Chapter V

POSITION OF WOMEN

The period under survey provides some good examples of the fair sex having made progress in different fields, administrative, artistic, and spiritual. Though the majority of women were pre-occupied with home and hearth, some distinguished themselves, as administrators, in various posts, as patrons of education and literature, as connoisseurs of fine arts, as heroic and fighting women, as philanthropists, and as nuns.

Since early Chalukyan times, we have examples of queens, who patronised art and architecture. One queen Vijayabhattārika made a name as a poetess. In Rāṣṭrakūta times, the tradition of rule by queens or princesses continued. Sīla Mahādevi, the queen of Rāṣṭrakūta Emperor Dhrūva I admirably associated herself with the affairs of State. Rēvakīnirmāṇī, a daughter of Amūghavaraśa III ruled Ededore. Binaeti ruled over the town of Śidēmūr during the same period.

We find a good number of women holding important posts during later Chāḷukyan times. When compared to these, no reference to women, acting as governors in the
Women of Karnataka ruled as heads of different administrative divisions. Following the precedent of Chalukyan queens and princesses, wives of the subordinate kings also ruled a particular division or town, as assigned by their respective husbands. The inscriptions provide examples of these ladies administering, but unfortunately, they lack in details, and hardly enlighten us as to how these women ruled and established themselves as efficient administrators. There were women who administered villages, towns, agraharas, districts, divisions, and provinces.

Administrators of Villages

Goyindabbe, wife of Irbarasa, Governor of Banavasi, seems to have administered a village.7 Pampadevi, wife of Mahamandaleswara Kundaraja was administering Jagaluru, while her husband was in charge of Banavasi, 12,000 division.8 Chandaladavi, the senior queen of Chalukya Vikramaditya VI administered several important villages in the province of Aland thousand.9

Piriyskalala Devi, yet another queen of Vikramaditya is said to have ruled the three villages of Siriguppa, Kolannuru and another village (name lost).10 A gift of land was made by Jogabbarasi who was administering the village of Ajjadi in Saka 941 i.e. 1019 A.D.11
That the king should consider Jakkiabbe as quite capable of discharging these responsibilities is a great tribute to her. Besides she was a commoner. Unlike many lady administrators, as mentioned above, she does not seem to have belonged to any royal family, which is all the more creditable. The fact that she was a woman never came in the way of her performing her duties. This instance also proves that there were such able women, who were on par with men, in a field which is always dominated by the latter.

**Governors**

We may now proceed to assess the work of princesses and queens, who were at the higher rung of the administrative ladder, as Governors of the provinces. Mailaladévi, wife of Jayakésin II of Goa seems to have governed a big territory, which comprised nine hundred of Konkan, three hundred of Unkal and Sabbi, thirty of Kontakuli, five hundred of Hanugal, thirty of Ushigráme, seventy of Vélugrámé, five hundred of Haive, and a lakh and quarter of Kavadidvipa 28 (presumably Lakshadvipa). Mailaladévi, a senior queen of Sömésvara I is said to have ruled Banavási twelve thousand which was an important division in medieval Karnáataka. 29 As a worthy governor of a large area comprising of three regions, round about modern Bijāpur district, Bhágubáyi earned the confidence of her over-lord Singhana II. 30
Akkādevi, the sister of Emperor Jayasimha, outshone as an administrator in this galaxy. The earliest mention about her is found in an inscription of 1010 A.D., which tells us about her governing Kisukādu seventy, and the last inscription describing her rule belongs to the year 1054 A.D. Thus it seems that she ruled for more than forty-four years. Her grant to a female ascetic Ganglabbe is mentioned in an inscription of 1064, where she is just mentioned as the mother of Tōyimadeva, suggesting thereby her retirement. In the latter years, a few more divisions like Toragale sixty and Māsiyavādi one hundred and forty and Bāgaḍage seventy were added to her jurisdiction. Her name is associated with one Mayūrasārman, who ruled Banavāsi twelve thousand and Pānuṅgal one thousand and who seems to have been her husband. If this is the case, Akkādevi seems to have been better known than her husband, in administration and philanthropic activities. She encouraged education by giving liberal grants to brahmapuris and to the agraḥāra of Perur. The latter seems to have been a fairly big educational institution, with five hundred students. She acquired the title of Akhilāvidyārthi janāvalīsandini, or joy of the student community, due to her patronage of education and learning.

Akkādevi was quite conversant with the science of warfare and actually led a campaign against the rebel
chief of Gōkage and defeated him, and won the title of Ranaabhairavi. She patronised equally Jainism and the Vedic religion, as is evident from her grants to Jain Basadis, Saiva temples, and a Traipurusha temple. She seems to have undertaken a pilgrimage to Benares also, as she is invariably called Gangāmānapavitreyar, "The purified one on bathing in Ganga." Many distinguished soldiers and chiefs were proud to acknowledge her as their ruler. Thus one Ajjarasa, who had defeated the Chōla, Āndhra, Magadha, Koṅkana, Mālava, Pāncchāla and Lāṭa kings calls himself her Pādapadmopajīvi. Her title Arinripamukutaghattita Charanāravindeyar is rather unusual, and suggests that she might have defeated a few enemy chieftains.

Ballamahādēvi (1275 A.D. to 1292 A.D.) actively participated in the affairs of the state along with her husband Vīra Pāndyadēva. When he met with an untimely death, she acted as a regent to her minor son Nāgadēvarasa. She is mentioned as mistress of the western sea, ruling from Bārahkanyāpura in the inscriptions.

Chikāyitai, a queen of Hoysala Vīra Ballāla III, ruled the Tulumād from A.D. 1335 on her husband's behalf and seems to have continued to rule up to A.D. 1348 even after her husband's death.
Administrators of Religious Establishments

Women administrators of these times did not lag behind in the field of religion also. Thus Kétaladévi was governing an agrahāra in 1054 A.D. and her subordinate officer Chaṇkirāja of Vānasa Vamsa built shrines of Sāntinātha, Pārśva and Supārśva at Ponnawāda for a Chaityālaya. It is significant, that being head of an agrahāra, which was usually a religious establishment of Brahmans, she promoted the cause of Jainism.

It may be noted here that the agrahāras in medieval Karnāṭak were all self-governed. Hence the queens who are mentioned as ruling the agrahāras undertook their overall supervision (mūlāka). As representatives of the King, feudatory queens were mainly concerned with the revenue administration of their agrahāras.

An inscription of 1071 A.D. records that Dandanāyaka Baladevāyya made a grant to Jīnālaya, at the agrahāra of Saraṭavūru, and entrusted it to Huliyaubajjike, a lady disciple of Sirinandi Pandita, apparently a nun.

