

CHAPTER – V

POSITION OF WOMEN DURING VIJAYANAGARA EMPIRE

Introduction:

The Vijayanagara Empire under the Tuluva dynasty was at the zenith of political power, economic prosperity and cultural efflorescence. Even some of the foreign travelers cum merchants, for instance Nuniz and Paes, who visited south India during this period, were impressed by its pomp and prosperity. Naturally, the people of Vijayanagara were also responsible for this prosperity to some extent. This leads one to make an attempt to probe into the social conditions, specifically the position of women and their contribution during the period. Some of the questions raised in this endeavour to understand women of this age are – Did the women contribute to the overall prosperity of the period? What was their role in the society?; Did they take part in any activity outside their homes? Did they perform any predominantly made activities? Where they economically independent?

In an attempt to answer the questions raised above, this chapter aims to probe into the position of women in the Vijayanagara Empire. Contemporary literary works, epigraphical sources and foreign travelers accounts shed some light on the activities of women. But lack of sufficient sources in this area makes one to search for new areas of investigation with the available material. One should try to examine the activities and question, what happened to women? Did they take part in any of these activities? And what were their contributions? Mere narrative account would not help in any way. One should

try to read between the lines and find hidden meanings in order to have a better idea about women under study.

Many women gave donations, for instance, an inscription recorded in 1540 A.D mentions that a tank was constructed by Chinnamamba, wife of Chief Pratapa Yalla and sister of Ramaya Mantri Bacha, the Chief Minister of King Achyuta Raya. Since, a tank is an essential avenue for better living and a woman has given a donation for the tank, we can infer that the donor enjoyed some renyity. Economically also she must have been self sufficient to give this particular donation. The main focal point of contemporary literary works is the king and court politics, but they also discuss about aspects regarding queens and some sections of women.

Women Classes and Profession:

The society during the 16th century Vijayanagara was highly stratified as noticed in the earlier studies. The variations between various classes regarding the standard and patterns of living were clearly evident. Keeping this in view, women of this period cannot be studied as a group to general rather they have to be examined in their variations.

In order to have a better understanding about women during this period, they may be broadly classified on the basis of various classes and professions. According to status, they can be divided into women belonging to nobility, middle class women or family women and the lower class women. Women of this period can also be divided on the basis of their professions. They include

women living within the precincts of the royal harem, the courtesans, the temple damsels and women who were proficient in various other fields.

The major chunk of this category consists of belonging to the nobility. Information regarding other sections of upper class women is scarce. The accounts of Barbosa, Paes and Nuniz disclose most of the information regarding the position of the noble women.

The girls belonging to the noble class were taught to read and write not only the local languages but also Sanskrit. One of the necessary accomplishments they ought to fulfil was skill in music and dancing. To divert themselves from the daily routine, they went to the palace pleasure garden along with their maids. Even they enjoyed swimming and sported with water. There were separate pools for women of the nobility.

The women of aristocratic families spent the major portion of their lives within the four walls of the zenana. It was not possible for them to participate in the public functions where men were likely to gather¹. They were unable to select their life partner out of their own. Moreover, the presence of polygamous habits which were present during the period made the element of love highly improbable².

Allasani Peddana, states in his Manucharitra, how it was possible for one man to love several women and vice versa. In such an arrangement the feelings which were manifested towards women cannot be termed love but can be regarded as which a master condescendingly shows to his servants. The numerous women who surrounded such a man were nothing more than his

maid servants who were influenced by the considerations of his attainments, wealth and position in society. Love can only be between single individuals and it is wrong to assume that a person could love several women at the same time³.

Under these circumstances, it was a rare fortune for a woman especially of the higher classes to secure a devoted husband. The pains caused by the cruel treatment of men towards women and subsequent reactions were described in the contemporary literary works⁴.

The wives of the king had each a house, women guards and required number of servants. All of them were women, except the eunuchs who were also engaged. No man was allowed to see them unless he was an old man of high rank, and specially permitted by the king. The wives of the king were usually carried in closed litters and were closely followed by the eunuchs⁵.

