Chapter- 6
Conclusion

Kunal Chakrabarti points out that legitimization can be claimed by two methods; ideology and coercion. In the present situation we are looking at the ideological method adopted by elites to claim status and position. This ideology was established through the text as well as inscriptions.

Gender identity is represented in the manner women and men in the region claimed/ marked their position in the society. Women and men in many cases claimed a distinct characteristic identity especially in polity, society, and religious beliefs. At the same time they claimed a similar position in many respects such as the language and script used in the inscriptions. The method used to claim legitimization such as making grants was also similar for the elites although the numbers of grants given by women and men differ. The Matsya Purāṇa also clearly identifies a different position for men and women. That the text was patriarchal can be noticed in many ways, especially in terms of ideals of kingship, genealogical details, the dāna and its desired result, religious beliefs such as vrata and the rewards of dāna etc.

The authorship of the Purāṇas is a matter of controversy among scholars. Specifically the Matsya Purāṇa was a Brāhmaṇical text with the motive to gain popularity in the region. Hence the traditions prevalent in the region were accepted and within the Brāhmaṇical framework. The audiences of the Purāṇas were varied. It addressed the elite as well as ordinary people. The inscriptions on the other hand were a method of claiming status and legitimization by elites, although most of the inscriptions, especially those of the Kalacuris, mentioned the poet, scribe, eulogist, or engraver in their records. Another feature of the inscriptions was the mention of verses by Vyāsa. Since the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas mentioned Vyāsa as the author, the copper plate inscriptions interestingly mentioned imprecatory verses by some known source. Most of the charters specifically

mentioned Vyāsa as the author of the verses. This reflects the influence of these texts. The elite class wanted to establish their position by quoting Vyāsa in their records.

In terms of political identity, women claimed an identity derived from men. There are no references to women as rulers. It was always men who ruled and women were referred, if at all, as queen or as mother of the successor. Both the sources indicate that women did not have significant role in the political system of the region. In this context, attributes claimed or ascribed to kings may be reiterated. The qualities of the king included being brave, virtuous, upholding tradition. Besides he was frequently described as the one performing sacrifices. The inscriptions besides the other qualities, also mentioned birth in the dynasty, which was an important eligibility criterion for them. But these aspects were not mentioned in the context of women.

The Purāṇa does not mention the nature or quality of the queen although it mentions the threat of a discontented queen. Thus queen does not seem to be relevant enough to be mentioned in terms of a ruler or qualities which should be inculcated in her as was the case of a king and prince. The inscriptions show on the other hand that queens were important, as generally they were mentioned in the genealogy. The queen as the mother of the successor played a significant role. That queens were important was also evident from the fact that they could make donations. The number of donations as compared to elite men was fewer but that they gave grants would indicate their control over resources. Thus the identity sought for the royal elite was different for men and women. However, what is interesting is that while the Purāṇa provided a certain role model for kingship, royal women in the region were able to create an identity and space for themselves in spite of the absence of such a role model in the textual tradition.

Another aspect linked to the notion of kingship was the Kali yuga paradigm. The Purāṇa and the Mahābhārata connect the Kali yuga with several catastrophic developments such as brāhmaṇas ceasing to perform Vedic yajña, śudras taking on religious duties, mlecchas emerging as a dominant factor in contemporary life, women devoid of chastity and people taking to evil practices such as consuming liquor and meat. Interestingly the

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Matsya Purāṇa which described the Kali yuga in similar terms, described Kali in the
dream of a demon king Mayāsura as a woman. Thus some link between woman and kali
was implicitly suggested in the text.

In the Vākāṭaka inscriptions, Pravarasena II was eulogized as the restorer of the Kṛta
yuga, sambhoprasāddadhṛta karttayugasya. The Kalacuris also used the concept and
described the kings as those one who had uprooted the Kali yuga or as a kalpavrksa i.e. a
wish fulfilling tree. This shows that the concept of kali was believed in through a long
period of time. The notion of the Kali yuga was invoked in both categories of
sources. The inscriptions do not describe the concept of the Kali yuga but the references
to it would imply that the concept had acceptability in society. Kings claimed to mark
their identity as those one who could remove it. Women in general do not refer to the
Kali yuga in inscriptions, except in one inscription, which mentioned Bhopā, the daughter
of the donor Devaganā, not tainted by the Kali yuga. This was the only record which
mentioned women in context of the Kali yuga.