Chandavve, daughter of Kandanambisetti is distinguished as the proprietress of a temple, in 1255 A.D. Kandanamb made over certain lands to the temple of the god Kunjēśvara. He wanted to make an endowment and his
own daughter Ganakumāri Chandavee fulfilled all his bequest requirements. In a ceremony, where many people had assembled, the charge taking ceremony was solemnised. As the odeva or proprietress of the temple, she was entitled to receive the dues payable to the matha and to disburse the expenses for the ceremonies of worship. The charge was made over by the traditional pouring of water in the presence of the god Kunjēsvara, the Rājaguru Rudrasakti of Dūrasamudra, representatives of one hundred twenty temple priests and numberless ganas of mathas, farmers and priests. On receiving this land grant, all the members of the congregation in unison, conferred upon her the title of Ganakumāri and the Vibhūtipattā, the latter of which Rice interprets as the crown of authority. Thus the title Ganakumāri and the post of odeva of a temple carried considerable prestige, as they required the approval of the religious bodies, local leaders, and representatives of corporate organisations.

Accomplished queens

The women who did not actively participate in the tougher line of administration had another outlet in the field of fine arts. We find highly accomplished queens and princesses in different arts, in which they received specialised and rigorous training.
Manasollasa emphasizes the necessity of accomplishments, for women thus: "Among women, the beautiful are the best, among the beautiful, the youthful are the best, among the youthful, the music-knowing are the best, and among the music-knowing, the dancers are the best." But the author admits that it is difficult to get a woman with all the qualities mentioned.

Lakmādevī, queen of Tribhuvanamalla was proficient in Kāvya literature, as well as in the arts and sciences of vocal and instrumental music and dance. Bāchaladēvi, wife of Mahāmandalēśvara Ganga Permadī had specialised in dramatics, and won the heart of her husband, by enacting a play, and obtained the title of pātraçagaddale. Piriya Kataladēvi, besides being accomplished in music, was conversant with many languages, (Anākadīphabhāśāvinatā).

Lachchaladēvi, wife of Udayādityadēva of Gangawādī is highly praised for her proficiency in singing and dancing; while performing, she could bring out astonishing emotion and sentiment in bright and new ways. One Mechaladēvi is referred to as Pumyakathāpurānaprasānga which can be translated as proficient in narrating meritorious stories and purāṇa.

Marīyane Dandanāyaka's three daughters, Padmaladēvi, Chāvaladēvi, and Boppādēvi were skilled in art, singing and dancing, and later became queens of king Ballāla.
Santaladevi, the Hoysala queen, is famous in this field, and her name is quoted in song, story and sculpture, as a paragon of accomplishment. She is eulogised in several inscriptions for her unusual talents. Expert in singing, instrumental music, and dancing, she mastered many arts. What is very unusual and noteworthy is that she is called a Brihaspati in discrimination, and a Vāchaspiti in ready wit. She ruled the kingdom, along with her illustrious husband, Vishnuvardhana.

While describing the Court life of king Yāsōdāhara, Sōmadēva, speaks of dance exhibitions held in the court theatre, and the king is described as witnessing these performance in the company of expert dancers and well-trained exponents.

Pārvānātha Purāṇa, also speaks of a saṅgitāgōṣṭhi wherein the king witnessed dance performances. We have a splendid example of a dance exhibition given by queen Sāvaladēvi, wife of Kadamba king Sōma, in 1174 A.D. She gave an exquisite performance of music and dance, in the audience hall, where were assembled eminent and influential men of her and of other kingdoms. Present were also persons proficient in music and dancing. The record says that she sang extempore (āṅkālita niyuktaśya i.e. without previous arrangement). Sāvala Devi's
sister was one Bāvala dēvi, who was also highly skilled in the arts of singing and dancing and her brother Bhairava, by name, had proficiency in Brahmavīna, and in beating time. Thus the whole family seems to have been talented.

In Basava Purāṇa, the poet Bhīma describes the various instruments played by women; there is frequent mention of women who could play maddale (tabor), blow kahale (horned trumpet) and play on the flute and tāla. Sculptures also confirm this. (Plate VII)

**Heroic women**

We have seen above that Akkādēvi led an expedition, in person, against a rebel chief of Gōkāve. A damaged inscription of 1106 A.D. tells us about the death of Chāvagāvunda and Hollāgāvunda in an attack on Nīlagunda, by one Chāgaladēvi (Chāgaladēvi dāliyıtū) suggesting that she, wife of a chief of Torgale might have been a queen and led the troops of this campaign. Suggaladēvi, wife of the Mahāmandalēśvara Barma succeeded in catching a large snake, to the admiration of the public. Sāviyabbe, a devoted wife seems to have accompanied her husband to battle and fell fighting by his side. The sculptures on the top panel of the memorial stone represent her as an amazon riding on a horse, flourishing a sword, with a man...
or an elephant opposite her, apparently aiming at her, some weapon, held at the level of the waist. An inscription of 1386 A.D. narrates the death of Bommāmbē, wife of ... mādar kāla, who continued to fight in the battle, in which her husband had died. Sculptures in the Kallēśvara temple at Bētūr (Dāvagere) testify to the fact that occasionally women participated in battles and were proficient in wielding weapons, when the occasion demanded. Another woman warrior Chommarāmbē followed her husband to the battle field and died fighting.

Queens and other women accompanied the king during expeditions. Ketaladēvi, queen of Tribhuvamalla Vikramāditya, made a grant from Ponuguppe when the king was camping there. It is evident that the royal ladies did not go joy-riding, risking life and limb.

Pārśvanātha Purāṇa describes women who rode elephants and accompanied the king on an expedition. An inscription from Belur refers to a training school for princesses, for teaching horse-riding (antahpurāda pattasāhāna). Queens and princesses, who shone as administrators received necessary training in state-craft, and it is not unlikely that they were taught the science of warfare and wielding of weapons, which formed an essential part of training for the royal children, male and female. For, Mānasāllāsa, while describing the king's
audience, states that among the invited ladies, who came to the assembly, some rode on horses, some on mares, while others came on foot. 

Women Philanthropists

A number of inscriptions describe the grants made by women of all strata, towards education and other welfare activities. The gifts comprised lands, fields, gardens, groves, water sheds, wells and cash. In some cases, women took the initiative in founding agrahāras or arranging the donation of books. In certain cases, they advised their husbands to make donations, but, by and large, they cooperated with their illustrious husbands, in providing charities. Inscriptions provide examples of a variety of these gifts. A few illustrations will suffice to show, how, at least some of the donors, have become immortal by their philanthropy.

As mentioned earlier, Akkādēvi was known for her grants. One such was the remarkable donation to the agrahāra of Pērūr, which provided education to five hundred students. She made a liberal grant of five hundred mātāra, fifty houses and two gardens to the temple of Traipurushadēva to which the agrahāra was attached. Queen Malaladēvi was famous as mahādēni, for her liberal
endowments. This wife of king Bhuvanaikamalladēva is known to have constructed in 1076 A.D. temples for Śiva, Āditya, Viṣṇu, Buddha, and Nāga, besides a well and a tank, after making a grant for lighting of lamps for the temples. This grant was entrusted to the charge of a Kālūmukha ascetic from Maleyāla, Dēva Singijiya. This establishment contained several students and naisīthika ascetics, for whose comforts every provision was made. The relevant inscription provides a good example of the religious toleration of the subordinate kings and especially their womenfolk, who made no difference between sects and religions as far as charities were concerned.

