

Role of women in ancient civilizations

[Sociology](#), [Women](#)



Throughout history women have been oppressed and discriminated against. Barriers against women have been originated from more powerful institutions and by a greater male society that has set limits on the potential of women. The status of women has evolved greatly as agriculture advanced. In the two civilizations, India and Greece, the status of women has evolved in many different ways. Women were domesticated and oppressed in the household, economically, and on a social and religious scale. Both ancient civilizations, India and Greece carry a multi-faceted past.

Both ancient civilizations had distinct geographies that allowed for diverse social norms. Economically, the women of both ancient India and Greece were not valued. The ancient Indian economy was centralized around agriculture, which was indicative of the contribution women had economically. Females mostly ran the household, and raised the children, which left the men to run the fields. It is even said that women were an economic burden because their lack of utility and the dowry system. Greece was also a divided civilization because of the geography.

The economic contributions of women in ancient Greece evolved over time. The new Sparta, a Greek state, emerged between 800 and 600 BCE and conquered many bordering states, making them a military state. New ideologies from this warrior clan became to develop in Greece. The Spartans forced young boys at age seven to be exiled to live in military-style barracks. At the age of 7, a child's brain is not developed and highly vulnerable. This gave the Spartans much a lot of control over their military base. While the men remained in these camps, the Spartan women would take on the big roles at home.

Because of this separation, the Spartan women were actually expected to maintain their health and strength to take over roles on the homeland. Apart from the Sparta era, women in Greece were not allowed to vote or own property, making it almost impossible to have a defined status economically. Although women were excluded economically, women in both ancient India and Greece had a very crucial role in the family. In India, the family was a social construct of three generations living in the same household, in an essentially patriarchal structure. At this time, a woman's initial role as outlined in Hinduism was to be a good wife.

The family was also a basic unit when worshipping the ancestors. Religious practices were conducted by the oldest male and only the males in the family were allowed to study the sacred Vedas. This is just one of the ways male dominance was expressed. This shows the misogynist culture in ancient India is rooted from religion. In Greece, similar to India, a woman's utmost responsibility was to be a good wife. Similar to India, Greece estate prohibited divorce. In both Indian and Greek culture women were not involved in making decisions. Women were materialized in a sense that they would be given from their father figure to a their husband.

Women were oppressed on a social spectrum in both ancient India and Greece. In ancient India, an explicit symbol of the subjection of women was the ritual of the Sati. This symbol held a conative meaning, where the wife had to throw herself on her dead husband's funeral pyre. This represents the horrific reality of women not being worthy of life without their male counterpart. This symbol also shed light on women subjection being accepted by women themselves. Another symbol was the " Mother

Goddess". A Harappan between 2600 and 1900 BCE constructed this prominent sculpture. The sculpture portrays a woman with wide hips and big breasts.

The sculpture outlines the fertile features a woman would possess. The "Mother Goddess" was idealized in a way that represented beauty and fertility. Socially, women in India had relative initial equality. After the arrival of the Aryans women in India were more oppressed and were more domestically confined. This might have been because the Aryans were a more warrior ruthless civilization. The one aspect deemed powerful in women was their sexuality. The Indians believed a woman's persuasion could have a large impact on men. After the Buddhist society emerged in India (480BCE) the role of women became more significant.

However, they were still oppressed. The Siddhanta described women to be angered, dangerous, and stupid. These are very harsh descriptions, but nevertheless the position of women did improve in this era. As Hinduism developed, the caste system became more prominent. There were initially four main castes, and women were represented in all of them. Men were allowed to marry a woman of a lower caste, but a woman could not without disgracing her family. By not fulfilling your dharma you were unable to accrue good enough karma to be reincarnated in a higher caste or life form, including being reborn as a woman, who was inferior to a man.

So is apparent the sexist mentality was rooted from religion. In much of Greek philosophy women were sought as inferior to man and even inadequate of accomplishing anything. It was believed that women should be subordinated in society and in merit. The denial of education upon women

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did not allow an intellectual group of them. Although Greece was one of the first civilizations to take a democratic approach to politics, women were not allowed to vote, and were given almost no voice in the community. The most prominent works of art but portray women as weak.

Compared to India, however, the status of women in ancient Greece was more evolved. The range of female influence and experience has slowly been brought to the fore: from the divine power of the female gods to the social and religious power of female priests. Women being portrayed as courageous and powerful rooted from the epic stories of Iliad and the Odyssey. Women in ancient India and Greece underwent atrocities and discrimination. The traditional mentalities in both cultures assume that women are mainly confined to the household. Women were inferior to men in the household, economic platform, and on a social and religious scale.