The concept of kingship in the Matsya Purāṇa not only mentions the qualities of the king
and his ministers but also the precautions the king must take, how to protect himself and
his people besides building forts etc. Thus the Matsya Purāṇa was similar to a political
treatise. The description of the king or other elite men was in terms of their knowledge,
bravery, handsome form, etc. The description of the qualities of the king and other elite
men was more pronounced in the Kalacuri inscriptions than in the Vākāṭaka records. The
Vākāṭakas seems to represent an early political formation as their administrative system
was simple. They do not mention myths and legends about the dynasty and kings. But
they claimed to have a samrāt in the dynasty. Pravarasena I was presented as an ideal
ruler who performed sacrifices. The Kalacuris had a complex and well differentiated
bureacracy. They traced their descent from moon, Atri, to Saharārjuna. They frequently
referred to Purāṇic myths in their records.

One aspect of kingship was its divine nature. The Purāṇa mentions how the king
represented the gods on earth and similarly the inscriptions compare the kings as well as

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5 Ratnapur Stone Inscription of Prithvideva II: (Vikrama) Year 1207, CII, Vol. 4, Pt. II, p. 487.
the queens to the gods and their consorts. The comparison to deities was relatively rare in the Vākāṭaka inscriptions. However, it was interesting to note that the kings were compared to Viṣṇu, Śiva, Indra besides Kāma, the deity who was famous for his beauty and was desired by women. Thus the definition of kingship was not only in terms of bravery, noble family, but also being beautiful. This concept of beauty was a feature of early medieval court culture. Kings were compared more often in the Kalacuri records not only to deities but also to famous characters in the epics and Purāṇas and sometimes also to animals like the lion etc. But in the case of women the comparison was with consort goddesses or with Lakṣmī, goddess of fortune. Another feature was that the records of women do not make such comparisons in either of the dynasties, thus women in their grants were not claiming a divine position. It was kings and other elite men, who claimed a divine status in their records. In the process they also claimed a divine status for their wives.

Another aspect of king’s duty was the administration of justice through fines and punishments, to ensure that the varṇa order was well established. The fines and punishments dealt in the text covered theft, adultery, immoral actions besides others. In the context of fines and punishment the caste system was well evident. In case of adultery most of the punishments for women were in terms of dishonoring and confining them to the household. For men, a few punishments were mentioned, which included fines from the higher caste men. In the case of lower caste men they were to be punished, in many cases with death in place of fine for offences done by them. The text also mentioned ordinances to be performed in case of immoral actions, but the details of such vows were missing. In some cases fines were mentioned in monetary terms. The inscriptions however do not mention fines and punishment as probably it was not the purpose of the records to document these. Only the records sometimes mention that everyone should respect the grant otherwise they will be punished together with a fine.

Among the queens, Prabhāvatiguptā carved out a different identity, although none of her records mention her as a ruler. It was probable that she was acceptable as a regent but not

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as a ruler. The queens of the Kalacuri dynasty such as Nohalā, Nonnalā, Gosaladevi, Rāhaḍā, and others, who gave donations independently or jointly also, mark out a distinct position but again the identity claimed was as wife or mother of the king. They do not create a niche for themselves as was done by Prabhāvatīguptā. She marked herself as different from the rest by mentioning the Gupta genealogy instead of the Vākāṭakas in her records, besides other differences.