Similarly queen Suggaladēvi of Jagadēkamalladēva made a grant of land to Pāsūpata ascetic, Brahmarāsi-pandita, and for other ascetics and students, for their food, clothing, and medicines. Chattaladēvi, daughter of Ganga Permādi, and wife of Nanni-Sentara is compared to Rōhini, Chēlinī, Sīta, Rēvati, and Prabhēvati in an inscription of 1077 A.D. which describes her construction of an unequalled Pancha Jinālaya, which became a resort of munis, who wanted to give up family cares. She also bestowed gifts of food, shelter, medicines and learning.

Chikaladēvi entreated her husband, Duddharasa, a chieftain, to build a tank, set up a chatram for Brahmins,
prepare fields by the river side and perform many meritorious acts of *dharma*. 85 Dēmiyakkā, wife of merchant Chāmunda, always gave food to the people of the three worlds, was a refuge to the frightened, distributed medicine to the afflicted, and *agamas* to those seeking spiritual knowledge. 86 This last mentioned deed of charity is very significant, because that meant diffusion of learning through distribution of copies of books on sāstras. Evidently, wife of a merchant prince, she seems to have covered the whole gamut of charity, feeding both mind and body, with medical relief in addition. Āchale, the beautiful and accomplished wife of Chandramauli granted a village for the worship of god Pārśva, a tank and two gardens. 87 Chandalādēvi, the senior queen of Vikramādiṭya VI, who was herself known as Abhinava Saraswati, is mentioned as a patron of education, in inscriptions. 88

Nāgi Gāvundi was engaged in philanthropic work; she was an ideal wife of Ādi Gāvunda, whose munificent grants are extolled in an inscription of 1183 A.D. He gave milk to growing children and food to the hungry. In times of famine, he arranged for water, built tanks, and planted groves, evidently to provide relief to the destitute. The wife, Nāgi, joyfully distributed food with her own hands, to all visitors, and at times even to the number of a thousand. 89
An inscription of 1190 A.D. of the time of Yadava Billama throws light on a charity-fair which was of everlasting utility to the public. Siridévi, wife of Boppa'náyaka was observing the rite of kshita-rupam (rite of growing trees), and in this connection, she requested her husband to plant a number of trees, and establish a charity fair (dharmasamāne). Accordingly, mango, néraka (euragna jambilana), íla (orange), jack fruit, tamarind, dates, cocoanut and betelnut trees were planted in an ideal spot, and it was later converted into a charity fair in the town of Bevinur.90 The market was free of tolls, something like the free ports of Europe. It was obligatory on the part of the people to maintain the market, and the trees in it, with the income of the local bodies. The fruits were to be utilized for the worship of various deities mentioned in the inscription.

Sóvaladévi, sister of the Hoyasala king Narasimha II was an eminent patron of education. In 1237 A.D. she built a town, by name Sómanathapura, and turned it into an educational centre, with dwellings for Brahmins learned in various branches of knowledge. It is compared to Vallabhi.91 The university of Vallabhi was one of the greatest educational centres of medieval India, and the seal of Sóvaladévi to have a centre in her own land modelled on the lines of Vallabhi was really remarkable.
This section will remain incomplete, if, at least, mention in brief is not made about Attimabbe, the "Princess of Philanthropists." Of the large galaxy of famous women of medieval Karnāṭaka, she is the shining star, who not only led an exemplary life and spread enlightenment in her age, but left a great heritage, which was eagerly followed by the several distinguished ladies, who lived in the later generations. Much has been written about this great lady, and there is always a fear of repetition. But her life and attainments provide ample scope for a study of social conditions of that period.

Attimabbe and her sister Gundamabbe were two daughters of Mallapa, a minister of the Chālukya King, Satyāśraya. Both were given in marriage to Nāgadēva, who seems to have died prematurely. Gundamabbe committed Sati, after persuading Attimabbe to continue to live, for the sake of the latter's infant son. Attimabbe led a saintly life and made innumerable gifts. The great poet Ranna was patronised by her, as was Ponna by her father, who encouraged him to write Sāntipurāṇa. Attimabbe got one thousand copies of this work made and distributed them free. She also built thousands of basadis and richly decorated them. The magnificent basadi at Lakkundi, was got constructed by her.
A number of miracles are attributed to her like retrieving two Jain idols lost in the floods, holding up river Godāvari, pacifying a maddened elephant which ultimately made its obeisance to her, putting out a conflagration with a sprinkling of Jinōdaka etc. All such attributes might have had their origin in the use of ordinary common sense, grit, and moral courage displayed by this lady, in times of crises. Befitting a pious Jain, she mortified her flesh by penance and fasting. Once she had refused all sustenance, till she beheld her Lord Kukkutēśvara, i.e. Gōmatēśvara, perching on the hill. The faithful would have it that her heart's desire was fulfilled and that the heavens rained water to revive her emaciated body. 96

Born to riches, she embraced poverty; wife of a chieftain, she remained unattached like an ideal śrāvaki (devotee); she encouraged poets and writers, in an age, which valued fighting more than learning. She is extolled in our classics and inscriptions as Dānachintāmani, or the neverfailing jewel of charity. Apart from Ranna, from whom we learn the accomplishments of Attimabbe, Brahmasīva 1150 A.D. also sings her panegyrics. 97

The tradition set by Attimabbe was carried for more than three centuries. In an inscription of 1142 A.D.,
she is classed with the great women of Purāṇas and epics, like Rāti, Sītā, Rāvati, and Arundhati. Dandamāyakiti Echikabbe is spoken of as bestowing gifts, like Attimabbe, asking "who wants which"? The virtuous Bāchavve is described as equal to Pārvati, Gangā, Sītā, and Attimabbe.100

Again, one Lōkapālādevī is compared to Attimabbe, in devotion to Jaina Dharma.101

Such was the legacy of Attimabbe in medieval times. Her one gift, which later generations should remember with gratitude is the gift of books, and the popularisation of classics, which led to diffusion of learning, and raised our cultural level. The heroes, fighters, administrators, and builders who strode that world of her time are not remembered; but she is remembered and will be remembered, as long as the Kannada language lives, because of the writings of Ponna and Ranna, whom she popularised and patronised respectively.

Nuna

Inscriptions from Sravana Belagola, mainly Jaina, tell us about various women, who died by the rite of Sallākhana, after Sannyasana.102 Though sannyasana means renunciation, this was a later stage in the lives of these women. A house-wife, sister, mother or daughter would renounce the world, as per Jaina injunctions, when
the inner call came. Till then, though they led saintly lives, they would be called Śrāvakīs, or lay devotees. Sāvyabbē is called a celebrated Śrāvaka, in an inscription of 950 A.D. 103 Attimabbe, with all her saintly virtues, was only a Śrāvaka, which did not detract an iota, from her greatness, in the eyes of the faithful.

