



Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer's Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India (Oxford Early Christian Studies)

By Stephanie W. Jamison

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This book concerns the conceptual position of women in early India, specifically in the Vedic and early epic periods (c.1500-200 BCE), and it seeks to make contributions both to Indology and to gender studies. By focusing on a single female role--the activities of the "Sacrificer's Wife" in solemn ritual--and by extracting the rich materials on her role from the voluminous technical ritual manuals, the author isolates a set of conceptual functions the wife fills in ritual practice. These functions can then be observed in other cultural institutions in which women participate--particularly the system of hospitality and gift exchange that regulated the relations between mutually obligated strangers in ancient India and the system of marital exchange.

Besides filling a large gap in our understanding of ancient India, this work makes a general contribution to the study of women and gender, not merely by supplying information about a place and time poorly represented in these studies, but also by suggesting some methodologies involving sensitivity to language and linguistic analysis to employ in approaching women and gender in other ancient cultures.

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Review

"The scholarship is extremely fine. Jamison has investigated thoroughly all major literature on the subject....Her writing is very clear and lively. She shows the ways in which these rituals address very human problems and situations. Jamison's discussions represent a significant advance in the methods of ritual analysis, and will enable the Vedic material to be brought into larger discussions of women in India."--Joel P. Brereton, *University of Missouri*

About the Author

Stephanie W. Jamison is at Harvard University.

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