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FAMOUS WOMEN ADMINISTRATORS OF MEDIEVAL KARNATAKA

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ABSTRACT:

It is well known that in medieval times Indian women were almost like domesticated pets caged in the house, in spite of all the equality and libertarian movements the mankind has gone through. Lawmaker Manu's often quoted statement that women are not worthy of freedom supports this expectation. However, the inscriptions, literary sources and sculptures of the period give an surprisingly different picture of status of women in South India, especially in Karnataka during medieval times.



KEYWORDS: Indian women , literary sources and sculptures.

INTRODUCTION :

Northern India did not find any women administrators of provinces or kingdoms during this period. In contrast, Karnataka had women who administered villages, towns, divisions and heralded social and religious institutions. Piriyaaketaladevi, a queen of Chalukya Vikramaditya VI ruled three villages. According to an inscription of 1148 A.D. Lakkadevi was a village headman. Jakkiabbe ably administered seventy villages after premature death of her husband. Mailalladevi, a senior queen of Someshwara-I ruled the important province of Banavasi comprising 12,000 villages. This article is an attempt to

throw light on such queens who played important role in administration .

ADMINISTRATORS OF VILLAGES.

From the study of inscriptions it is evident that queens and wives of generals ruled over small villages. Piriyaaketaladevi one of the queens of Chalukya Vikramaditya VI ruled three villages.¹ Jogabbarasi, another queen administered the village of Ajjadi in 1019 A.D.² Lakshmadevi, a senior queen (piriyarasi) of the same king ruled Dronapura.³ Mailala Mahadevi, pattamahadevi or enthroned queen, administered the town of Kannavalli in 1094 A.D.⁴ Revakabbarasi, wife of a general (dandanayaka), Vavanarasa, ruled Posavuru.⁵ Mahadevi, daughter or Irivabedanga Satyasraya, ruled

Maruvolal (Marol in Bijapur district).⁶ Queen Laliteya Devi ruled Mottiwada (in Belgaum district).⁷ Jakaladevi, ruled Ingunige (Ingaldi in Bijapur district).⁸ This shows that certain women exerted considerable influence on their distinguished husbands. Vennele Settikavve Urodati (ruler of village) ruled and was security officer of Satenahalli.⁹ She is an instance of women encouraged to participate in civic affairs. Lakkadevi was a village headman (*mahaprabhuvini*) as revealed by an inscription of 1148 A.D.¹⁰ Revakabbarasi was a responsible officer (pasayite) in the royal household.¹¹

ADMINISTRATORS OF DIVISIONS.

Administration of larger units, like

nadu (a division comprising several villages), was also assigned to women of royal family and generals, if they were found competent or had passed away. Inscriptions from Karnataka throw light on such women who administered divisions also. Sattarasa Nagarjuna was the chief administrator of a division (*nalgavunda*). He was a head of Nagarakhanda, consisting of seventy villages¹² and was responsible for revenue, irrigation and the general administration of this division.¹³ When he died prematurely, the king found in his widow, Jakkiabbe, an able administrator and appointed her in his place. She supervised the work of several headmen (*pergade*) under her and looked through several deals, recovered dues and distributed grants. While dedicating herself to administration, her health failed. It is interesting to note that her daughter succeeded her.¹⁴

ADMINISTRATORS OF PROVINCES.

Royal women and women of families of provincial administrators and rulers attained fame in administration of provinces. Inscriptions reveal that, Mailaladevi, a senior queen of Somesvara I, ruled the important province of Banavasi, comprising twelve thousand villages.¹⁵ Bhagubai was the governor of three large regions including modern Bijapur district and earned admiration of her king and overlord Singhana II.¹⁶ Akkadevi, sister of the Chalukya king Jayasimha, ruled Kisukadu Seventy for more than 44 years (1024-1068 A.D.).¹⁷ In the course of her rule, additional divisions comprising sixty villages of Toragale, a hundred and forty villages of Masiyavadi and seventy villages of Bagadage were added to her province. She encouraged education by giving liberal grants to brahmapuris and agraharas (both settlements of Brahmins, where education was imparted), of Perur which accommodated five hundred students. She was known as 'Joy of the student community (Akhila vidyarthi janavalinandini)'. She was besides, an excellent warrior (*rana-bhairavi*) and fought and won a war against a rebel chief of Gokage (Gokak in Belgaum district). She had a secular outlook and had given grants to Jaina basadis and Hindu temples. She undertook pilgrimage to Varanasi. Like Ajarasa, who had defeated many kings, a large number of soldiers and chiefs were proud to acknowledge Akkadevi as their ruler, capable and efficient. It is probable that Mayurasarman, ruler of Banawasi twelve thousand Province and Panungal one thousand, was her husband.¹⁸ If this is the case, Akkadevi was more popular, efficient and better known than her husband. Ballamahadevi assisted her husband, Vira Pandyadeva, in administering his province from Barahkanyapura (Barkur in South Kanara district). His sudden death forced her to work as a regent to her minor son, Nagadevarasa from 1275 A.D. to 1292 A.D.¹⁹ and she is mentioned as mistress of the Western Sea. Chikai Tai, a queen of the Hoysala king Vira Ballala III, ruled Tulunad on her husband's behalf from 1335 A.D. and seems to have continued to rule up to 1348 A.D. even after her husband's death.²⁰

CONCLUSIONS

Thus it is evident from the above study that, women of medieval Karnataka were complementary to men and not competitive in all the fields and they together made a complete unit. They administered the villages, divisions and provinces assigned to them. Women faced difficult situations bravely, and excelled in the field of charity, exhibiting their sense of social service. They were good administrators and fought battles also.

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