There were other orders or hierarchies of merit. Some inscriptions mention a few Kantiś or kantiś, who were disciples of famous gurus, and had lay disciples or ascetic disciples of their own. The ajīś or āryakāś, and kantiś were ordained nuns. An ajīś or a kantiś may be compared to an abbess of the Catholic church; the former may or may not administer a nunnery; yet she could exercise all the spiritual functions of the Jain female counterpart, unlike the Christian abbess. This is something unique and provides us with an example of the attitude of the Jainas towards the members of the fair sex, who developed their spiritual personality. An inscription of 1187 A.D. tells us about a big assembly of ascetics, wherein "the brilliant gurus of all the Ganas of the four Sanghas, the Ganadharas of the Kali age, the fifty eminent sages, their female disciples, Gourārī Kanti, Sōmarī Kanti and twenty eight groups of disciples assembled and celebrated the five auspicious events." 104
According to a Gudigere Jain inscription of 1076 A.D., Achārya Śrinandi Panditadēwa, who was practicing asceticism, had a female disciple, (śīrṣaṇti), who was known as Ashtopaṇāśigānti, signifying thereby that she observed the prescribed eight fasts so tenaciously that her name came to be associated with that vow. A Sravāṇa Beḷagolā inscription speaks about an ascetic Śrimati Gānti and her death by the rite of sannyāsa. Her penance was immense, and she is referred to as subduer of Kashāyās. Kashāya is the word the Jains use for objects of sense. By severe penance, she had obtained name and fame on earth. Her disciple Mānakabbē-Gānti set up the epitaph. Similarly, Kuṭmvve erected an epitaph in honour of Jēkavve Kānti in 1130 A.D. Similarly, Kuṭmvve erected an epitaph in honour of Jēkavve Kānti in 1130 A.D. Another distinguished nun Jakkiyabbē Gānti, disciple of Vajrapāṇi-Pandita, purchased the land, from the king Vinayāditya in 1054 A.D. and left it to the basadi of Sosevūr, as a memorial.

Poetess Kānti, a contemporary of poet Māgachandra or Abhinavapampa, lived at the court of Hoysala king BallāḷaI and is known for her many witty compositions and poetic repartees with Abhinava Pampa. She is, by far, the first poetess to write in Kannada.

Except for Huliyaṭṭājī, who acted as a proprietor...
of a temple, as seen earlier, we do not have any example of an *aśī (nun) who distinguished herself in asceticism etc. Provision was made for *aśī along with the *rīṣīśc for food and clothing. 111

There were nuns not only among the Jainas but also among the Śaivas, tāṇtrikas, mahanubhāvas and Viṣṇu Śaivas. We have seen that Chandavve was a ganakumāri. A ganakumāri is interpreted as daughter or princess of the ganas or jāngamag, the hosts of Śiva. In all probability, Chandavve was a nun. 112 Akkādevī's grant of 1064 A.D. states that a Śaiva female ascetic, by name, Gangikabbe received an endowment, for imparting education at the matha, and for other expenses. It is interesting to note that the ascetic Gangikabbe is addressed with the titles of Tāponsyeśa—Japa—Samādhiśīla—Sampannayarappapam—Tapasvi, showing that she practised austerities, discipline, prayers, concentration etc., which are customary with male ascetics. It is clear from the inscription, that there were other ascetics in that matha of Hottur, and Gangikabbe held a representative position, in a community of Śaiva ascetics. 113

Another female ascetic Bilavve is introduced in a record of Yaḍava Singhana. She is therein described as "Mūlasthanadēvāra pāḍārādhaki, Khetra sanyāsi, and Mahānubhāve."
The last title may signify that she belonged to the Mahānubhava sect. She was the recipient of certain grants made for religious purposes.114

An inscription of 1071 A.D. mentions a grant of sixty kalams of paddy for three hundred sixty days, to the four yōginis, who lived along with other temple staff at the temple of Piṣāriyar.115

A vachana of Akkamahādevi mentions that to the male ascetic the female ascetic was an illusion.116 By which it can be deduced that female ascetics were common. Akkamahādevi herself became one. There were Buddhist nuns in the Vihāra at Balligāve. In 1065 A.D. Rūpa Bhattayya established a Bauddha Vihāra and made a grant of land for feeding the Yōginis, Kūṣalis (orphans), and Sanyāsins.117

Temple priestesses were known during this period. In 1005 A.D. six māttar of land was granted to Revabbegoravi of Mūlasthāna, at the request of eight gāvundas and the sixty tenants of Sirivur.118 In Shantipurāṇa, Ponna, describing a Goravi, says that while wandering, the Goravi119 makes (the image of) Gaṇesa wander, and we are led to guess that she might have been a Gaṇapatya nun or a wandering ascetic.120
In *Dharmaśārita* of Nayasena, the story of a young girl, Anantamati is narrated. One day, she was playing with other girls the game of marriage of a doll. Her father takes her to the basadi, and in lighter vein tells the guru to ordain her as a nun. The guru also, in a jocular mood, plays at ordaining her. The girl takes this seriously and vows to become an ascetic. After several mishaps, she, at last, succeeds in persuading her father to allow her to become a nun. She is ordained a nun, after receiving consecration at the hands of Kamala Shrīganti. This story confirms the fact that at least there was a class of women, who were free to renounce the world and were in a position to induct female disciples into the order.

There is an instance of a male disciple of a female ascetic, as well. In 1108 A.D., the illustrious Mahāmandalēvara Ballaladēva and Gandārāditya allotted two hundred *kṣanag*, and a house for the purpose of providing food for the *basadīs*, which Bammagāvunda, the guḍḍa or disciple of Rātrimati kantīyar had caused to be built.

**Courtesans**

We may now observe a few facts about the oldest profession in the world, as it existed in medieval Karnātaka.
Literature of this time is full of description of these vēvyās or ganikās, and vēvyavarnāna or description of courtesans became an essential part of a classic, though there was a lot of exaggeration in them. But the fact that the poet or artist always could not escape depicting his milieu remains, and there is a possibility of getting factual description here and there. Following medieval norms, a combined study of this class of persons, courtesans (vēvyā, panyāṅgāna, vārāṅgāna), harlots (sūle), dancing girls (pātra) and tottu (slave) is attempted here.

Courtesans were not only tolerated and recognised, but at times held a respectable place in society. Pārvanātha Purāṇa recognises the courtesans as an essential element in the court (āsthāna). Several kings thought it an honour to be associated with ganikās. The king Amogha-varaḥa is described as having a thousand courtesans, decorated with waist-bands and bells or tinklers round their hips, and ear-rings, armlets, and necklaces. Another king Hoysala Narasimha is mentioned as having three hundred eighty four women. All those must have been concubines, because his queen is specially mentioned in the same inscription. The public women (panya-yōshitah) were invited along with other women of the harem and the household ladies of the nobility to witness sports and entertainments.
In the highly sophisticated society, this class of courtesans had their own place. Like all the castes of Karnataka, this caste had also a sense of belonging. That they cultivated histrionics is proved by the sobriquet of pātradavaru, which they bear.