There is a difference between the principal queens, lawful wives and the other inmates of the harem. For instance, Krishnadevaraya had twelve lawful wives of whom there were three principal ones, the sons of each of these were heirs of the kingdom but not those of the others. When there were sons to all of them and if there was only one son to a wife, he was heir⁶.

One of the principal wives of Krishnadevaraya was the daughter of the king of Orya and others, daughters of a king, his vassal who was a king of Serimgapato; another wife is a courtesan whom when in his youth was his mistress before he became a king, and she made him promise that if he became a king he would take her as his wife and thus this courtesan became his wife⁷.

All the three wives of Krishnadevaraya and never any discord or ill feeling between them and all of them were great friends⁸. The queens had a very large sum of money, treasure and personal ornaments namely armlets, bracelets, seed pearls, pearls and diamonds and each of them had sixty maidens adorned as richly as could possibly be⁹. It was known that thirty six of the most beautiful of the king's wives covered themselves with gold and pearls and in the hands of each a vessel of gold with a lamp of oil burning in it. Sometimes they were hardly able to move¹⁰. Probably Nuniz who makes the comment must have been amused by the large amounts of gold these women possessed.

The royal wives of the emperor were permitted to enjoy the same privileges as enjoyed by the king in the audience hall. It shows that equal importance was given to queens along with the king by the people. Krishnadevaraya was represented by Nandi Timmayya in a verse at the end of the first canto of his Parijatapaharanam as hearing along with his queens the works composed by the poets assembled at the court during the spring festival¹¹.

During the reign of Krishnadevaraya, there were many evidences of queens accompanying the king during campaigns. One instance was that of Krishnadevaraya's campaign to Kalinga along with the queens. They visited Ahobala and made some gifts to the god Kondaveedu Chinnadeviamma and Tirumaladeviamma were with him. It was in the company of two queens that the emperor visited the temple of Amareshwara near Darinakota and bestowed magnificent gifts known as Tualapurusha Saptasagara and presented some

villages¹². There were many instances of Krishnadevaraya visiting Venkateshwara at Tirumala along with his wives¹³. These references may be found only during Krishnadevaraya's time and not during the time of other Tuluva rulers. It can be inferred that queens enjoyed a better position during Krishnadevaraya's time than the other Tuluva rulers.

“Sati” was also performed by the women belonging to aristocratic families when their husbands died or were killed in battle. This gesture was considered to be a great honour and a source of merit.

Women belonging to the upper class did not enjoy certain rights which women of other classes were generally accustomed to as they were confined to the four walls of the zenana. Most of them did not come out in public to express their views freely and impartially. The queens moved freely within the precincts of the palace but outside it they were under seclusion. Most of the other women belonging to upper class were under the control of their male counterparts.

The upper class women wore white garments of very thin cotton or silk or bright colours, five yards long; one part of which was girt around the waist and the other part was thrown over the shoulder and across their breasts in such a way that one arm and shoulder remained uncovered. They also wore leather shoes well embroidered in silk, their heads were uncovered and the hair was tightly gathered into a becoming knot on the top of the head¹⁴. The queens wore a separate upper garment is discernable from the bronze sculptures of Chinnadevi and Tirumaladevi at Tirumala. Both the queens covered their

shoulders with a piece of cloth. Hence they used sewn or unsewn upper garment. The royal family members and other rich sections of society preferred ornaments of pearls and precious stones. This differentiated royal women from other sections of women.

Details of the financial status of the middle class women were not known but from the evidences available, it can be said that some type of private property was prevalent in medieval South India¹⁵. The parents of this class wanted their daughters to get married early to suitable persons. Among the Brahmin community, the girl's marriage was celebrated usually before she attained maturity. Among other communities, it was celebrated after maturity¹⁶. It was doubtful whether the girl was allowed to select her own husband. Marriages were usually celebrated with great pomp and show in the house of bride's parents. In the case of Brahmins, bride's parents demanded and obtained arana of the nuptial present¹⁷. In case of others, the bride's parents had to give several gifts to the bridegroom.

