



## Social Status of Courtesans (Ganika) in Ancient India

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**Abstract :** *This paper focuses upon these neglected women of ancient India as in 'Subaltern Studies' we try to know and record the history of common men especially the marginalised ones. The 'Ganikas' of ancient India remain a mystery for the present day generation. So this paper tries to highlight the life and works of the neglected ganikas. Women's place in society is defined by various aspects like economy, religion, politics and culture. It is related to the social system and situation-as well as to socially accept moral values. We find different studies dealing with women in ancient India.*

**Keywords:** *ancient India, women, Social Status of Courtesans*

**1) Introduction:** - Ganika or courtesans as an institute came into existence in ancient India with a special purpose. It received social status and support by the kings. It also has social recognition from middle and higher classes. In ancient India, courtesans or prostitutes had a higher place in society than the common people.<sup>1</sup> The men interested in music and dance used to get attracted towards them. Their class was a striking feature of city life. Their life itself was a composition of music and fine arts. The same was their profession. As compared to their present situation, they had a higher position in politics and society. They used to captivate the people with their beauty and musical presentations. Their role was important in cultural and luxurious life.

**2) Meaning of Ganika :-** Some experts opine that The word 'Ganika' came from 'Gana'. All the member of 'gana' have a right over her. So the one who is for gana is 'ganika'<sup>2</sup>

**3) Mahakavya Age :-** In this age, prostitutes had an important role in families and society. In Mahabharat, when Gandhari gets pregnant, a prostitute is appointed as her maid.<sup>3</sup> When Shri Krishan meets Kauravas to establish peace, he is welcomed by prostitutes.<sup>4</sup> They accompanied the army of Pandavas.<sup>5</sup> Even in Ramayana, we find that there was a group of Prostitutes with Rama for entertainment at the time meeting with Bharata.<sup>6</sup>

**4) Famous Courtesans of India :-** Courtesans flourished during the Budhist period more than ever before.<sup>7</sup> Their presence increased the beauty of the city. Vaishali Nagar