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QUEEN ADMINISTRATORS OF INDIA- A STUDY IN ANCIENT KARNATAKA

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Introduction

The study of history of women in the Indian subcontinent has been a major scholarly and popular field of research, with many scholarly books and articles, museum exhibits, and courses in schools, colleges and universities. Women have been an integral part of Indian culture and society since ancient period. However, the status of women in India has been a topic of debate and concern for many years. Despite the progress made in recent years, there are still many challenges that women in India face today.

Status of women in Ancient India

It said during the Vedic period women enjoyed high status along with men in all the aspects of life. Works by ancient Indian grammarians such as Patanjali and Katyayana suggest that women were educated in the early Vedic period, Rig Vedic verses suggest that women married at a mature age and were probably free to select their own husbands in a practice called swayamvar or live in relationship called Gandharva marriage. The Rig Veda and Upanishads mention several women sages and seers, notably Gargi Vachaknavi and Maitreyi (c. 7th Century BCE).

In the 6th or 5th century BCE, Queen Mrgavati (Sanskrit), or Migavati (Prakrit) of the Vatsa mahajanapada ruled as regent while her son Udayana was either a minor or held captive by a rival king, and she earned "the admiration of even experienced ministers.

During the Gupta period there are instances of queens participating in the administrative activities. Chandragupta I, the founder of Gupta Empire, ruled his kingdom jointly with his queen Kumara Devi. Prabhavatigupta the daughter of Chandra Gupta-II of the Gupta Empire and the wife of Rudrasena-II of the Vakataka dynasty performed administrative duties in her kingdom. Instances of women of the upper classes extending their phase of activities beyond the domestic circle are provided by the queen and queens regent in Kashmir, Rajasthan, Orissa and Andhra. In the 2nd Century BCE, Queen Nayanika (or Naganika) was the ruler and military commander of the Satavahana Empire of the Deccan region (South-Central India).

Since early times, the queens patronized art and architecture. Vijayabhattarika, the daughter-in-law of Pulikesi-II, was a well-known poetess. The tradition continued in Rashtrakuta and Western Chalukyan periods. Besides, women held important posts in administration. According to B. P. Muzumdar, Northern India did not have any women administrators of provinces or kingdoms during this period. In contrast, Karnataka had women who administered villages, towns, divisions, provinces and headed social and religious institutions. Women had equal rights and free opportunities to play noteworthy part not only in religious social and religious but also in political field during Mediaeval Karnataka. There are large number of inscriptions and contemporary literary works which contain eulogies of queens who took active part in the governance of kingdoms and provinces and who assumed the reigns of administration and ruled efficiently and even independently.

Women Administrators in Ancient Karnataka under the Chalukya, Rashtrahuta and Kalyana Chalukya Reigns: Participation of women in political affairs of the land was not an innovation of mediaeval Karnataka. Epigraphical records and research works speak of some women mainly queens

who played prominent role in central and Provincial (Pranta) administration. But, from the period from Vijayanagara i.e., 14th Century to 18th Century only few names of queens are found except some Muslim and Hindu queens who ruled the Deccan Kingdoms and provinces.

Under the Central Administration we find the names of Vijaya Bhattarika (also called Vijayamahadevi) the queen of Chandraditya of Chalukyas of Badami who ruled over the kingdom as regent after his death for her young prince till 655 CE, after whose subsequent death was succeeded by Vikramaditya-I. A hero stone from Kundakuru while eulogizing the death of a hero Marayya son of Dorayya, who embraced death in Peltiyur forest and in who's memory the viragal was set up by his father Dorayya at, Kudukuru, further informs about the rule of Pampadevi as Chalukyan princess. An epigraph from Foranabagi informs about a queen Pampadevi, the daughter of Taila-II, who shared the responsibility of ruling with her brother Srivallabha-deva, and that, she was married to and was the crowned queen of Mahamandaleshwara Vira-Ganga Pratapa Hoysala Narasimhadeva.

