

The Mahābhārata allows a husband to give his wife three thousand coins⁷⁷ The wealth thus given to the wife could be

74. पिता हरेद्वृक्ष्य रिवैः भ्रात एव च | 
   अनन्तर: सपिष्टासत्सत्य तत्स्त्य होर्ज्ञन्ति | 
   अत ऊध्य संक्त्याः स्वातचार्य: शिष्य एव च च || - Manu.X.185,187

75. अनपत्यस्य पुज्जस्य माता दायम्बानानुवात | - Manu.IX.217

76. यदि कुवश्चास्मानश्चान्यल्याः कार्याः समांसिकाः | 
   न दत्त सीठश्च यास्त्रा भर्त्रा वा हस्तवत्रोत्त हि || - Yājñavalkya.I.115
   पितुर्याः विभजतां माताप्येः सम हरेत् - Yājñavalkya.II.123

77. बिरस्तिस्ये दायाः: श्वाये देवो धनस्य च | 
   भर्त्रा तस्म धनं दत्तं यथार्थ्य भोमुमहति || - Mbh.अनुसारन.47.23
spent or disposed off by her as she liked. However, the position of the widow was secured to some extent socially as well as economically. Though the practice of niyoga is recognised in the Mahābhārata, protection of the widow was considered a king's duty.

**Political Activities**

Women not only in family life, but also in war field showed their ability, strength and power and proved themselves as sādharṇī, sādākṛṣṇī and sādāyogini. In the vedic period, women were not considered as weak persons. They could teach lessons to the wicked and cruel persons. In Rgveda, we find two women Mudgalāṇī and Vispāyā. There were democratic assemblies in the vedic age. The marriage hymn expresses the hope that the bride would be able to speak with composure.

78. संहोर्वः स्म पुरा नारी सम्म वाव गच्छिति। - Atharva Veda XV.126.10

इन्द्राण्येवं प्रथमजीतापुष्पता पुरं। II Ibid.1.27.4

79. अवीरातिमेव मामयं शतास्तमि मन्यते।

उत्ताहमसि दीर्घायुः पुर्णस्वता विश्वस्मातिन्द्र उष्ट।। - Atharva Veda XX.126.9

80. उत्तर स्म वालो बहति वासो अस्त्य अधिष्ठन्त वदयतु सहस्रम।

रथिरामुखुग्नानि गविष्टे भे कृतं व्यभिचिन्द्रतेन ह।। - Rg Veda X.102.2

81. याभिविधवां धनसमाध्यं सहस्रमीह आजाबजिन्तावर्।

याभिविधात्रिः प्रणिनांत तामसर भु उत्तिमीर्दिना गतम्।। - Rg Veda I.112.10
and success in the public assemblies down to her old age.\textsuperscript{82}

It is thus probable that some ladies used to take an effective part in public discussions of the democratic assemblies of the age. In the later Vedic period, the state of affairs changed; it is expressly informed that women do no longer go to public assemblies.\textsuperscript{83}

Political thinkers were not unanimous as to whether it is desirable to permit women to become rulers of the state. In the Mahābhārata, Bhiṣma advised Yudhiṣṭhira to sanction the coronations of the daughters of those kings, who had died in the war and left behind no male issues.

\begin{verbatim}
कुमारी नास्ति वेषां च कन्यास्त्राभिषेचय ||
- Mbh.शान्ति.32.33
\end{verbatim}

During ancient period it was held that women should not be made rulers, for on account of their natural limitations, they cannot become efficient administrators.

\begin{verbatim}
यत्र सै कितवो वाले वजानुशासिता |
मजान्ति तेजवशा राजनयामसमस्तवा इव ||
- Mbh.उज्जोग.38.43
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{82.} ऋग्वेद लच्छिनी लच्छिनी विद्वथमावदसि। - Rg. Veda X.85.26

\textsuperscript{83.} तत्त्राद्वृत्तमां: समां यात्तिन न खिक्ष:। - Manu.IV.7,4
Hindu kingdom under lady regents were usually well governed. Hindu queens were not mere head of government, but used to actively guide and supervise the state administration. They used to exercise a good deal of influence on the administration even when their husbands were ruling. They were often entrusted with most delicate missions and their advice was eagerly awaited.

