

The Status of Woman in Vedic Period

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The Vedic age was an important phase in the progress of Indian civilization and culture. Like all other civilizations, it has evolved from a simple system of a complex society. To shed light on the society, there are four main Vedas. The aim of this research is to examine the status of woman in Vedic period. Early Vedic people had a tribal life and then gradually evolved to territorial state. The status of woman during Vedic period is a complex matter and it is likely that reality might have been something different. According to available Vedic literature, in early Vedic age woman enjoyed a position of respect and esteem and there was a gradual decline in the status of woman in later Vedic period. During Rig Vedic period woman occupied the same position as man in intellectual and spiritual life. The literature mentions name of some woman like *Vishwavara, Apala, Ghosha* who composed hymns to attain the rank of *Rishi*. Besides, scholars there were also woman warriors. Girls were given freedom to choose their husband and were married only after attaining the age of maturity. There was no seclusion or purdah system, woman moved freely and participated in the public feasts and festivals. There is no reference of *Sati* (burning of widows) and practice *Niyoga* (married to any of the brother of dead husband). After all the rights bestowed upon woman, it is important to note that woman did not have equal rights as man in social and legal aspects. They did not possess the right to hold property. The birth of daughter in the family began to be looked down upon. The system of dowry also came into practice. According to *Satapatha Brahmana, Maitrayani* and others, an ideal woman is the one who dines after her husband and bracketed woman with dice and wine as the three main evils of the society. Texts also advocated marriage of girl before puberty and laid numerous restrictions on woman with regards to marriage, education, inheritance etc. These factors gradually led to the decline in the status of woman during the subsequent period.

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