Several inscriptions of previous centuries bear details of gifts of land and wealth made by these sūlka. Therein we find the honorific plural used whenever reference is made to themselves or their forbears. They quote with pride their matrilineal ancestry. This tradition of giving grants continued into the period under review.

Description of, or even a passing reference to these women is made in connection with the palace, temples, or public functions. Mānasollāsa states that, the ganikās, along with the women of the royal family, dancers, pandits, and sāmantas were present in the assembly. From the description of Nayasaṇa and Sōmeśvara, it is clear that ganikās formed an essential part of the royal entourage. They were highly accomplished in singing, dancing, painting, and other fine arts and were supposed to lend colour to every day life of the contemporary society. They served as a status symbol of the royalty and nobility. Thus in Yasastilaka, they are shown as preceding the
There are several references to public women and their locality in inscriptions. General Mahādevāyya took great pride in constructing the temple of Chandrāmauliśvara and settling the courtesans, as public women of the suburb.

A fragmentary inscription of 10th century refers to the quarters (hātaka) of the chief courtesans of the king. Classics of these times are quite eloquent in describing them. They lived in beautifully decorated houses, used sweet-smelling perfumes, were elegantly decorated, and tastefully dressed. They seem to have been quite wealthy. They had soft beds, well-decorated bedsteads, comfortable seats, big mirrors, unguents, fans, drinks and betel. There were musical instruments to entertain them. On the upper storeys of their houses, gōsthies were usually held. Somanāthaḥāritra of Kāghavāṅka gives interesting description of the amusements these women provided. In the evenings, they assembled in the halls upstairs of their houses where games of chess or chance like gambling were played; some practised on veena;
others made the parrots talk; a few studied Kāmasāstra; others were dancing, singing or playing instrumental music; while a few others were listening to the stories or condemning the satires indulged in against courtesans. 135

Ibn Battuta describes the courtesans in the bazar of Dēvagiri (Daulatabad). The beautiful bazar had many shops; the shops were decorated with carpets; in the middle stood a big cradle (perhaps a swing), on which the female singer relaxed. She was decked in all finery and her female attendants swung the cradle. The female singers came in crowds, and sang and danced until dusk. 136

Here we may recall that a refined vēṣya, according to Kutṭanimatas of Abhinava Gupta, circa 9th century, had to study books on science of sex, like Vātsyāyana, Dattaka, Vīśputra, Rājaputra, the Nāṭyasāstra of Bharata, treatises on art, music, Vīrāhāyurveda, painting, needle-work, wood-work, metal-work, clay-modelling, cookery, and practical training in instrumental music, singing and dancing. 137 The curriculum would do honour to any educational institution for ladies. The girls were caught young and moulded into shape by the seniors and other experts in various arts, so that they may do justice to their profession. From Śomānātha Chāritra of kāghavānka referred to above it is clear that
In Karnataka also the courtesans were well-versed in various arts and sciences.

Kuppaturu\(^{138}\) and Benturu\(^{139}\) had separate streets for the habitation of courtesans. Kuntani, mudisüle and tottu, meaning female pimp, old harlot, and slave, were others who lived with these courtesans.\(^{140}\) Evidently, these belonged to the lower strata in the profession.

A courtesan's main attraction was her youth, and once the youth vanished her plight was miserable. Poet Rāghavānka picturesquely describes an aged harlot thus:

"Draping her head with soot-black cloth to hide her grizzly hair, tying her limp breasts in a tight blouse, applying collyrium to her eyes bereft of lashes, keeping the light behind her so that her face could not be seen fully, the seedy old hag solicited any male passing by."\(^{141}\)

To return to temple girls, two types of these are mentioned in inscriptions, pātra and sūle.\(^{142}\) Provision was made for their residence and food, by the persons who constructed the temples. This is testified by the quarters constructed by the Generals Mahādeva and Anantapāla, which were solely for these women attached to these temples.
The system of dedicating girls to temples is an ancient one and by the tenth century, it had become an established practice. Thus Agni Purāṇa says, "By dedicating female slaves, servants, ornaments, cows, lands, horses and elephants to an idol, a man acquires wealth and fortune, and attains heaven after death." Kundanagār's observations about this custom in medieval Karnāṭaka are worth noting: "The worshipper being a learned man, and his family being held in high esteem, could not do any menial service in temples, such as sweeping, washing the pots, keeping clean the yards and surrounding places, and the choultry attached to the temple etc. This was to be taken up by maid servants in constant attendance. For this purpose, maid servants were dedicated to the temples, and were called Dēvadāsis." Kundanagār's remarks are based on the utilitarian view of the origin of the system. He quotes the example of Vambi-yakkā enamoured of the poetic skill of Hariharadēva. She comes to Pampākshetra and agrees to be dedicated to the temple, and undertakes menial work in that temple; one section of society at least did not feel degraded when it accepted the system as a way of life. Marco Polo (1293 A.D.) had observed in the southern region many young girls being consecrated to the gods and
Inscriptions mention these girls, sūlē and pātra, but the nature of their work, in the temple, is not mentioned anywhere. Pātra is used in Sanskrit to mean an actress also, and there are grounds to believe, that the pātra girls were appointed or dedicated to sing and dance before the god. And there is an inscription which tells about a grant to six temple girls (sūlēyar), the dancing master (nattuva), and to the supervisor of these girls (sūlēvala) as well, which implies that a sūle was also trained to know dancing.

However the word pātra was used in a wider sense, and applied to women, who were not devadāsis. We have seen that queen Bāchaladēvi won the title of Pātra-jagaddalē because of her high proficiency in dancing. We have another example of a lady, the daughter of Siddhānti Kriyāsakti Pandita and wife of Mallaṇya, who was a Pattasāhāni of Mahāmandalēśvara Mallidēva. She donated two golden banners to the god Svayambhu Trikutēśvara and is referred to as Pātra-chūdāmani Chandavve. Similarly, a Chaityālaya named Tribhuvana Chūdāmani was caused to be built by Mangāyi of Belgula, who is described as Rāvpātra Chūdāmani. Thus we can see that the word "pātra" was not restricted to the temple girls only and did not carry the bad odour it did in later times. The appellation implies that dancing was not the sole monopoly of the courtesans and that women...
of rank were not above receiving honorific titles, containing the word pātra. But there were sūles, who were also pātra girls. 151

Some of the dancing and singing girls appeared to be wealthy and of a charitable disposition. Siriyavve, a pātra girl and daughter of Kāmave Nāgavve, and a devotee of the god Kalidēva gifted her house to the god in 1035 A.D. on condition that those who lived in the house were to pay two paṇas per year, for keeping a perpetual lamp before the god. 152 Similarly, Nachhiyālval, daughter of Sitaiyāndal, a dancing girl of the temple of Kīrtinārāyana at Talakād presented a big metal lamp stand and also paid some money to the temple treasury for the permanent maintenance of a perpetual lamp. 153

Tottu or slave girl did all the menial tasks in a temple or household. Her position was low in society. Sōmanāthacharitra of Rāghavakā refers to the tasks performed by a slave, like sweeping, decorating etc. 154 The saint-poet Basavēśvara exclaims that it is better to be a tottu in a devotee's house than be a queen in a palace, because the tottu would have an opportunity to serve God, by doing petty jobs for Hīm. 155 The position of the male children of the vēśva or dāsi (prostitute or slave) was miserable and Basavēśvara tried to better their condition.
Thus, he declared, that after initiation to Vīrāṣeivism, the son of a dāsi or vēśa was to be considered as Śiva himself and duly worshipped. 156

The Age of Marriage etc.

