



## Position of Women in the Rig Vedic Period

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**Abstract:** The Rig-Veda, the oldest Vedas, is filled with hymns on natural events. Women's Status is portrayed in Rigveda with tremendous reverence. Usha (the goddess of Dawn) and Aditi, the mother of many Gods such as Mitra, Varun, Rudra, and Aryaman, are depicted in the Rig-Veda. The goddess Usha brings in the new day by dispelling the darkness and reawakening the mortals. Rati, the Night, is Usha's sister, and it is because of her all creatures rest after a day's work, i.e. Usha and Rati are daughters of Heaven. Goddesses such as Saraswati, Laxmi, and Mahashakti are given equal honour and prominence. Women had religious liberty that allowed them to conduct the rituals. She was entrusted with a significant role in the sacrifice. In The Rig Vedic period, Women in India enjoyed high Status in society. Their social condition was good. In those days, women were allowed to attain high intellectual and spiritual standards. As we know, there were many women Rishis during this period. Women have had equal positions and been described as more than the better half in the Rig Vedic period.

**Keywords:** Early Vedic literature, Later Vedic literature, Mandalas, Hymns.

### Introduction

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Women in Vedic times are to be understood through the early Vedic literature like Rigveda and later Vedic literature like Smveda, Ayurveda and Atharvaveda. The Vedic literature has been derived from Vedas, four in number: Rig- Veda, Sama -Veda, Yajur-Veda and Atharva-Veda. Rig-Veda is the oldest known literature that contains ten mandalas and 1028 hymns (mantras) written by several priestly families, some of which were contributed by 27 women called Brahmavadinis who enjoyed family life as well.

### Position as Reflected in Rigveda

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Women were given a place of honour as they participated in religious ceremonies with their husbands. At numerous sites, the wives join their husbands and perform sacrifices

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together. They offer the oblations together. In the Rig-Vedic period, women enjoyed a status of equality with men; their position was equal to men. As we saw, She and the men received an education, participated in assemblies and debates, studied Vedas and made sacrifices with their husbands. In Rig-Veda, the desire for children and cattle is a recurrent theme in the hymns.

The Rig Veda is the oldest text, composed chiefly by priests but by a few women too. In the Rig Veda, there is a creation story where the goddess Aditi gives birth to the earth, also personified as a goddess, Prithvi. Mother Earth's role was to be tender to the dead, and Aditi was to be prayed to for release from sin. Ancient India had many learned ladies.

As was seen in Vedic times when women and men were equal in many aspects. Where women participated in public sacrifices alongside men; one of the scripts mentioned a female rishi Visvara. Some other Vedic hymns are attributed to women, such as Apala, the daughter of Atri; Ghosa, the daughter of Kaksivant or Indrani, the wife of Indra.

During the Rig Vedic period, women were treated equally to their male counterparts in terms of Status and position. Only married men with their spouses were permitted to perform religious rites on numerous occasions.

In this period, women were revered and valued as mothers who brought up new generations and as individuals with immense ability to see the truth and contribute significantly to human society. In the early Vedic period, women received adequate education. Even though the patriarchal system was prevalent in this period, women were treated with respect and devotion.

The woman is a creature of institutions. The subject of women's position and Status is broad and so crucial. Through their creativeness, intellect, and spirit of sacrifice, they played an admirable role in the family and social life and made a magnificent contribution to society's overall development. We are proud of the accomplishments of Gargi, Maitreyi, Apala, and Ghosa. They were Mantra-perceivers; they undertook enormous penances and did what only men could. Society imposed no restrictions of any kind. They possessed great wealth and land and were the only guardians of their offspring. They were viewed as embodiments of Divinities, Sustainers, and creative forces that benefit human society's growth and prosperity. For example, Gosha, Apala, Lopamudra, Saci, and Vishvavara penned hymns and became intellectuals. The girl studied several topics while practising celibacy throughout the Rigvedic era. Philosophy and logic were two subjects in which women excelled. They used to sing the Rigveda's shlokas. Women pandits included Ghosha, Lopamudra, Vishvavara, Appala, and Urvashi.

In addition to the woman's Upanayana, there was also the sutra or inclusion ritual. Women, like males, used to be required to be celibate to obtain an education. After Brahmacharya's life had come to an end, Samvartana ceremonies were performed. Sages' names include Gargi, Barwa, Sulabha, Maitrei, and others.