An epigraph assigned to the period of Chalukya Tribhuvanamalla Vikramaditya V states that, his younger sister Akkadevi also assumed the reins of administration of Kisukadu 70 with him during his rule. Some epithets describe that battle field was not unfamiliar to her, she conducted campaigns and fought against enemies. She is praised as Bhairavi in battle and in destroying hostile kings, and a record dated 1047 C.E states that she laid seize of the fort of Gokage, possibly to quell some revolt. 15 Yet another record of 1050 C.E refers to Akkadevi which tempts one to guess that her reign must have continued for a long period and that, she was administering not only Kisukadu-70, but also over Torugere-60, Bagadage-70 and Masiyavadi-140 and also refers to her ministers Kalidasayya, Millayya, Chittimayya, Demayya, Chandimayya, Chavundaraya and Dasimayya. It further states that when the towns and villages used to suffer a lot and all their organizations used to disintegrate, the ruling king had to take up the responsibility of rejuvenating and reconstructing them and the ruler Akkadevi shouldered that responsibility.

An inscription states that king Someshwara-I was ruling from Vagghapura in Karahada-nadu and introduces Mailaladevi as his chief queen in the year 1048-49. The Bagevadi inscription speaks of the liberal gift of land by the ruler Mailaladevi for the Someshhvara temple. It also states that, when she was controlling the reigns of administration some of her subordinates, under her directions made some grants to one Shaiva teacher Chillukacharya. Lakshmidevi, the chief queen of Vikramaditya-VI was probably associated with the administration of the various parts of the Kingdom at different periods and shouldered ably the responsibility of the exalted positions. A record from Sudi describes her as ruling from the capital at Kalyana in 1084 C.E.

Ganga Mahadevi shouldered the administration Gangavadi with her husband, King Bhuja-bala-Ganga Permaddi-Brahmadeva, as a record dated 1112 C.E. states that, she assumed the crown for her king and also for Gangavadi, A damaged epigraph of 1136 C.E speaks of Bammaladevi, the queen of Hoysala Vishnuvardhana, who or at whose instance a subordinate was ruling over Aasandi 500 and another district (name lost) of 300, another record of 1140 C.E states that, she was a Pallava princess and daughter of Chavundabbarasi and Govinda and was ruling the kingdom (Hoysala) peacefully with her royal consort and made gifts to various dirties and Brahmins. A Sinda queen Siriyadevi ruled as a regent for her young sons named Bijjala and Vikrama. Three inscriptions dated 1179 and 1184 C.E, introduce Bammaladevi the queen of Pratapa-Hoysala Vira-Ballaladeva, who had equally shared the responsibility of ruling the kingdom along with her husband and probably Vira-Narasinga-Deva. The records dated 1189 and 1190 C.E, speak about another Hoysala queen Umadevi ruling over

Dorasamudra while the king was on an expedition. Ketaladevi the valliant queen of Ballala-II, acted as regent during the absence of the king for internal administration, while the king was away from capital on expeditions. Another epigraph states that, she was very famous and her name was well known from Setu to Hima Le, throughout India.

Conclusion

Since early times, the queens patronized art and architecture, fine art, literature, religion and culture. The tradition continued in Rashtrakuta and Western Chalukyan periods. Besides, women The inscriptions introduce many queens who ably ruled the country in different periods. Epigraphs, inform us about those kings who were ably assisted by their queens in the work of administration. The women not only acted as governors and viceroys administering areas of limited size, but also like Lakshmi Devi governed different parts of the kingdom one after another and even ruled over quite extensive kingdoms independently. The good examples were Mailaladevi and Jakala Mahadevi. Mailaladevi governed the extensive kingdom. While Mailaladevi occupied ably the difficult but highly coveted post of the administrator of the largest province of Banavasi 12,000, Jakala Mahadevi ascended the throne and ruled the big Kalasa Karkala kingdom so efficiently that the people enjoyed the benefits of a benevolent reign for a long period.

Some Queens ruled with their husbands jointly, Baganabbe and Keleyabbarasi are such examples that the epigraphs provide. Paramabbe was administering Kurgal, Bhujabbarasi, Akkadevi and Ketala Devi ruled for quite a long time. From the records dealing with them, one can gather that even in the evening of their life, they were quite active and others respected their authority. The references to the succession to the thrones of their fathers by the daughters like Revakka and also to the association of the sisters like Akkadevi. Suggala-devi, Kalala-devi and Pampadevi in the administration of their brothers who were noted kings make clear that even the daughters and sisters were given equal political rights and privileges.

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