Except for the very few who opted for an ascetic's life, marriage was compulsory for all girls. As in ancient times, early marriages were in vogue. Kane observes that the rule that the Brahmin girls were to be married between 8 to 10 years became general, from about the sixth or seventh century, and continued to modern times. 157 A speaker in a story in Yasāstilaka identifies heaven, with the mutual love of a maiden, twelve years of age and a youth of sixteen, while in Nītivākyāmarita, it is clearly said that a maiden and a youth of the age specified above are fit for marital relations. 158 In the story described by Poet Nayasēna in his Dharmaśāstra, Anantamati was abducted in her twelfth year by a Vidyādhara. This age was considered fit for marriage. 159

Smaritikāra Haradatta who lived about the 12th century A.D. expressly says that in certain countries consummation followed immediately after the marriage ceremony, and that such practice being contrary to Sūtras should not be followed. This shows that as late as 1200 A.D. in several parts, pre-puberty marriages were common. 160
After describing rites and customs of a royal wedding, King Somesvara says that the princes immediately after being married had a nice time with their young wives and begot children. No ceremony regarding nuptials is mentioned. Hence, it is inferred that the royal brides were fairly grown up and were of a proper age to rear a family, at the time of the wedding.

The Sansāra Prakāśika (c. 1200 A.D.) expressly states that there is no prohibition against marrying a girl, who has passed the age of puberty, for Kshatriyas and others.\(^{161}\) Bilhana speaks of Svayamvara of Chandalaḍēvi, in which, she of her own will garlands Vikramāditya.\(^{162}\) Though there might be exaggeration in the description of the Svayamvara, the possibility of Chandalaḍēvi's own choosing of her husband and informing about her wish to her father, the Silahāra king, who supported it, cannot be ruled out.

Further from the description of Chandala, prior to her marriage, it appears that she was in full bloom of her youth and that she was married at the proper age for amorous dalliance (Śrīnāramitram Vayaha).\(^{163}\)

About Māyaṇalaladēvi, a Kadamba princess, who married King Karna of Gujarāth, it is told that she was
in the bloom of youth and that many princes wished to wed her, but she accepted none. Her attendant told her that the flower of her age was passing away and that she should accept a husband. She later chose king Karṇa.164

We may say that among the Kshatriyas, at least, the girls were quite grown up, at the time of the marriage.

An interesting episode is found in an inscription of the tenth century which speaks of the freedom girls of the working classes enjoyed in choosing their husbands. For some unknown reason, the village of Palarūr was under a curse, and was not allowed by the rulers to offer (būdagūlu) boiled rice for the manes. An incident occurred which enabled this curse to be removed. The ruler of the area Mahāśēṃantādhipati Sāntivarman was passing by the village, with his entourage and he wanted grass for his elephants and horses. He sent his officer Allakunda to fetch it from Palarūr. Allakunda came across some village maidens whom he asked for the supply of grass. The girls realised that if they helped him to cut grass, he would persuade the ruler to free the village from the curse. The public spirit of the girls is aroused. When the girls ask him to do them a favour, Allakunda inquires "what will you do for me, if I cause the spirits to be set free?" To which the maidens replied that he could marry as many of them as he liked.165
The inscription further says that Allakunda cut the grass in big quantities which so pleased the king, that Allakunda dared ask for a boon to permit offering of boiled rice to the spirits, so that they might be set free. The king gave his consent and thus the chivalrous Allakunda obliged the maids. But the inscription is silent as to whether he married all or some of the maidens. (Perhaps he did!). The inscription suggests that the marriage of grown-up maidens was allowed, and the maidens, of their own accord could propose marriage, without consulting the elders. It also proves the concern these maidens felt about the curse on their village, and the means of lifting it. Since the whole incident has the sanctity of being engraved on stone, the maidens' offer cannot be brushed aside just as a case of frivolity. Women of the working classes have always had greater freedom and choice, as their poverty makes them work outside the home and obtain some economic independence and a measure of equality.

There is evidence of three cases regarding the free option exercised by women to marry or not, and while marrying to choose the partner. Bontādēvi remained single for life and Gogavaėe married at her will. Guddavve resided in Kalyāna for several years as a Śivasārane and after returning to her village, got married and settled down.
It is evident she was past the usual age for marriage. This is due to the liberalising influence of the Virasaiva movement. 166

Polygamy was in vogue in all strata of society and popular among the Kshatriyas. Favourite queens of the king took pride in having the titles: Savatigandhavārane 167 or Savatimadabhājane 168 both meaning subduer of the pride of co-wives. Another Sōvaladēvi, wife of Hāya Pāndya was one, whose lotus feet were kissed by the clusters of bees, the curls on the foreheads of co-wives. 169 Among the royalty, polygamy was practised mainly for political reasons. Savarna marriages (marriages within the caste) were permitted by Dharmasāstras and followed by all. Mānasollāsa states that a king has to marry a Kshatriya girl of noble birth for a chief queen, though he is permitted to have wives of Vaisya and Sudra Varnas for his pleasure. 170

Sati or Sahagamana: How far was it common? 171

Inscriptions of those times bear witness to the system of Sati being in vogue. But, we have grounds to believe that this was common to a certain class of ladies, who either took the vow, or deemed it a great honour to die on the funeral pyre of their husbands. Mēdhātithi
pronounced that the practice of Sati was nothing but suicide, and as such was not permissible. But Agni Purāna declared that the widow who burns herself on the funeral pyre of her husband goes to heaven. In an age of such divergent views, the women of Karnataka followed a middle path. They were not coerced to undergo such a ghastly death; but some opted out of their own volition to immolate themselves. The vast majority of women did not accompany their menfolk to the other world. Some of those who stayed behind, erected memorials to their deceased husbands. Kontada Nāga is commemorated by his widow at Gobbanur, after he fell fighting. Other inscriptions also speak about the setting up of memorial stones by the wives of the dead heroes. Ibn Battuta says that the self-burning of widows was considered praiseworthy by the Hindus, without however, being obligatory. We have seen that Attimabbe was dissuaded from committing sati by her sister, who took up the task herself.