Generally the family women were under the control of their husbands. But all the women were not submissive to their husbands. There were rebellious, pugnacious and termagant women who made their married life a curse instead of a blessing¹⁸. In order to remain faithful to their husbands under all circumstances they practiced sati¹⁹. Most of the women preferred death than leading dishonourable lives as a widow. Sometimes, physical force was employed by the kindred of the widowed women who showed their excessive

zeal for sati by casting into the funeral pyre²⁰ so that the unhappy widows might be quickly reduced to ashes.

Brahmins were married and got very beautiful wives²¹. Brahmin house wife was the mistress of the household and performed most of the domestic work.

The family women of this age can be compared with modern day housewives. But specifying of the term 'family women' by the contemporary literary writers and foreign travelers seem ridiculous. Apart from public women, every woman was called a family woman. This distinction was made to separate family women from public women who were large in number. Most of them were devoted to the households and did not participate in the public functions.

Some of the dress patterns of middle class women were known. In 'Sukaspatati' of Kadiripati, a Brahmin lady is described as arranging the pleats of her sari with fan-shaped ends²². In 'Sringara Sakuntalam' by Pillalamarri Pinaveerabadrudu, a married woman was described as having a flowered bun²³. In Peddana's 'Manucharitra', a bride was described as wearing a Kundala. Kundalas were incised with cut and beaded design and star shaped design. In 'Kalapurnodayam' Pingali Surana, a bride is described as wearing three types of ear ornaments: (a) 'Kotapu Kammajodu', 'chevula poovulu', and 'bavirelu'. These three ornaments were identified with the three varieties of ear ornaments worn on the three parts of an ear mentioned in Bharata's 'Natyasastram', 'Kundalamu' was an ear-ornament worn on the ear lobe or the

lower part of the ear. 'Nochakamu' was worn on helix or the middle part of the ear²⁴. 'Kilamu' was worn on the upper part of the ear. A Reddy woman was described as wearing 'rendugundala mungara' or a nose ornament with two small balls. This is identified with present day 'Besari' which has two or more pearls or precious stones or gold balls suspended from a nose stud. Nasa Mani i.e. the nose ornament made of diamonds was decorated by 'Godadevi', the heroine of Amuktamalyada²⁵.

The lower class women and tribal women attended not only domestic work but also assisted their men in the fields. Referring to contemporary working class women, Linschoten writes, the women go with a cloth bound about their middle beneath their navels and hanging down to the middle of their thighs and the other end, they cast it over their shoulders whereby half of their breasts were covered²⁶.

The tribal women represented in the 'Kiratarjuniya' panel in the Lepakshi paintings were seen in skirts down to their knees. They were made of leaves. The same panel at Lepakshi reveals that their hair was tied into a normal bun with a tiara of leaves on the forehead. The author of 'Amuktamalyada' compares the blue sky with its reddish tinge to the evening twilight with a 'Natabhushana' made of the wild seed guriginja worn by Chenchu tribal women²⁷. A Saivite mendicant woman decorated a copper ring with the insignia of 'nandi' or bull. In 'Amuktamalyada', a low caste Vaishnava devotee appeared to be wearing 'venamalakante' or necklace of Tulasi beads.

On the basis of professions also women were divided into 1) women living within the precincts of the royal harem 2) the courtesans 3) the temple damsels and 4) women. Who were proficient in various other fields. They were women of position and others being daughters of the great lords of the realm. Some of them served as concubines and others served as hand maids. Here. It is appropriate to know about the women attendants who looked after the palace. For this purpose, the fairest and the most healthy women were sought throughout the kingdom so that they might do service with cleanliness and neatness. These women afforded great pleasure to the king by singing and playing²⁸.

The women employed in the palace had their houses within the precincts in good lodgings²⁹. Inside the palace, there were houses of the wives of the king and other women who served them³⁰. There were twelve thousand women in Krishna Deva Raya's harem³¹. They numbered over four thousand during the days of Achyuta³². No male child was allowed to remain with these women after attaining the age of ten.