With reference to the titles used, the Matsya Purāṇa mentioned titles such as rājayā, rājan, bhūpati, mahipāla, prthivīpati, narendra, nrpati, nrpa and narādhīpa for the kings. But there were no references to titles for queens. They also mentioned various officials such as mantrin, sandhivigrāhika, purādhīyakṣa etc. The epithets used for women in the Purāṇa were bhārīyā, mahādevī, and mahīṣī. In the Vākāṭaka records, the titles mahādevī, agramahiṣī, and mahārājī were used. The kings used the title of samrāṭ, mahārāja, and mahārājādhirāja. The titles claimed by queens of the Kalacuri dynasty were mahādevī by Rahaqa, and mahārājī by Kelhanādevī and Gosaladevi. Lāchalladevi of the Ratnapur branch claimed the title of mahīṣī. The kings of the Kalacuri dynasty used a wide range of titles such as nrpa, mahārāja, mahārājādhirāja, bhūpati, narapati, trikaliṅgādhipati, and others. Non royal elite women claimed the title of rājī and ṭhakkurājī in the Kalacuri records. There was no reference to other elite women except Atibhāvatī, Prabhāvatīguptā’s daughter in the Vākāṭaka records. The titles used by other elite men were rājā, ṭhakkura, rājuka, ācārya, mahārāṇaka etc. The titles show that women generally used epithets derived from those used by elite men.

Genealogy can be one of the best ways to understand the gendered nature of the kinship structure. The inclusion and exclusion of people or groups would reflect social linkages that were claimed and considered important. One of the main features of the Purāṇa was the inclusion of the genealogy of the dynasties, both divine as well as those of the Kali yuga. The description of the dynasties was restricted to the central line and not to the entire family tree. Women hardly find any mention in these genealogies. A few women such as the daughters of Dakṣa and others were mentioned in the divine genealogy. Thus in early social formations women as ancestors were accepted and highlighted. But women were not mentioned in the royal ancestry mentioned in the text. The role of women was relegated to the background in the Purāṇas. The terms used were jāyā,
bhāminī, sutā, kanyā etc. Thus the role of women was defined either in terms of daughters or as mothers. Rarely were they referred to as wife. In the divine genealogies women had some position and were mentioned as progenitors but later they were not mentioned.

The term used for women in the inscriptions was generally devī. Royal women sometimes claimed titles such as mahādevī, mahīśī, mahārajarīṇī etc. Records also used terms such as sutā, kanyā, priyā, bhāryā etc. In case of women other than the queens terms such as priyā, patnī, vadhū and others were more common. The status of the royal women as wife was not well demarcated whereas in the case of non royal women, their status as wife was clear in the records.

In the inscriptions there was reference to the queen as the mother of the successor i.e, from whom the prince was born, utpanna. The Vākaṭakas mentioned Prabhāvatiguptā, daughter of Candragupta II, and Ajjhikabhaṭṭārikā. Names of other queens of the dynasty were not mentioned in the records. Thus women as ancestors were not important. The grants by women do not trace the ancestry, except Prabhāvatiguptā, who traces the genealogy of the Guptas, instead of the Vākaṭakas, thereby marking out a different position for herself. The Masoda grant by the unnamed queen of Pravarasena II mentioned the usual genealogy of the Vākaṭakas. The Vatsagulma/ Western branch does not refer to any queen which would probably suggest that marital alliances were not politically significant. It was also probable that women did not hold a strong position in this branch.

The Kalacuris in their genealogical section sometimes mentioned the wife and her ancestry. Queens such as Naṭṭā, Nohalā, Nonnalā, and Gosaladevī found mention in the Tripuri branch records. Queens such as Lāchalladevī and others found mention in the Ratnapur branch records and similary women were also mentioned in the Saryupara branch records. In many records the ancestry of the queen was also traced. But that was a rare occurrence. It was interesting to note that women did not trace ancestry in their records. Elite women did not mention the genealogy. But elite men traced the genealogy. It was not only the kings but also ministers, feudatories as well as officers such as poets, scribes and others who traced their ancestry. The only difference was in terms of a
mythical origin traced by kings, while other elite men traced a real ancestry. They mentioned their father, sometimes both the parents and their grandfather. Thus the link to the kinship structure was claimed by elite men more explicitly than women.

Marriage was an important theme in the Grhyasūtras but the Matsya Purāṇa does not mention any rules or regulation regarding marriage. There was hardly any reference to marriage. There was only mention of daughters being given. The question of marriage according to caste was implicitly mentioned in the story of Devayāni and Yayāti. But otherwise the Matsya Purāṇa is silent on this issue.

