



HISTORICAL DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN POST VEDIC PERIOD

DR. M. ESTHER KALYANI ASIRVADAM¹

Reader in History

G. MARY VIJAYARATNA KUMARI²

Lecturer in History

P. ANUSHA³

Lecturer in History

^{1,2,3}, CH.S.D. St. Theresa's College for Women (A),
Eluru, West Godavari District,
(AP) INDIA

ABSTRACT

The attitude of a community towards the woman has great social significance in any society. In Indian society from the Vedic age, women's names are mentioned, who attained eminence along with men. Recent cross-cultural studies by anthropologists like Margaret Mead seem to indicate clearly that personality and character differences are in general basically influenced by the cultural norms of the society in which an individual is born and bred. From a study of education in Ancient India, it became clear that women learnt all types of education as afforded by the opportunities. Many girls studied literature and became teachers, debaters and orators and some of the girls attained perfection in military science and administration, especially those who belong to the ruling families. Though we noticed women armies in the Vedic period. This opportunity as days passed on seemed to have been dwindled in the common folk. The training given to women in different vocations such as weaving, basket making etc., seemed to have continued and remained as a profession of caste. Because of the education given in military science and administration to the girls of the rich families, they could occupy higher positions and became successful administrators, otherwise it is not possible to account for the success of dowager queens like Naganika of the Satavahana dynasty, Prabhavati Gupta of the Vakataka family, Vijayabhattacharika of Chalukyas of Badmi, the queen of Lalitabharana in Orissa of Chaliyan house, Rudramaba of

DR. M. ESTHER KALYANI ASIRVADAM G. MARY VIJAYARATNA KUMARI P. ANUSHA 1P a g e

Kakatiya family, Didda of Kashmir, Nagama Nayakuralu of Palnad and Ballamahadevi of Alupu dynasty. These queens at times ruled independently, at times as regents, at times jointly with their husband while at times jointly with their husband while at times with their sons. History unfortunately recorded only a few women. By the study of the lives of these women in History, we get sufficient impetus and motivation to bring out the greatness, hitherto this strength was hidden in us to overcome the challenges individually, which will eventually help the society at large.

Key Words: 1. Women 2. Administration 3. Rulers 4. Queen 5. Regent.

INTRODUCTION

The attitude of a community towards the woman has great social significance in any society. In Indian society from the Vedic age, women's names are mentioned, who attained eminence along with men. Recent cross-cultural studies by anthropologists like Margaret Mead seem to indicate clearly that personality and character differences are in general basically influenced by the cultural norms of the society in which an individual is born and bred. The position of women had undergone great determination since the Vedic time. Their subordinate position is clear from the fact, that the Buddha was reluctant to admit them into his Sanga. Women were permitted to receive education and some of them were quite highly learnt. Women even received military training. On the testimony of the Greek writers, it can be noted that the women took up the arm and fought along the side with their men when need arose, against the enemies, who fought against their kingdoms. It can also be noted that women were well versed in fine arts like dancing and music as well. It is worth mentioning that there are numerous references of women's participation in feasts and festivals. Women were permitted to take up the study of religious text and indulge in spiritual activities. There are several references of learned women known as Brahmanadanis who dedicated their lives to the study of text and known for remarkable participation. Some Buddhist nuns are known for their participation in field of the study of Philosophy and Dharma, therefore we can construe that they have dedicated their lives for these studies, and were well known for their participation in debates and discussions.

By the study of the lives of these women in History, we get sufficient impetus and motivation to bring out the greatness, hitherto this strength was hidden in us to overcome the challenges individually, which will eventually help the society at large. In this context, the study of women who excelled in political field of the South India is worth mentioning.

4. NAGANIKA:

Naganika was the wife of Satakarni I, who ruled over the Deccan from 180 to 170 B.C. she was the daughter of Maharathi Tranakayiro, who belonged to the Angiya or Anibhiya kula or

DR. M. ESTHER KALYANI ASIRVADAM G. MARY VIJAYARATNA KUMARI P. ANUSHA 2P a g e



family. Tranakayiro, seemed to have remained with his daughter Naganika when the Satavahanas were in danger to safeguard the interests of his daughter and the empire.

The queen Naganika was a great personality. On the death of her husband, she became regent to her son, Vedsari. It was during the period of her regency. The Naneghat inscription was issued from which we note that she was interested in religious rites. She used to observe monthly fast, brahmacharya and led her life like a hermit – house- holder. It also described that her husband Satakarni, as the Lord of ‘Dakshinapatha’ and as the welder of the unchecked wheel. This shows that she followed Hinduism and must have taken part in the sacrifices performed by her husband. This inscription not only informs us the religious character of Naganika but also gives the information of the brilliant success achieved by her husband in his campaign against the intruders on his kingdom.