The services rendered by women were varied. They did all the work inside the gates and held all the duties of the household³³. The imperial household was modeled in such a way that it consisted of women from six to twelve thousand in number. They were either in the service of the emperor himself or his wives. To be specific, some were dancing girls and others were bearers who carried the king's wives on their shoulders and also the king in the interior of the palace. A few women were wrestlers, astrologers and

soothsayers. Women wrote all the accounts of expenses that were incurred inside the gates and others were involved in writing the affairs of the kingdom and compared their books with those of the writers outside. There were women musicians who sang and played on the instruments³⁴. Other women included cooks for the king's personal service and others were kept for times when he gave banquets. Ten cooks prepared the food for no one but the king alone. Women and eunuchs served him at the table³⁵. Many women handled sword and shield and others who wrestled, blew trumpets and pipes. Women also acted as bearers and washing folk. Although it is doubtful, women also held offices of responsibility³⁶. They must have been employed for the management of the zenana.

When the king was in his apartments, women waited outside to perform some special duties. Each of them held a casket of musk, the white cowry, the spittoon, the sword, the perfume casket, the mirror, the fan, golden pitcher, the betel pouch and the camphor box³⁷. It is not that the king wanted to make use of all these auricles all the time but court etiquette demanded that he should keep them as they were insignia of royalty³⁸. They were patient and obedient with the sole duty of standing with a particular article or vessel in their hand for a long time.

Women helped the emperor in many ways. They assisted him in bath, dress, and served him food and narrated stories of love to amuse him. They even sang, played on musical instruments and danced before him. When the king went to war or toured, he had the company of many women. Thousands of

women accompanied him when he went to war³⁹. This is confirmed by Barbosa who alludes to the numerous unmarried women who were reserved for the king and travelled in great state as they had great riches⁴⁰.

During the time of festivals especially at the time of Mahanavami, all the female servants came along with king's wives. They were fair and young aged between sixteen and twenty and were maids of honour to the queens⁴¹. Many of them were proficient in dancing and singing. Krishna Deva Raya employed the famous musician Lakshminarayana to teach music and dancing to the ladies of his zenana. Achyuta Raya and Rama Raya engaged Bakaraya Ramappaya for the same purpose. Music and dance assumed lot of popularity. Women were taught to sing, dance and to turn about and take many light steps from their childhood⁴². Some of the foreign travelers Paes and Nuniz were struck by the beauty of the dancing girls and the dexterity of their movements⁴³. Every Saturday, the dancing girls were obliged to go to the palace to dance and posture before the king's idol that is in the interior of the palace⁴⁴. There was a dancing hall for the ladies of the royal household. The panels within it and the designs of panels show the pattern of dances in such a way that on each panel, there was a dancer in proper position. This was to teach women so that if they forgot the position in which they had to remain when the dance was done, they might look at one of the panels. By that, they can keep in mind what they have to do⁴⁵.

It is quite possible that the dancing Nan which existed during the times must have been called by the name Pattadanataka sale in Karnataka. The

inscription dated 1599 A.D. that relates to Sringamma of the Elahanka-nad Prabhu testify to this. Immadi Hire Kempaya Gauda's stae dancing suloon (Pattada-nataka-sale) was founded at Srirangasagara agrahara⁴⁶.

On the whole, women in large numbers were employed in the palace and proved themselves to be devoted, reliable and trustworthy servants. They moved freely and extended their service to the king and the queens. But their rights were almost confined to the palace. Some of the foreign travelers mention about the female door keepers. Immediately after the Dasara festivities were over. Twenty to thirty female door keepers came from inside the palace with canes in their hands, and whips on their shoulders⁴⁷. Information regarding women porters was also available⁴⁸.

The sculptural panels reveal some of the styles of the dress patterns. One category of dance figures in the contemporary sculptures wore their lower garment in 'sakaccha' style down to their ankles. The ladies of the royal household like the chauri bearers, attendant women, women musicians wore their lower garments in the same fashion. In some figures, pleats in the front were arranged in a decorative style with fas-shaped ends. This pattern appeared to be popular during Vijayanagara times.