The inscriptions reflect the politics of marriage. In the genealogical sections, important marriage alliances were mentioned in the records. Hence, the Vākāṭakas mentioned the Bhārāśiva alliance but did not mention the woman to whom Gautamiputra was married. This alliance was prominent as after this alliance Rudrasena I, called a dauhitra, claimed the title of mahārāja. Secondly all records of the Vākāṭakas of the Eastern branch mentioned the alliance. Another such important alliance was with the Gupta dynasty i.e. the marriage of Rudrasena II and Prabhāvatīguptā, even though the marriage was a sapinda alliance, which was not permissible by the Dharmasūstras.

In the Kalacuri dynasty there were many prominent marriage alliances such as with the Candellās, Cālukyas and other dynasties. Nohalā of the Cālukya dynasty seemed to be a prominent queen who invited the Śaiva ascetics to the Kalacuri kingdom. Similarly Nattā, Rāhaḍā, Lāchalladevī, Gosaladevī, Ālhaṇadevī, Āvalladevī, Rājallā, and others were also mentioned in the dynastic records. But the dynastic background of all the queens was not mentioned in the records. It may be possible that these queens did not belong to important families. In many cases queens were not mentioned at all, while in some all the queens were mentioned. For example the Saryupara branch records mentioned all the queens but they were bereft of any title and their families were not mentioned.

Not surprisingly the genealogical sections only mention the sons and the queens but not the daughters. Sometimes the natal dynasty of the queen was mentioned if the alliance was important; otherwise the reference was dropped. Daughters and the dynasties to which they were married were not mentioned, even though the dynasty was prominent. For instance, the Kalacuris do not mention the Raṣṭrakūṭa alliance in their records,
whereas the Raṣṭrakūṭas mentioned the alliances in their inscriptions. This was probably because the status of the wife taker was regarded as higher than that of the wife giver. Thus in terms of the kinship structure women’s position was not strong. They did not claim link to the kinship structure.

In terms of religious beliefs, women could find a place for themselves as they could participate in religious practices. The Purāṇa opened the religious sphere to women as now women could hear as well as perform rituals and gain emancipation and other benefits. The Matsya Purāṇa mentions a range of religious rites and rituals such as sacrifices, vrata, tirtha etc., but the resultant return from these rituals were different for women and men. The Matsya Purāṇa emphasized on the expiation of sins. Thus every religious act such as sacrifices, going to a sacred place, vowed observance, or even reading and listening to the text was considered to be pious and would expiate one from the sins of the Kali yuga. The Matsya Purāṇa reflects a period of transition from sacrifices to Purānic rituals. Thus it mentions the sacrifices without much detail and later in the text mentions various rituals which would give the same benefit as the sacrifices. Although women performing sacrifices or going to sacred places was not mentioned, sometimes the text mentioned the benefit of such activities for them.

The inscriptions specially those of the Vākāṭakas, mention the sacrifices in their records but that too performed by an ancestor. None of the rulers mentioned sacrifices such as the aśvamedha, agniśoma, jyotiśoma etc. as being performed by them. The Vākāṭakas portrayed themselves as upholder of traditions. Of the records by women only Prabhāvatīguptā mentions sacrifices in her records. She mentions the aśvamedha yajña performed by Samudragupta or Candragupta II, her father. She as a regent did not claim to perform these rituals rather she claimed status through her father. This makes her position distinct as she claims legitimacy through her father and not her husband. The Kalacuris do not mention any kind of sacrifices in their records as it seems that sacrifices as rituals had lost their prominence.

In the context of śrāddha, the Matsya Purāṇa gives details in terms of the proper time, place and the position of the brāhmaṇa in these rituals. The resultant benefit from these rituals was not only spiritual but also worldly. The expected return was in terms of
wealth, health, and progeny besides others. Thus it was important to please the 
*pitr* for a successful life and *brähmanas* were the agents for that. Donations were mentioned in the 
*Matsya Purāṇa* for the successful completion of the *srāddha* ritual. In this case, the
donation was not of gold, land etc. rather it was clothes, bed, utensils and other household 
articles. The Purāṇa also mentioned that the gift should be given to a *brähmana* with a 
family and preferably with a large family.

