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## POSITION OF THE WOMEN'S DURING VIJAYANAGARA KINGDOM

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**Abstract:** After the disappearance of the Hoysala Empire in Karnataka. Women and their role is a prominent and predominate factor in all ages with little variation. The role and status of women during vijayanagara period is laudable. It occupies a unique place in the social and cultural history of South India figuring in all walks of life women had constructive role in administrative, political, economic, agricultural, social, cultural, art and paintings. Women had material wealth and good social status. They were liberal donors too. Women of different ranks made endowments to various institutions. However, Devadasi system or temple prostitution a socio religious institution was in vogue with divine sanction. Hindu society in that time considered it was a lawful and honourable position. Child marriage was in practice. Dowry system was prevalent and became a great burden on many families. Sati system also prevailed in Vijayanagara period and was confined to upper class of Hindu society.

Women had active role in celebration of festivals. Dance and music were performed by princess and common people were in receipt of patronage from rulers. To certain extent people gave equal status to women in society and in government appointments. Women were treated with the respect as daughters, wives and mothers. With the exception of evil cultures of sati and prostitution which had state sanction, the role and status of women during Vijayanagara period was laudable.

**Index Terms - women's in administration, educations, prostitutions, child marriage.**

### I. INTRODUCTION

Women occupied a very honorable position in the Vijayanagar society. Some of them were very learned and were eminent litterateurs. Monogamy was the general practice, but kings and nobility followed polygamous practices. Early marriages were common among the Brahmins. The plight of the widows was pitiable, but they could remarry. The state encouraged widow remarriage by not levying any marriage tax on their marriage. Women of the nobility and higher castes were carefully educated. Music and dancing formed an important part of their curriculum. Women were also wrestler, astrologers, accountants, writers, musicians and even went to the battlefield. Courtesans were highly educated and cultured and no social stigma was attached to them. Most courtesans were very rich and enjoyed certain privileges.

### POSITION OF WOMEN IN VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE:

Women had a respectable position in Vijayanagara society. The woman of the palaces of the kings and the royal family often participated in public functions. The kings and queens were experts in the fields of art, dance, music, poetry, administration, justice, mathematics etc. Some were scholars. For example: Kampanaraya's wife Gangambike wrote 'Madhura Vijayam', Tirumalambike wrote 'Varadambika Parinaya', Ramabhandramba wrote 'Raghunathabhyudaya'. Honnamma was also a correspondent at the court of Devaraya 2, Tirumalamba Achyutaraya of Oda. Krishnadevaraya's queen Chennamba danced. Queens were trained in dance and music, sword fighting wrestling. He used to give charity sometimes. There was a large procession of women in the royal court.

There were 12,000 such people in the court of Krishnadevaraya and 400 in the service of Achyutaraya. He was busy with palace accounting, writing, guarding, and giving interviews to the public. There were women who guarded the palace at night. Some were bailiffs and judges. Others were astrologers, doctors, accountants, palanquin bearers and trumpeters. Some women were skilled in swordsmanship and warfare. Some are artists. Dancers were held in high esteem in the Vijayanagara court.

The status of women in Vijayanagara period can be measured by the following practices.

1. **Family System:** Vijayanagara society had a patriarchal family system. The women did not have economic and social freedom. She felt that she was for a man. She had to live under her father in her childhood, her husband in her youth and her son in her old age. Thus, there was neither the right to property nor the freedom to choose one's spouse. Her property was the dowries received during the marriage. Only a childless widow got a share in her husband's property. Male children were preferred. Dowry system and kanyashulka or Tera systems were customary. Patriarchal family system existed only

in the coastal region. Generally, woman's work area was confined to the home only. It seems that there is no incentive for his education.