The dress of women at the court consisted of pavada. Paita and ravika⁴⁹. The difference between the dress of prostitutes and women at the court was ravika or bodice. Women dressed up in frilled skirts up to the knees and were often represented in the crowded acrobatics and group dance scenes⁵⁰.

The maids of honour to the queen who participated in the Mahanavami festival wore high caps on their head which they called collac and on these caps, consisted of flowers made of large pearls⁵¹.

The word 'courtesan' is broadly framed. They were also known by the terms Sani, Patri, Lanja, Bhogamuvaru, Ranga bhogamvaru etc. Their profession was not confined to prostitution alone. For that matter, the meaning of the term prostitute differs from the medieval times to the modern period. At present a 'prostitute' is generally considered to be deregulatory whereas during the Vijayanagara times the courtesans were not considered so. On the other hand, they were regarded as a respectable community and enjoyed a high status in the social fabric. In the opinion of the writers of the age, they were regarded as important as the four great castes. The courtesans resided in large numbers at the capital and took part in the social festivals, They were comprised of (a) those who were attached to the temples and almost nothing to do with the court ceremonies (b) those who lived independently. To whichever class a courtesan might belong, she plied the trade of the caste quite regularly. She never faced any social disabilities as there was no blame attached to their profession⁵².

The caste of the courtesans was not homogenous. It was open for the women of any community to join the sisterhood. Even women of good families were forced to adopt the profession by tyrannical social customs. There were instances of poor parents who either sold or handed over their young daughters to the rich courtesans⁵³.

The girls of this class were carefully educated. They were taught to read and write. Some of them had acquired good knowledge of Sanskrit and vernacular literature. But emphasis was laid on the training of professional work. Considerable importance was attached to singing and dancing. The education sought by them was such that it developed sexual instinct in them at a very early age⁵⁴. The most important lesson which the courtesan girls had to learn was to evoke love in their customers without loving any of them in return⁵⁵.

To succeed in their profession, good looks alone were not sufficient. A courtesan had to be accomplished in various fields in order to capture men of wealth and distinction. For instance, the most successful courtesan had to employ several arts in keeping her lover firmly moored. If he were a scholar, she discoursed with him upon the beauty of the classics, if he had no taste for learning, she sang melodiously. On occasions, when song did not please him, she entertained him by playing upon the vina and when that did not arouse his interest, she played dice with him. When dice ceased to have attraction, she engaged witty conversation with him. She proved to be a learned scholar, a skillful musician, a clever gambler and a brilliant conversationist⁵⁶. By this it is clearly evident that to be successful a courtesan had to be proficient in many arts.

A rich and influential courtesan takes early steps to open a career for her daughters by introducing them into the palace and obtain a foothold for in the imperial household. Women of this class were very much in demand to

discharge several duties⁵⁷. If she was fortunate enough, she was raised to the position of a queen on certain occasions⁵⁸. However, majority of the courtesans had to exercise all their wits to attract men and earn money.

As soon as a courtesan girl attained maturity, the kannerika ceremony was usually celebrated⁵⁹. That was regarded as a great event in her life. The kannerika was a ceremony analogue to the marriage of the girls of good families. The courtesan girl should undergo the ceremony with a man seated together like a couple in a wedding. The occasion was celebrated with usual celebrity and incurred heavy expenditure. As the men had to finance it, the elders of the girl took advantage of the occasion to extract as much money as possible. As a result; he was given preference over the other customers.

Many of the courtesans possessed enormous wealth. Some of them were very rich. When one of them having no children made the king heir to all her property before her death, the king sent somebody to collect what she had left. They found a sum of seventy thousand pardows. During her life time, she had set apart another twelve thousand pardows to one of her handmaids whom she had brought up from childhood. It shows that they were the richest people⁶⁰. Some courtesans had lands that were handed over to them with litters and maid servants. There was a woman at the capital who was said to have possessed a hundred thousand pardows⁶¹.