The Rig-Veda, the oldest Vedas, is filled with hymns on natural events. Women's Status is portrayed in Rigveda with tremendous reverence. Usha (the goddess of Dawn) and Aditi, the mother of many Gods such as Mitra, Varun, Rudra, and Aryaman, are depicted in the Rig-Veda. The goddess Usha brings in the new day by dispelling the darkness and reawakening the mortals. Rati, the Night, is Usha's sister, and it is because of her all creatures rest after a day's work, i.e. Usha and Rati are daughters of Heaven. Goddesses such as Saraswati, Laxmi, and Mahashakti are given equal honour and prominence. Women had religious liberty that allowed them to conduct the rituals. She was entrusted with a significant role in the sacrifice.

In Brahmavidya, the ultimate knowledge, we see Gargi and Maitreyi standing out. In a sacrifice, Visvavara takes the place of a Rtvik. The wife had full rights in the religious sphere and routinely joined her husband in religious rituals. The husband and wife performed religious ceremonies and sacrifices together. Women were even active participants in religious debates.

The family was an important institution in the Rig-Vedic era. Duhitri was the name given to the family's daughter. Although society appears to value the male child, allusions in Rigveda suggest that female children were equally valued. In Vedic times, a parent did not want to differentiate between his son and daughter. He treated them all the same. Women were provided with excellent education to live their social and personal lives to the fullest. Marriage was viewed as a sacred task in the Vedic era. Daughters were allowed to choose their husbands in this manner.

On the other hand, unmarried daughters might stay at their father's houses. Because the girls were grown at the time of their marriage, there is no record of child marriage in the Rigvedic period. One of the primary responsibilities of women was to bear and raise children. In most households, the mother was the mistress of the house.

The women were to be adequately cared for, with all feasible amenities given according to the husband's wealth. God would not accept the offering of a man who abuses his wife. Thus the wives were not to be used or mistreated. In ancient India, women were regarded as ideal housewives. They can effortlessly handle even the most difficult situations due to their exceptional mental tranquilly.

The woman is the most important member of society. The Sabha and Vidatha were the public meetings to which women came and spoke freely. A newly married

girl was privileged to be a member of the Vidatha when she was sent to her husband's household. Women were used as messenger forms at the time. In those days, women received the same military training as males. Vispala and Mudgalani were seen on their way to the battlegrounds. That was possible because of the military education they received earlier in life.

The Rig Vedic women went to the battleground to assist their men in political matters. To illustrate, Vispala lost one leg in the fight and was cured by the Asvins with the addition of an iron leg.

Some sacrifices, such as Rajasuya, Vajapeya, Asvamedha, Purusamedha, and Sarvamedha, are linked to social and political life. God Savita plays a significant role in the Asvamedha sacrifice. The evidence suggests that women's political responsibilities were introduced and persisted in full force during Rig Vedic times.

Women were given high-ranking positions. It is said that mature girls used to attend numerous festivals and public gatherings to meet with potential husbands, and their mothers would also let them do so. One of the essential responsibilities of Vedic women was to nurse and tame their offspring. According to a Rig Vedic hymn, women should make sacrifices, weave garments, irrigate plants, and fulfil the wants of their family members. The Vedic women were economically independent. Some of the ladies worked as teachers. Clothing spinning and weaving were done at home. The place of manufacturing was at home. Women also assisted their husbands in their agricultural endeavours. Personal property, such as jewellery and clothing, was allowed for the women. When a lady dies, her property is passed down to her daughters.

Sometimes, if her husband died without a son, the widow inherited his property. The provision for Stridhana was quite restricted, extending only to the wife's rights to jewels, decorations, and gifts given to her at the time of her marriage. Daughters who were not married had a share of their father's property. Without a boy, the daughter held exclusive legal rights to her father's possessions. Mother's estate was split evenly among her sons and unmarried daughters following her death.

In The Rig Vedic period, Women in India enjoyed high Status in society. Their social condition was good. In those days, women were allowed to attain high intellectual and spiritual standards. As we know, there were many women Rishis during this period. Women have had equal positions and been described as more than the better half in the Rig Vedic period. Such women's character and intellect were glorified in the past, and old customs were revered. They were fully equal to men regarding access to and capacity for the ultimate knowledge of the Absolute. Women were regarded as mother goddesses (Shakti) in the Rig Vedic Period (1500-1000 BC),

a symbol of life with an enormous ability for tolerance and sacrifice. So they held a respectable place in society.

## Conclusion

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We saw that women's position in the early Vedic period was respectful. Women were respected in society. They were given due respect as equal to men. Sometimes we saw that the yagyas were not conducted without the better half. As we saw, She and the men received an education, participated in assemblies and debates, studied Vedas and made sacrifices with their husbands.

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