2. **Marriage System:** Monogamy was in common practice. Polygamy was practiced among kings and nobility. Kings, Nobles, feudal lords, peasants had as many wives as they wanted and employed maidservants. A polygamist would become a distinguished person. For Example: Krishnadevaraya had 12 queens including Tirumalamba, Chinnadevi and Jaganmohini. Child marriages were common. Among Brahmins, girls were married at the age of 7 or 9. Mohamadan raids led to child marriages. Dowry system was customary. Both caste and wealth of the groom were the criteria for deciding the dowry. This was mostly the norm among upper castes. The consent of elders was necessary for marriage. There were intra-caste marriages. There were no inter-caste marriages. Widow Remarriage was not allowed. The widow had to be sati or should have done hair removal. Brahmins had generously given permission for it.
3. **Devadasi system:** Devadasi system was practiced. He looked after the administration of the temple. She was a music and dance. He used to participate in the cultural programs held in the temple and the king's court. In the name of God, maidservants were treated as pleasure. Temples were destroyed by them. Innocent girls were victims of this evil practice. This practice led to the exploitation of women and prostitution.
4. **Prostitution:** Prostitution was widespread due to Devadasi System. No one had any objection to prostitution. It was a carefree career. For the prostitute it was trade, a trade of the body. Members belonging to all classes and castes were her customers. She did not discriminate. He did not choose to see that he was superior or inferior. Poor girls and widows were forced into prostitution. There were prostitutes in the towns. There was a separate street for mines. According to Abdul Razak, prostitution was officially recognised by the government. They used to pay taxes to the government. It was given as salary to city security personnel. Prostitutes were artists and skilled dancing. These dancers were called for festivals. Foreigners were attracted to his dance. He was joining the army. He had the right to consume Veelya in the presence of the king.
5. **Sati Sahagamana System:** Sati Sahaganama System is the practice of burning the dead husband's widow on the pyre of his dead. She should have realised that a widow whose husband has died has no right to live. Otherwise, he should have shaved his head. Sometimes she had to commit suicide within 2-3 months of her husband's death. She should not wear clothes that attract men. A lingayat widow was buried alive. Barbosa said that if the king dies, hundreds of women will burn to death by falling into his pyre Nunez says that when Achyutaraya died, more than 500 of his wives committed suicide. A widow's life committed among the living was like hell, so there was a feeling that it was more like suicide. Nunez describes this evil practice as follows: at last, she took leave of everyone and leapt into the fire with such boldness that she leapt into the fire, carrying a pan full of oil on her head. As soon as she jumped on the pyre, the relatives who waiting with sticks in their hands threw them into the fire and covered her body. After this, everyone starts crying loudly. Sometimes the Sati was put on a horse and paraded, after which oil was poured on her head and set on fire. It is said that there was an opportunity for widows to have arranged marriages. From the above rituals it is understood that the position of women was very miserable and degraded.
6. **Costumes:** Both men and women loved jewellery. The ornaments used by women are, earring, nose piece, necklace, headgear, daabu, anklet, finger ring, odyana, arm band, bangles, etc. perfumes were also used. They wore cotton clothes. The rich used to wear silk saris. Women wore sarees, blouses, men wore panchas, robes, shawls and handkerchiefs. Abdul Razak said that prostitutes used to wear ornaments that were too heavy for them to bear.
7. **Queens in Rule:** It can be observed that since the time of Chalukya, women were involved in administrative affairs. Even during the Vijayanagara period, the field work of queens and royal women further expanded. We find examples of queens ruling. For examples of Krishnadevaraya's queen Jaganmohini ruled the kambam region near Kdapa.
8. **Education:** The Vijayanagara period has seen many women practitioners. Gangadevi, Honnayima, jaganmohini, Abhirama Honnayima, Mohanangi- many more names can be listed. All of them are educated. Like her, many women were educated mainly in music, dance, drama and instruments. Poets, readers and accountants were in Vijayanagara court.

Here is a brief introduction of some women.

- A. **GANGADEVI:** Gangadevi was a poet belonging Muluvayi [mulubagilu] kingdom during Vijayanagara period. She lived around 1360 AD. The second Kampanaraya [Veerakampana] was her husband. Kampanaraya was the son of the Bukka I. she was influenced by Sanskrit poets like Kalidasa, Banabhatta, Bharavi, Dandi etc. She claimed that a contemporary Vishwanath is now a guru. Gangadevi wrote a Sanskrit work called 'Madhuravijayam'. She wrote this work with the main purpose of documenting the achievements of her husband Veerakampana. This is also the most important document about Veerakampana. In 1371, he attacked the Sultan of Madhura and expanded the Vijayanagara kingdom up to Rameshwaram and died a heroic death in this struggle.

- B. HONNAYIMA:** She was the famous Scholar. An inscription of Bukkaraya dated 1372 AD mentions her as scholar. She was expert in many branches of knowledge including vedas. When she died in 1972, her husband Bukkarayan donated a village in Manjarabad taluk. That village came to be known as Honnapura.

### CONCLUSION

Therefore, to conclude if we focus on women then we get a new perspective to look at the past. Women were not a monolith category and comprised of various classes. Women of upper, middle, lower, rural, urban class do not reflect a single perspective. However, something which comes out very clearly is that all these women were under a patriarchal system. One could seek the University of these Experiences and understand the social and ideological mechanisms that have ensured the subordinate status designated to them by a patriarchal society. Thus, we can say that with the Vijayanagara period we also see the crystallization and expression of many ideas about women leading to the emergence of a new personality who can be located in history the Vijayanagara women who has also left their mark on traditions that are followed over the centuries by women.

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