The courtesans lived in the best streets of the city. Their streets had the best rows of houses. They were very much esteemed and classed amongst those honoured ones who were the mistresses of the captains. Any respectable men

had accessibly to their houses without any blame attached⁶². Their company was sought after by the captains and noblemen at court. Kings and princes visited them in their houses and summoned them to their own residences when they were disinclined to visit them⁶³. Thus they enjoyed a predominant position and enormous freedom to express their views.

They enjoyed some of the special privileges. They were allowed to enter in the presence of the wives of the king and chewed betel with them. This was a rare privilege not given to any other person no matter what his or her rank might be. They were even allowed to use betel in the presence of the king⁶⁴. They pleased the king by singing, playing and offering a thousand other pleasures as well⁶⁵. The presence of courtesans on specific occasions was essential especially during the festivals like the great Mahanavami. When the king withdrew to the interior of the palace, the courtesans and bayaders (i.e., the dancing girls of the temple and palace) renamed dancing in front of the temple and idol for a long time⁶⁶.

The trade of the courtesans was legalized in Vijayanagara. A tax was levied and the amount came up to 12,000 fanams. It was quite a large sum that went to pay the wages of the policemen⁶⁷. Thus it is clear that courtesans of the period formed an important locus standing in the society.

Courtesans lived independently and enjoyed some of the special privileges which no other women has enjoyed. Their profession was no doubt a difficult one surmounted by many challenging tasks. They were proficient in many arts in order to continue with the profession successfully. There was no

restriction on their movements and they enjoyed enormous freedom to express their views. Their presence in large numbers at the capital, the essentiality of their presence on specific occasions, their wealth speaks of the popularity of courtesans during the 16th century Vijayanagara.

The description of prostitutes in 'Paramayogivilasamu'⁶⁸ tallies with the dress of the ladies in the Lepakshi paintings. They wore a petti coat or pavada and over it, they wore a silk sari. In 'Paramayogivilasamu', a prostitute is described as wearing a loose bun⁶⁹. Prostitutes were interested in wearing necklaces of pearl strings and their maid servants wore necklaces of black beads or armlets made of flowers. As old prostitute appeared to be wearing 'muttepu kante' or 'pearl neck let'.

Another important profession practiced by women was of dancing in temple. The difference between the courtesans and temple girls was that the former lived independently at the capital and the latter attached themselves to the temple and depended on its earning for their livelihood.

Temple girls were also known as devadasis or tiruvidhisani. They danced and sang before the gods daily at specified hours. Their service was to please god and hence they were known as devaradiyals. Such rights were hereditary. The temple girls were often children born out of illegal alliances. Sometimes they were also daughters of ordinary citizens who were dedicated to the temples as an offering⁷⁰.

There was a procedure to be followed to become devadasis. It was similar to the 'kannerika' ceremony of the courtesans. The girl who was

devoted to the temple should not have attained puberty. The initiation took place in the 6th or 9th year of the girl. The procedure started with the introduction of the girl to the yogakkar by the senior devadasis. When the girl's request was accepted to be enrolled as a devadasi, she was granted a kudi or padi i.e., a house and an allowance for her maintenance. The selection was made after ascertaining the number of girls and the status of the girls to be admitted⁷¹.

The ceremony of initiation as devadasis was like this. On the prescribed day, the talikettu or the marriage of the girl with the god was performed with great pomp and gaiety. The girl was taken in a procession to the temple followed by her relatives. Women carried a brass plate containing new clothes, betel, arocanut, turmeric, kumkum and a tali (marriage symbol) made of gold. When the party reached the temple, the priest tied the tali around the girl's neck on behalf of the deity, it was a common practice in temple festivals that the priest tied tali to the goddess on behalf of the deity. Thus the marriage of the girls with the deity was solemnized. The devadasis received land grants for maintaining themselves. In addition to this, they were given every day share of the cooked rice offered to the deity and houses in the temple premises⁷².

The devadasis performed specific duties. Every day they had to sing and dance before the deity at the time of worship. They accompanied and danced before the procession conducted in his honour⁷³. The residents of the capital, they visited the palace every Saturday to dance before the deity whom the Raya personally worshipped⁷⁴.