The Vākāṭakas in their records do not mention *srāddha* as a ritual performed by the elite. 
However the Kalacuris refer to the performance of this ritual in their inscriptions. The 
ritual was mentioned not only in the records of the kings but also of other elite men. None 
of the records of women mention the performance of *srāddha*. Thus both the texts and the 
inscriptions show that women probably did not have access to these rituals.

Going to a *tīrtha* was a practice which was open to both men and women. The *Matsya 
Purāṇa* however does not mention clearly about women going to a sacred place but in 
some case mentions the benefit of going to a *tīrtha* for both men and women. The 
resultant benefit from the various rituals was different for men and women. The 
patriarchal nature of the text is very evident in this context. Interestingly, it also 
mentioned that if a woman, *nārī*, take a bath in the Paramāśobhana *tīrtha*, she would 
become the wife, *paimī* of Indra after becoming as beautiful as Gaurī (*MP, 191.55-57*). 
Similarly one who takes a bath at the Ahalyā *tīrtha* would enjoy the company of women 
(*MP, 191.89*). The gendered nature of the text becomes evident as according to it one 
who worships Ahalyā on this *tīrtha* on the fourteenth day of the *sukalpakṣa* in the month 
of Caitra would always be born as a male, *nara* and would be beloved of women and 
have as handsome a form as Kāma (*MP, 191.91-92*). Occassionally, attaining a beautiful 
form was considered more relevant than spiritual gains. Besides other details on this 
*tīrtha* there was also mention of women giving charity at Śukla *tīrtha* and worshipping 
Śiva and Kumāra who would go then to the realm of the lord (*MP, 192.33*). It was one of 
the few cases where the benefit for women was not gain in physical beauty rather it was 
emancipation. By taking a bath at the confluence of the Kanyā *tīrtha* one goes to the 
realm of Devī (*MP, 193.83*). This was the only reference to the realm of the goddess in 
the context of a *tīrtha*. Further the text mentioned that even listening to its glory, barren 
women, *vandyā* beget sons, the unfortunate become fortunate, *saubhāgya*, a maid, *kanyā*
gets a handsome husband, the brāhmaṇa becomes versed in the Vedas, the ksatriya becomes victorious in war, the vaiśya becomes wealthy, the śūdra attains emancipation from the bondage and mūrka the idiot becomes learned and one who hears it never suffers from the pangs of separation and hell (MP, 194.48-50).

The inscriptions, especially the Kalacuris mention going to a tīrtha and performing śrāddha in sacred places. They mentioned Prayag which was described as one of the important places in the context of performing śrāddha. Besides there was mention of the Narmada, Gokarna, and other such places, both outside as well as inside the Kalacuri realm. But again none of the records of women mention going to a sacred place. The Vākāṭakas do not mention tīrtha in any of their records. Probably rituals such as going to a sacred place and performing the śrāddha had not gained prominence yet as a method of legitimization for the elites.

The vratas were seen as the sphere open to women. Vratas were the best way to show the attempt on the part of the Purāṇas to incorporate everyone irrespective of caste and gender. Vratas, which were household affairs, were institutionalized with a position of importance to brāhmaṇas. At the same time the communal nature of the ritual was also maintained. It was important to read the Purāṇas, sing, and dance in honor of the deities while performing the vratas. And vratas were to be performed by both men and women. There were references to vratas performed by sex workers, śūdras besides the poor. It was notable that for the same religious acts benefits were different for men and women. The caste distinction was also noticeable.

In the context of the vratas it was mentioned in the records of Prabhāvatīguptā, that she gave grants after the completion of the ekādaśī fast. No other records of the Vākāṭakas and Kalacuris mention this ritual. Probably it was a ritual followed by the masses and not the elites. Another plausible reason could be the widow status of Prabhāvatīguptā because of which she performed the vratas, as was also mentioned in the Dharmaśāstras.