In the Mahābhārata, Draupadi was aware of the strength of her husbands, and thus was always exhorting them for war. When Kṛṣṇa was going to the Kauravas for peace-talks, she became angry and urged him not to forgive Duryodhana and suggested him not to talk of peace. She remembered the insult which Dushāsana had done to her by dragging her hair in the court of Hastinapura. So, she asked Kṛṣṇa to remember this incident while talking of peace. She showed Kṛṣṇa her united hair with the following strong words. "Fie upon Arjuna's valour and Bhiṣma's strength if Duryodhana is alive even for a moment. If my husbands through cowardice, do not fight, then my old father with the help of his brave sons and my five

84. अयं ते पुण्डरीकाः हु-शासनस्कृर्त: ||
स्मरत्वः सर्वकाव्रेष्ठ परवर्ता सम्प्रदीपितः || - Mbh.उपोग.82.36

85. शिको पार्वत्य भ्रुधुमताः भीमसेनस्य धियू बलम् ||
यत्र दुर्योधनः कृष्ण मुहूर्तमणि जीवितः || - Mbh.उपोग.82.31
sons under the leadership of Abhimanyu will fight." She said that she had nobody not even Kṛṣṇa as all of them were ignoring her insult. She was consoled by Kṛṣṇa and Dhrishtadyumna by taking a vow of Kauravas' destruction.

Kunti's special message to her sons for war was inspiring. "The time has come for which a kṣatriya woman gives birth to sons. If necessary, one should give one's life" etc.

Kunti also sent message to Yudhiṣṭhirā, stating that a king should rule his country with dharma by which he gains the power of God. If he rules with adharma, he attains hell.

86. यदि भीमारुणी कृष्ण कृपणी सन्स्थिकामुकी ||
पिता में योत्रपते युक्त: सह पुरुषमहर्षिव: ||
पञ्च चैव महाजीव्वः पुन्त में मथुरादन ||
अभिमन्यु पुरस्तुप्त्य योत्रपते कुरुक्षेर: सह || - Mbh.उयौग.82.37-38

87. राजा चरित्र चेत्र धर्म देवलचारिव कल्यने ||
स चेत्तर्थम चरित्रा नरकायेव गच्छिति || - Mbh.उयौग.132.13
She also said that a king should use Dandaniti in such a way that it should keep him away from adharma.\textsuperscript{88}

Finally, Kunti concluded that a king is responsible for the condition of his country.\textsuperscript{89}

Another woman character in Mahābhārata Vidulā, while emboldening her son to war said that kṣatriyas are created only for victory and war. They should earn victory or else, they should be killed in war.\textsuperscript{90}

Woman was often considered as the main cause of the war. According to the words heard from the sky, Draupadi's birth itself was for the destruction of kṣatriyas.\textsuperscript{91} Thus, women though considered as unfit to take part in war, they played a very important role in political field by inspiring or encouraging their husbands and sons to fight for victory in the war.

88. दण्डनीतिः स्थचरणां चातुर्वृत्तृणां नियोक्तिः।
प्रतिवक्ता स्वामिना सम्यगम्यं भवच्छिन्ति॥ - Mbh.उष्ण.132.14

89. कालो वा कारणं राजी राजा वा कालकारणं।
इति ते संस्कारो भूतं राजा कालस्य कारणं॥ - Mbh.उष्ण.132.16

90. युद्धाय क्षत्रियं सृष्टं संजयेः जयाय च॥
जयं वा कथ्यानो वा प्राणोत्तेति द्वस्तोकताम्।
न शक्ति भवते पुष्पे दिवं तदं विभवते सुखम्।
यदमित्रानु स्वकृतं क्षत्रियं सुखमिदनुते॥ - Mbh.उष्ण.135.13-14

91. Explained in chapter II under polyandry.