We have yet another example of a lady becoming a mahāsati, against the will of her parents and relatives. Dekabbe, daughter of Navga, who was administering Nugunādu, and was a feudatory of the Chōla king, was married to Roha, who ruled Navile nādu. This Roha seems to have been a good wrestler, and it happened that he killed
some one who was a relative of the Chōla king, for which the king had him brought to Talakād and beheaded. On hearing this, Dekabbe who was very much attached to her husband, decided to burn herself. Despite the entreaties of her father, mother and relatives, pleading with her not to immolate herself, Dekabbe was adamant. She argued that she was an illustrious daughter of Kavlga, ruler of Hugunādu and faithful wife of the ruler of Havilenādu; therefore she did not wish to live while the house which gave, and the house which received her were to lose their good name.176 The inscription further states that in spite of all pleadings of the gathering, she did not desist, and after making due charities, entered the blazing flames.

Dekabbe belonged to the family of Kudiyas, who are farmers by profession and udras by caste. According to Rev. Kittel, this is perhaps the first inscription that has been discovered concerning the self-immolation of a udra's wife, after her husband's death.177 Thus we can infer that there was choice for a widow to commit sati or lead an austere life like a nun. There is no evidence of remarriage of a widow of the higher castes.

The number of sati stones or mastikallu is very small for this period. They are sacred to all Hindus and might not have suffered desecration or removal. We may
therefore safely deduce that only a few women who thought it a great privilege to die with their husbands preferred sati.

Plight of widows

Alberuni writes that in India if a wife lost her husband by death, she could not marry another man; she had to choose only between two things, either to remain a widow as long as she lived or to burn herself; the latter eventuality was considered preferable, because, as a widow, she was illtreated as long as she lived. Ibn Battuta confirms that though sati was not obligatory, the plight of widows was miserable. A widow was not supposed to wear ornaments, nor apply unguents; she could not decorate her hair or chew tāmbūla, as is seen from the description of widows of enemies killed by patron kings eulogised in inscriptions. She had to lead the life of an ascetic.

Altekar has proved that the tonsure of widows was not known during Rāṣhṭrakūṭa times. Perhaps the same was the case during the following age as well. The Mitākshara, a contemporary commentary on Yājñavalkya quotes a text of Menu (not found in the extant texts) to the effect that tonsure was not desired in the case of learned men, the king, and the women, except in the case
of one guilty of Mahāpāṭaka or the sin of killing a cow, or of a Brahmachari guilty of sexual intercourse. The Mitākṣara, as well as Aparārka are silent about the tonsure of widows, and Kane opines that the practice was gradually introduced. 181

There is a faint hint of the tonsure of widows in Vikramādītya's conquest of Kēraḷa, Bilhana mentions that along with the sandalwood trees, his elephants rooted out the creeper like hair of Kēraḷa women as well, signifying their widowhood. 182 But this might be an allegorical expression and more evidence is yet to come forth to establish the fact that tonsure was common in Karnāṭaka, during the period under survey.

Among the Jains, women who unfortunately became widows early, could take to study. Nayasāma tells about Nārāyaṇāma, a friend of queen Prabhāvati, who being widowed early had read the Tarkāśāstra etc. and was known as Pandita. 183

The Purdah

There is no evidence of women using a veil or observing purdah, during these times. Women moved freely in society. Abu Zaid, who came to India in the early part
of the 10th century observes that most of the kings of India when they gave public audience allowed their women to be seen by the men of the country and by strangers and that no veil obstructed their being viewed. 184

Altekar writes that soon after the beginning of the Christian era, a section of society began to advocate greater seclusion for women. This was more particularly the case with royal families, where the notion began to prevail that the royal ladies should not come under the public gaze. Hence the veil came into use amongst the kings, princes, and chiefs. 185 But such however, was not the case in Karnāṭaka. Even during the wedding ceremony, the Kshatriya bride does not seem to have worn any veil, because the eyes of the bride and bridegroom were to be fixed upon their mutual faces, at the auspicious moment. 186 Old customs of marriage and social functions die hard; they give an idea of the freedom enjoyed in the past. Mānasollāsa recommends that royal ladies should attend the court (āsthāna) in covered dōlas. 187 Pārvanātha Purāṇa also states that the queens travelled in covered palanquins. 188 But this may be a safety measure. The very fact that the royal ladies attended the court presupposes absence of purdah. Mānasollāsa states that by casting frequent glances, the ladies should please the king in the court. This definitely shows that
they did not use any veil or covering for the face. It is shown elsewhere that among the fashions introduced from Karnataka into Kashmir, uncovering of the head, (nırıṁraṇi), was one. Hence, we may presume that the south remained free from the innovation of veil, during this period, and even influenced the north for good. Ibn Battuta, while describing the women (perhaps Muslim women) of Honavar writes that they were educated, chaste and beautiful and wore nose rings. He could not have got the idea of their beauty if the faces were covered.

In Mānasollēsa, we come across ladies from the royal family witnessing the public games and taking part in various out-door activities. Ballamahādevi attended to court proceedings, with her husband, where all the pradhānas had assembled at Barahakanyāpura (Barkur). She made a grant, when she held court, during her rule (oddōlagam gottiralu). It is hardly possible that women could achieve so much in life, and be active in several fields if they had been confined in pardah.

**Working women**

Though throughout history, women have been working, it is rare in early Indian history to come across such examples. Hence, it is considered necessary here to
give illustrations of such women working in various professions. Besides cooking and rearing of children, women are seen to have rendered a helping hand to men in their different vocations. Spinning and weaving have been popular with women, since the days of Kautilya. Duggale, wife of Shivasarana Dasimayya, used to spin, while he used to weave the cloth. We have seen earlier, maidens working in the fields. Remavve, a sarana (devotee of Siva) was known by the nickname of Kadire-Remavve, because of her occupation of spinning, (Kadire meaning spinning wheel). There is reference to a woman, who carried on trade in oil. Old experienced women were appointed as superintendents in the royal household over maid-servants. Manasollasa prescribes that women be employed for serving food, for bathing, for washing feet, for massage, for dressing the hair, for applying unguents, for singing, for playing musical instruments and dancing. This practice continued amongst Hindu kings into Vijayanagar times, as attested by Barbosa and Nunis. The occupation of a nurse or dhatri was very common. One inscription of 1191 A.D. refers to the senior lady door-keeper (piriya padiyarati).

The Viraasaiva movement gave a higher status to women, by which they could assert their importance in society. The dignity of labour or the theory of kayaka...
stressed by Basavēsvara led many women with humble occupations, to realise God. Pittavve was an orphan; there was none to look after her in old age. She used to prepare cakes (dōsas) for her living. Similarly Ammaavve took to spinning to support herself. Annaladevi used to make cowdung cakes for fuel and sell them. For the first time, the working woman got recognition as a respectable member of society.