The Matsya Purāṇa has detailed information about the sixteen kinds of mahādāna.8 It also mentions the purpose and degree of spiritual merit obtained through the great gifts.

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Making a gift is often a way of claiming status. The mahādāna mentioned royal gifts which included gold, jewels, and other things. The performance of the ritual was for the elites as it required resource mobilization. Besides the mahādāna, the Matsya Purāṇa also mentioned simpler dāna to be given during the performance of rituals such as śrāddha, tīrtha etc. The Matsya Purāṇa also mentioned sixty simpler dāna such as lighting the lamp, cleaning the floor of the temple etc. Thus it not only mentioned dāna for the elite but also for the masses.

The inscriptions suggest that giving dāna especially land, well, tank, construction of temple etc. was practiced by the elites. It was not just elite men but also elite women who gave grants which reflect that claiming status by giving grants was practiced by men as well as women, although the number of grants by elite men and women was very different. Nonetheless that women gave grants would reflect their control over resources. The most common donation was of land but it was the king who granted land. Neither the queen nor the feudatories gave grants of land. They gave donations of gardens, tanks, temples etc. Cynthia Talbot says that as daughters or wives of privileged men, highborn women enjoyed considerable social prestige. They also often had control over significant economic resources, either in their own right or as agents for their children. Women gave grants to temples. Patronage was probably the only public activity women could engage in.

These donations were probably for the elite section as it engaged in a lot of rituals and required resources. All the inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas as well as the Kalacuris were land grant donations except a few which mentioned building of a temple or various religious activities of the donor. Thus giving grants was a well-established practice. Reference to the mahādāna as mentioned in the Matsya Purāṇa was found in two inscriptions; tulāpuruṣa dāna was mentioned in Umariya Plates of Vijayasimhadeva.

The two sources show that in terms of political identity women could not claim an independent position. Their position was dependent on the king. It was only

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9 Talbot, C., 'Rudrama-devi, the Female king. Gender and Political Authority in Medieval India' in David Shulman (ed.), Syllables of Sky, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995, p. 392.
11 Umariya Plates of Vijayasimhadeva, CII, Vol. 4, Pt. I, p. 44.
Prabhāvatīguptā who ruled as a regent and also claimed a distinct identity. Yet she claimed to be a wife, mother, and daughter. Although she ruled as a regent she did not use her own seal in the records, except in the Poona plates where she claims to be the mother of the prince. In the Kalacuri dynasty we do not find a single woman ruler. But the Kalacuri records mention a larger number of women, which included both royal and non royal women.

Women did not form a strong link to the kinship structure as both the sources show that in genealogical charts women were not always mentioned. Marriage alliances were recorded only when these were significant. Another aspect worth noting is the status of wife takers as compared to wife givers. Thus daughters were not mentioned in the genealogical charts even though they were married to prominent dynasties.

In religious terms, women could access some of the rituals but not all. Although the Matsya Purāṇa reflects attempt to incorporate all sections of the society irrespective of caste and gender, the gendered nature of the text was also evident. The benefits of rituals were gendered.

Another interesting correlation was between the Narmada and Saivism but also linked to the rākṣasas according to the text. The Kalacuris ruled the region earlier associated with the uncivilized demons over which the gods, specifically Śiva, could gain a control. The text, inscriptions as well sculptural evidence show that Śaivism was an important religion in the region. Evidence shows that amongst other belief systems, Vaiṣṇavism was equally important. The alternative religious traditions such as Buddhism and Jainism were also prominent in the region.

Women could take part in resource mobilization by giving grants. Both royal and non royal women gave grants, which would reflect access and control over resources. Dāna was a Purānic concept well accepted and practiced by the elites.

Overall the Purānic pattern was followed, especially by the Kalacuris. The similarity in the practices of the Matsya Purāṇa and the Kalacuris was evident in many cases. The Vākāṭakas however represents an earlier tradition which was later transformed. In the Vākāṭaka times epic characters and Purānic rituals had not gained prominence. By the time of the Kalacuris, Purānic concepts were well accepted and practiced.