During the time of the temple festivals, people dragged along certain triumphal cars and with them went dancing girls and other women along with music⁷⁵. Emanuel De Veiga, a Jesuit saw a temple procession at Tiruvalur noted that there were thirty women dancers who accompanied it. They devoted themselves to the idols in perpetual service. They never married but prostituted themselves⁷⁶.

These temple dancers were highly honoured by the king and were given grants. For example, the title of 'Vidvatsabharaya Ranjakam' given to Kuppasani, mother of Muddukuppayi in the court of scholars testifies to this, these dancers paid offerings to the temples in the form of money. For instance, Lingasani and Tiruvcnkatadasi related to the temple damsel caste paid 1600 nar panam into the Sri Bhandaram for certain offerings in the Venkateswara temple⁷⁷. They paid the taxes too. For example, a record dated 1547 A.D. records the remission of certain taxes paid by the dancing women of the villages of Kommuru, Voruganti, Ravipadu, Gomgulamudi belongs to the god Agastyesvara of Kommuru⁷⁸. The temple girls were also known as Udigasanis or Uligasanis. In the Kannada inscriptions, the dancing girls were referred to as patra and the service rendered by her was described as patra bhogam⁷⁹.

The temple dancers were employed along with other servants of the temple like the musicians. Sometimes, the king appointed some damsels specially to perform dance in the temples. In 1531 A.D. Achyutaraya deputed Muddu Kuppayi, daughter of Ranjaham Kuppasani to perform dance in the Venkateswara temple at Tirumala. For her maintenance, she was granted one

talingall-prasadam daily from the temple of Govindaraja at Tirupathi⁸⁰. Common people also provided dancing girls to the temple of Rajakkal Nayinar Rajendra Sola Peruman⁸¹. In 1524 A.D. Mrittunjaya Nayakkar donated land to the dancing women attached to the temples of Tambiranar Paneaksharandar⁸².

The devadasis not only entertained the gods and the people but also dedicated to it in the real sense of the term. They even carried out repairs to the walls of the temples. They made sincere efforts to secure additional land grants and improved the finances of the temple. The idol was fed by them every day when food was being served to the deity, all the women of the pagoda and their girls danced before him⁸³. The 'Sukaspatati' describes about the bed room of a dancing girl. It was furnished with bangaru kalanji, pulapanupu (bedroom of flowers), kumkum talagada (a pillow as soft as kumkuma flower), sakindla pattemanchamu (a cot prepared according to vastu), swati (an elegant fan), niluvutaddamu (life size mirror) and dantapu vavalu⁸⁴.

The devadasis prostituted themselves often. Most of them were proficient dancers and were honoured by the king. As temples performed the economic functions of the state, monetary endowments were bestowed upon them. The devadasis made sincere efforts to secure additional grants and helped the temple administration to function more effectively.

Some women proved to be proficient in literature Tirumalamba was the authoress of 'Varadambika parinayam', which describes about the marriage of Achyuta Raya with Varadamba. Tirumalamba received a gift of suvarnameru from Achyuta and composed a Sanskrit verse⁸⁵. A temple inscription by

Tirumalamba at Vittala temple is a clue to the political as well as religious influence. Queens exercised in this period⁸⁶.

Varadambika, the heroine of the kavya was believed to be proficient in political matters. She built 'Vardarajammappeta' near Vidyanagara. Along with her husband and son, she donated large amounts of treasure equal to their weight to the temple of Varadaraja swami at Kanchi. In this kavya, Varadamba was described as a diplomat and an intelligent woman who handled the matters meticulously.

'Varadambika parinayam' is also useful as an historical work. In this, Tirumalamba also wrote about herself. Along with sharp grasping power, it is known that she had wide knowledge about the plays and puranas. She even patronaged learned men. She wrote highly aesthetic kavyas and knew different dialects. Her voice resembled that of the melodious musical notes of vina. She was praised as an incarnation of goddess Saraswati. She was loved by king Achyuta and was one of the wives or sub wives of Achyuta Raya⁸⁷.