**Contemporary views on women**

Sōmadeva, as a practical thinker, wrote that women are neither good nor bad and compared them to the ocean of milk, the source of poison as well as nectar. He further states that they became just like their husbands, as rivers assumed the character of the ocean, when they merge themselves in it. Pāreśva was unnecessarily harsh when he stated that it is difficult to find women, in the past or present, who wished only the welfare of their husbands. All their morals were flighty and their actions destructive of happiness, in the other world. Earlier, Brahmasēva in his *Samaya Parīkṣhe* derided one type of women, who had no faith in Jainism, who worshipped stones and trees, who did not give charities, who talked ill of their husbands, when they did not permit them to go to the fair, who provided for the bad habits of their sons etc. He called such wives *Arugulivendī*. 
An inscription of the 12th century gives a clear picture of an ideal woman of those times, in describing Mālaladēvi, mother of Chieftain Mādirāja. She was not like the other women, who hoarded their riches for themselves, and refused even so much as an oilseed for their husbands or children. Nor could she be compared to those, who, if anybody came before them refused to recognize them or hid themselves in their houses. There were bad women like Kutile (perverted), Kumāra (of evil conduct), Kutsite (contemptible), Kurūpī (ugly), Kubhāgye (wretched), Kushele (of bad character), Jiāhāmpate (loquacious), Shathe (depraved), Dhūrte (deceitful), Durgum (of evil disposition), Durvinīte (wicked), Durgum, Dushte (sinful), Kashte (vexatious); there are women who pride themselves in despising their husbands and who attract other men by wanton behaviour. These are condemned. Mālaladēvi was far removed from these.

There are women, who gaze on their neighbours' houses, or the yards of their front houses, and who mix with low people, under pretext of visiting other women that are pregnant, or for fulfilling a vow, or of going to shops or the vegetable market, or present offerings to a goddess (can they) be termed matrons? Mādirāja further speaks of wicked and shrewish women who put their husbands to shame by their improper behaviour; there were
some, who in deceit used poisonous herbs in order to bring their husbands under control, and thus caused their husbands to waste away with consumption, jaundice, leprosy, or diseases of the spleen. These could never be housewives (Kulāṅgane). 210

We have quoted extensively to show the vignettes of the domestic scene, how women used to do their own marketing, were free to visit temples, and above all to "gaze on their neighbours' houses," so that they could keep up with the Joneses or indulge in malicious gossip. In spite of the fulminations of these prophets, as in the Old Testament, life went on; but by their preachings, the housewife who confined herself to her house was held in high honour.

Women of certain position exercised influence, in their own way. Reference is made of queen Kamalādevi's establishing an agrahāra. King Śivachitta Kadamba, her husband, is mentioned as consulting his mother Mālalamahādevī, before giving away the grant. 211 As explained earlier, the field of charity provided ample freedom for women philanthropists. Not only did they give away gifts and grants of their own volition, but those of the royal family appealed to the king, in certain cases, to do the same.
They acted as witnesses as well. According to Dharmasastras, a woman is incompetent to bear witness but such was not the case in Karnataka. In 1156 A.D. Siriya Deviyakka was a witness, along with others for a deal of trees. Another inscription speaks of Kontidevi, as a witness. Consent of the wife was also recognised as necessary, along with those of sons and relatives, while disposing of property.

There was at least a class of thinkers who considered women superior to men intellectually. Thus Somadeva Suri thought that the discrimination between men and women was valid in respect of physical activity, but he considered women superior to men in intellectual activity. Achale, wife of Chandramauli, a minister of Viraballala II seemed to have been a lady of rare distinction and is described in more than one inscription. It is told of Chandramauli, that after the incessant practice of severe austerities in many births did he obtain union with the illustrious Achale. This is a common desire devoutly wished for by devoted Hindu wives, but in this case expressed in reverse.

We may end with one more example of Moligaya Marayya a famous saint poet. He wanted to merge in the
supreme Linga and accordingly informed his wife. His wife Mahādevi was a philosopher in her own right and regretted that her husband had not yet realised that in essence, the Supreme and himself were one. She uttered a pithy vachana "What were you? What are you? Know thyself. There is no duplicate of the necklace seen in the picture; it hangs by itself. I was thy devotee by virtue of being thy wife, but I am one with thee, one in flesh and blood and both of us are not different from godhood."

With a humility, found only in sages, the husband seeks from his spiritually emancipated wife the true knowledge, and says that her advice would not be ignored, as she was a jñāni (seer) and not just a woman. This was not an isolated example, at least in the age of Basavēsvara.

To conclude: in common with other members of her sex in north India, the women of Karnātaka still retained many rights and privileges of the Vedic and pre-Vedic times. In addition, they had the privilege of free movement, of aesthetic and cultural development, of participation in public affairs, of equality before God, as preached by the saint-devotees, in many ways peculiar to the south, unspoilt as yet by the Muslim influence. Some bad elements have begun to creep in like sati, but this is limited to the ruling class. When women come into
property, many of them make big donations in charity, build āgrahāras, arrange for worship, distribute books and encourage learning and the learned. The Jains have emancipated women in the religious sphere, by allowing them freedom to develop their spiritual personality. Vīraśaiva reform has also given a chance to women to write and sing the glories of God and lead ideal lives in this work-a-day world, realising the sacredness of manual labour or kāraka whether celibate, married, or widowed. Those in the higher rung learn singing and dancing and take part in histrionics. They administer villages, provinces, and kingdoms. And when the call comes, they die unflinching in battlefield, by sallekha, or as sati, thus showing that they can live with taste, and die without fear.
Notes

1. Lēkamahādevī and Trailōkyamahādevī
Queens of Chālukya Vikramāditya I of Bādāmi (642-680 A.D.)

2. Vijayabhattārika, Queen of Chandrāditya,
son of Pulikēsi II is mentioned as
reigning for a time, in the absence
of her husband: JA VII P 163-164

3. R.C. Majumdar: The History and Culture
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105. IA XVIII P 173
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129. YATC; P 38
130. EX XIII No. 4 Ittaga
131. Ibid No. 14 P 175
132. EX XXXV P 107
133. BP I (111) V 13-14 P 171
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144. INEX Introduction P 27-28
145. Ibid
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147. EI XIII No. 14 P 175
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Bhūtabali is offered in cases of barreness from the point of view that misfortune is due to influences of evil spirits. And thus we obtain a clear explanation as to why the records represent the village maidens as interested in the matter of būdāgul, according to Fleet. Another Ins. of tenth century refers to the gift of "būdāgul". SII IX (1) 59

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175. IB P 22

176. XI VI 19 Belatur P 214 ff

177. Ibid P 215

178. Sashau II P 155

179. IB P 22

180. Altekar P 344–45

181. HDS II (1) 590

182. VQ IV 2 "Kiralakantanaak shurpakunata-
   vallibhi" etc.

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192. EQ VI Ud 65-70
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194. XI 1 Devaratri
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215. EQ V Ak 8 and 9
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217. EQ II SB 327
218. Vachana P 195