The regency of Naganika did not witness disturbances and she followed the path of her husband in all directions. The figures of Srimuka, Satakarni the Ist etc, sculptured in relievo at Naneghat proves her administrative policy. Naganika did not seem to have disturbed the administrative policy in which the feudatories were given full freedom subject to the control of the royal officials. The very fact that she took part in the Vedic sacrifices were performed by her husband, and gave presents as given in the Naneghat inscription proves that the social order followed by Vedic religion was maintained intact. In spite of this there was religious tolerance.

Though there is no direct evidence to know the educational qualifications of Nagalika we understand that she was well trained in political science. Otherwise it would not have been possible for her to maintain the empire. No untoward events internal or external came into light in the period of her regency. There was neither the revolt or feudatories who generally look for an opportunity to establish independence, after the death of Satakarni or any other aggression until the time of Satakarni the IInd. Her policy of tolerance should have given no opportunity either to Jains or Buddhists or Hindus, to quarrel among themselves and create disturbances. We do not have any episode of any other profound knowledge in Brahminic religion. Thus we note that Naganika was not only an adept in political science but also was well conversant with the religious texts. Her period passed off peacefully. We do not know whether she issued some more inscriptions or not. So far only one Naneghat inscription came to light which enables us to presume the above account of Naganika.

It was during the period of her regency the Naneghat inscription was issued from which we note that she was interested in religious rites. She took part in the Vedic sacrifices performed by her husband. Thus we note that Naganika was not only to adept in political science but also was well conversant with the religious texts. Her period passed off peacefully.

5. VIJAYABHATTARIKA:

Vijayabhattacharika ruled over the Chalukyan kingdom of Badami for about a period of five years (649-654 A.D.) as the regent for her minor son. She was considered the daughter-in-law of Pulakesin-II by Dikshit though Fleet and Sircar are of the opinion her husband was a feudatory. Vijayabhattacharika's husband was Chandraditya, who ascended the throne of Badami after Abhinavadya. Chandraditya died leaving behind his queen, Vijayabhattacharika and a minor son. On behalf of the minor son, who happened to be the legal heir of the throne, Vijayabhattacharika assumed power as regent. Vijayabhattacharika with the help of her husband's brother maintained kingdom intact and managed it skilfully. Vijayabhattacharika after assuming power became Vijayamahadevi. This indicates that she gained higher status as the first citizen from the position of a queen to the position of a ruler. The dating of the regnal year in her inscriptions also suggest she was the ruler of kingdom. The title Bhattacharika and Mahadevi assumed by her also indicate her position as an ipso-facto ruler.

Her two grants namely, Kochare and Karnu indicate that she was rewarding the befitting. She was also religious in her conduct. This is evidenced by her Kochare plates in which a donation made by her after fasting on the twelfth day of the bright fortnight of Vaisakhaka. She also gifted some fields at the village Navakagahara to Arya swami Dikshita. She did not seem to have meddled with the then existing system of government, either in the matters of general administration where the appointment of ministers etc., is seen, or in the field of physical administration where taxation policy gets the first priority. She maintained the entire machinery intact. Unfortunately her minor son met with an untimely death nothing is known whether it was natural or unnatural. It is also not known how the regency of Vijayabhattacharika came to an end. But Fleet and others opined that Vikramaditya the Ist, the rightful heir captured the throne of the Chalukyas after the death of the minor of Vijayabhattacharika.

She also had acquired sufficient knowledge in all Shastras and training in administration and warfare. She maintained the kingdom peaceful for a period of five years (AD 649 – 654-655) exercising her powers and performing the essential duties of a King like Prajapalana, Prajarakshana, Prajaraajana and Varnasramadharmapalana as enjoined in the works on polity.

6. LOKAMAHADEVI :

Lokamahadevi hailed from Haihayas family that is Kalachuris. She was married by Vikramaditya the IInd, a Chalukyan king of Badami. It is recorded in the Kurtakoti undated stone slab inscription that Lokamahadevi governed Kurulta Kumte. As such it can be presumed that she was well educated in all branches of knowledge which included polity. The queens of Chalukyan dynasty are noted for their religious temperament and construction

DR. M. ESTHER KALYANI ASIRVADAM G. MARY VIJAYARATNA KUMARI P. ANUSHA 4P a g e

of the temples. The Pattadakal pillar inscription refers to the erection of a great stone temple by Lokamahadevi in honour of Shiva named after her as Lokeswara. At present the same temple is famous as Dirupaksa temple. She built this temple in commemoration of her husband Vikramaditya's victory over the Pallavas for three times and capturing Kanchi or the capital of Pallavas. Her main intention in preparing this inscription is to glorify the victory of her husband.

