RASHTRA JYOTI

ANALYSIS BRIEF
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# Purdah in India: Seclusion, Religious Separation and Coercion

Original analysis by **Swati Goel Sharma**

The author argues that although women's seclusion existed in India before the Muslim invasions, purdah spread during and after them. She cites Patricia Jeffery's survey of historical writing, Meer Hassan Ali's account of Timur, and accounts of how purdah was enforced under Mughal rule.



Women in burqa

## THE ESSENTIAL POINTS

- Patricia Jeffery acknowledged that women's seclusion predated Muslim invasions, while describing those invasions as a watershed in the spread of purdah.
- Meer Hassan Ali's account attributes strict concealment to Timur's order that followers keep their female relatives hidden in a land he considered idolatrous.
- In Manucci's narrated incident, a soldier killed a tax collector after an inspection exposed his family, then killed his wife and daughter.
- Sudha Sharma attributes women's seclusion among both Hindu and Muslim subjects partly to insecurity created by invaders and abuses by ruling elites.

## THE TAKEAWAY

**The historical accounts link the spread of purdah to both strict enforcement within households and fears for women's safety.**

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Updated from an original written by Swati Goel Sharma in September 2022. Summary prepared by Rashtra Jyoti Staff. Facts refer to the original reporting date.