Another poetess was Mohananagi, the beloved daughter of Krishna Deva Raya and wife of Aliya Rama Raya. She wrote a love poem called 'Marichiparinayam' in which the details of Mohanangi and Krishna Deva Raya were known. In his biographical sketches of Deccan poets which was published in 1829 Kavali Venkata Rama Swamy writes about Mohanangi, the authoress of 'Marichi Parinayam', He writes:

"The poetess was a princess and the daughter of Krishna Deva Raya. She received an excellent education in her infancy and was well versed in

rhetoric and poetry, while in the bloom of youth she married Rama Rayalu, after which she still continued her studies and employed much of her time in reading those works in Telugu composed by the poets at her father's court, by constant compilation. She attained to considerable proficiency in the art of versification and wrote a poem entitled 'Marichi Parinayam' the subject of which is taken from Mahabharat. In this poem, very elegant description is given of the Manchi damsels. The work consists of five books. The princess had no issues and became unfortunately, a widow, in the prime of life (according to tradition). She was immolated on the funeral pyre of her husband''⁸⁸.

Tukka Devi was another writer who believed to be one of the wives of Krishna Deva Raya. She wrote "Tukka Panchakam" in which she describes how Krishna Deva Raya defeated the Cuttack King, Gajapathi and married his daughter Tukkamba. Some opine that she was Chinnadevi. The king was attracted by Tukkamba's beauty and must have waged a war with her father in order to get her⁸⁹.

Women's contribution to Temple Economy:

Temple had a vital role to play in the dominantly agrarian economy of South India. In this regard, the best example that can be emulated from the South in the 16th Century would be of the Tirupathi temple. This shrine of Sri Venkateswara at Tirupathi is in the present Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh⁹⁰. In this regard, the Tirupathi inscriptions disclose the details of the nature and utilization of land and money placed with the Tirupathi temple as

religious endowments from the middle of the fifteenth to the middle of the sixteenth centuries. During the period, this temple was patronized by the Vijayanagara rulers and developed into a foremost shrine in the South. Between 1456 and 1570, this temple was granted over hundred villages and large sums of money as endowments and its income was used to perform rituals in the names of over three hundred donors. Villages and monetary endowments were utilized by the temple to develop irrigation facilities around Tirupathi⁹¹. During the sixteenth century, the endowments grew in magnitude and the secular organization of the temple changed to accommodate and encourage the input of resources⁹².

Similar to the Tirupathi temple, other South Indian temples also performed certain functions. However, the present study of the importance of the temple as a place of public utility is based on the collection of materials on the temple at Tirupathi.

Land grants in form of villages or plots of cultivated land constituted an important source of income for the temple. Even women in higher positions granted land keeping in view the multi dimensional functions of the temple though there were several reasons for granting lands and other forms of capital. Temple assumes greater importance in performing certain specific functions.

The lands granted to the temple had two functions:

- (1) To yield an income with which to maintain a specified ritual service in the name of the donor of the land.

- (2) To provide a productive place to invest funds granted to the temple for the performance of services in the name of the donor of the money⁹³. The general conditions of land tenure in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had a bearing upon the relationship of the temple to the lands granted to it. They were
- (a) Bhandaravada or the king's lands which were under the direct cultivation of the treasury, and from which the royal treasury received income year by year to defray the expenditure of the Government.
 - (b) Amaram lands held on military service by Nayaks who devoted the income from the lands towards maintenance of the stipulated number of soldiers whose services could be called upon by the emperor in times of need. There were many variations to this tenure. In some instances the entire money was spent on maintenance and in some others only a part was remitted to the royal treasury and the other part was retained for service etc.
 - (c) Lands held as charitable endowments which were given to the Brahmins, temples, mutts or traditional educational institutions. Tenure was different in each case. In some cases the matadhipati will himself be the owner, in some cases the temple lands will be managed by the trustees, etc.
 - (d) A peasant proprietor tenure about which there has been a great deal of discussion among scholars of Vijayanagara history like Prof. T.V. Mahalingam and Dr. N. Venkata Ramanayya etc⁹⁴.

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