As a woman interested in fine arts Lokamahadevi confirmed to the singers the covenants (maryada) bonds of morality or prosperity. She endowed many grants to the temples. She also took measures to see that the people offer kingdom voluntarily give two kulas (kulaga, that is 16 Pailas) on 60 Zeens of millot, one meter of land to the temple of Lokeswara bears ample testimony to her benevolent nature and capacity to attract people to her way of thinking. Thus Lokamahadevi became one of the celebrated queen among the Chalukyas of Badami. She was generous, munificent, magnanimous, religious and efficient.

7. AKKADEVI :

Queen Akkadevi otherwise popular as Lakmadevi, who ventured to command troops and to take part in the war and seizures was perhaps the most celebrated of all women administrators of Chalukyas of Kalyani. Nothing seems to be available with regard to the childhood, education and marriage of Akkadevi. She seemed to have married the Kadamba chieftain Mayuravarman. The fact that Banavasi was under the rule of Akkadevi and Mayuravarman in A.D 1037 forms basis for the presumption that there was close relationship between the two such as that of husband and wife. This fact further found support in the inscription (Epigraphia Indica Vol. XV. P.81). They had a son called Toyimadeva who ruled over the Banavasi region as a feudatory of the Chalukyan emperor Somesvara -I in A.D 1064.

Akkadevi first appeared in 1010 A.D., as the governor of Kisukad 70 independently. She after 15 years i.e in A.D 1025 was ruling over Banavasi together Mayurabarman, who had controlled over Panugal (Epigraphia Indica Vol.XVI p.15). She received high praise and was regarded as incarnation of Laxmi, the distributor of innumerable gifts, endowed with wisdom a shining example of truthfulness and noble conduct. (Epigraphia Indica Vol. XVI.p.75). She had practiced the religious observances prescribed by the rituals of Jaina, Buddha, Ananta (Visnu) and Rudra (Siva). She, in memory of her elder brother Tribhuvanamalla Vikramaditya V, made a grant of the Berur Agrahara caused to built there a hall of the Traipurusas and granted some land for the purpose of feeding and clothing students.

Akkadevi seemed to have constructed a number of temples. She also evinced great interest in promoting education. According to an inscription A.D. 1027, she made a gift of large plots

DR. M. ESTHER KALYANI ASIRVADAM G. MARY VIJAYARATNA KUMARI P. ANUSHA 5P a g e

of land to feed and clothe five hundred students and provided them free quarters. She also made a grant to Jain temple in a village. These facts led one to think that she might have reigned not only jointly with her husband but also independently. Though nothing is said about her education we may presume, in keeping with tradition and her activities, that she was well trained in political and military sciences as the custom of educating girls in these sciences was continued in rich families even in those days.

8. KETALADEVI :

The reign of Vikramaditya VI, produced the good women administrators of whom mention may be made of Ketaladevi, who was ruling the Ponnava Agrabharam, in A.D. 1054. It seems Kethaladevi is noted for her learning and her musical attainment. Her name figured in one of the inscriptions as ruling Sirugappe, Kolanuru and another village in Bellary district. (SII.VX (1) p 159) Her learning and experience must have made her a prominent figure in those days and brought fame and name to her, her husband and her family.

9. CONCLUSION :

These women of post Vedic Period of Southern India have made their mark in the pages of History. They are women who have not excelled in easy fields of life but in leading their kingdoms. It is worth mentioning that when women have not ventured outside the affairs of their own families, these women made their noteworthy contribution in leadership, politics and ruling their kingdoms in their own time, while in other kingdoms men were ruling.

REFERENCES

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| 1. The Satavahanas | : M. Ramarao. |
| 2. The Chalukyas of Badami | : S. Rajashekara. |
| 3. Political History of the Chalukyas of Badami | : Durga Prasad dikshit. |
| 4. A History of South India | : K.A.N. Shastry. |
| 5. The Chalukyas of Kalyani | : Krishna Murari |
| 6. Social Cultural and Economic History of India
(Earliest times to present times) | : S.C.Raychoudhary. |
| 7. INSCRIPTIONAL REFERENCES : | |
| 8. Annual Report of South Indian Epigraphy | |