CHAPTER V

WOMEN DURING THE GAJAPATI RULE
CHAPTER V

WOMEN DURING THE GAJAPATI RULE

The rule of the Gajapatis in Orissa was connected with certain episodes centering on women. These episodes reveal the power and position of women in Orissa. Before light can be thrown on such episodes, it is necessary to give a brief resume of the political history of the period so that a clear idea can be formed of the matter.

With the fall of the Gangas another glorious dynasty known as the Suryavamsi came to power in Orissa. The rulers of this dynasty traced their origin back to the Sun or the Sūrya. As such they claimed to belong to the solar dynasty. They were also known as the Gajapatis (the Lord of the Elephants). The epithet indicates that they possessed a large number of elephants.

Kapilendradeva (1435 A.D. - 1468 A.D.) was the founder of the Solar dynasty in Orissa. The Ganga Vamsanucharita of Vasudeva Rath reveals that originally Kapilendra was a minister under Bhanudeva IV, the last Ganga ruler. This work further reveals that Kapilendra usurped the throne with the help of the treacherous officers and the

---

discontented feudatories of the Gangas when Bhanudeva IV was away from the capital on a distant campaign. His empire extended from the Ganga in the north to the Kaveri in the south. The proud Kapilendradeva, after becoming the master of such a far-flung empire, assumed the pompous title of "Gajapati Gaudeswara Navakoti Karnata Kalavargeswar."

Purosottamadeva (1468 A.D. - 1497 A.D.) succeeded Kapilendradeva. It is said that Kapilendra had eighteen sons of whom Hamviradeva was the eldest. So he had the legitimate claim to succeed Kapilendradeva. But waiving aside his claim Kapilendradeva nominated his youngest son Purusottamadeva as his successor on the plea that Lord Jagannath had directed him in a dream to choose him as his successor. But the real cause lay in the influence of a woman. This Purusottamadeva was known to have been a bhogini-nandana or dāśāputra. It is further suggested that he was the son of Parvati Devi who happened to be a Phulvivāhi Brahmin wife of Kapilendradeva. The phulvivāhis constituted a class of wives of the rulers of Orissa who occupied an intermediate position between the concubines

---

2 JBRS, Vol. XXXII

and the queens. It seems that Purusottama's mother occupied such a position, but was the most favourite of Kapilendra Deva. Because of her influence her son was chosen as the successor to the throne.

In Orissan tradition there is a romantic episode centering on a woman. It was the Kanchi-Kaveri expedition of Purusottama. This episode has been accepted by many scholars as a historical fact. The episode is as follows.

Purusottama proposed to marry Padmavati, the beautiful daughter of the King of Kanchi. But the king of Kanchi rejected this proposal on the ground that the king used to perform the menial duty of a sweeper, i.e., Chhera Pahamra, during the annual car festival of Lord Jagannath. The Orissan Gajapati performs it as a religious duty and as a mark of deep devotion to Lord Jagannath. However, the rejection of the Kanchi ruler was considered as insulting to both Lord Jagannath and Purusottama. So to avenge this insult, Purusottama promised to capture the Kanchi princess Padmavati by force. So he led an expedition against Kanchi. But unfortunately

---

he was defeated. Then he took shelter of Lord Jagannath who promised in a dream to help him in his subsequent expedition. Accordingly he led a second expedition against Kanchi. It is said that Lord Jagannath and his brother Balabhadra proceeded to Kanchi in the guise of two horsemen, the former on a black horse and the latter on a white one. While proceeding towards Kanchi, on the way they felt thirsty. One milk-maid, namely Manika, was selling curd along their path. They requested her to give them some curd. Manika complied with their request. After taking curd they proceeded ahead without paying the milk-maid. So Manika asked them to pay for it. It is said that not having any money on them they gave her a gold ring and asked her to present it to Gajapati Purusottama who was following them. Accordingly Manika showed the ring to the Gajapati and requested him to pay her the price of her curd. The Gajapati was surprised to see that the ring in question belonged to Lord Jagannath. He not only paid her the cost but also accepted her as a very fortunate person who had been able to see Lord Jagannath and His brother in flesh and blood. It is said that to commemorate this incident the Gajapati established a

6 Panigrahi, H. O., p.216.
village there and named it Manikapatana. This second expedition of Purusottama proved successful. Then he brought Padmavati to Orissa. So deep was his sense of humiliation that even after this victory, Purusottama ordered his minister to arrange the marriage of Padmavati with a real sweeper. The intelligent and wily minister at the time of the next car festival addressed Purusottama as the greatest sweeper on earth while he was sweeping the car. So he offered Padmavati to him as his queen. Then the king married her.

It is not known whether Purusottama at all had a queen whose name was Padmavati. R. D. Banerjee identified the heroine of the Kanchi-Kaveri episode with Rupamvika, the principal queen of Purusottama-deva and the mother of Pratarpudra. K. C. Panigrahi holds the view that Rupambika was the daughter of Saluva Narasimha. It is known from southern sources that the name Rupambika has phonetic resemblance with the name of Saluva Narasimha's mother Mallamvika and also to his wife's name "Tippamvika". The original name of Saluva Narasimha's daughter was Rupambika which was subsequently changed to Padmavati meaning the 'Lotus Beauty' after Purusottama's marriage.

---

8 Panigrahi, K. C., H. O., p.216.
Similarly the name of Prataprudra's daughter Annapurna was changed to Tukka after her marriage with Krishnadeva Raya. Thus it appears that the original name Rupamvika was, in the Kanchi-Kaveri tradition, changed to Padmavati. R. Subramanyam and P. Mukherjee have accepted the above legend as a genuine fact of history. Furthermore, the historicity of the legend cannot be denied in view of its mention in three literary works such as the Mādala Pāṇji, the Kānchi-Kāveri and the Katakārāja Vamśāvalī. On the walls of the Jagamohana of the Jagannath temple at Puri are also found sculptural representations of Lord Jagannatha and his brother Balabhadra on horse-back marching to Kanchi in the guise of horsemen and the milk-maid Manika standing with a pot on her head. These representations have been referred to in the Vedhaparikrama, an Oriya work by Balarama Dasa of the Pañcha-sakhā group, a contemporary of Pratapurudra-deva.

9 Panigrahi, K. C., H.O., pp.217-18. The custom of changing the name of the bride after marriage was prevalent in Orissa and in other parts of India.

10 Ibid., p.218.


the son and successor of Purusottamadeva. The Vedha-parikramā happens to be a pilgrims' guide in which it is written, "After visiting this you will find the representations of the two brothers galloping valiantly towards Kanchi, on the walls of the Jagamohana." The two brothers are undoubtedly none else than Jagannatha and Balabhadra themselves.

It appears that Purusottamadeva introduced the institution of Chhera-Pahamra for publicly displaying his limitless devotion to Lord Jagannatha in the presence of a large number of pilgrims during the car-festival. By doing so he increased the power and prestige of the priests of the Lord.

There is yet another opinion regarding the identification of Padmavati. The Katakarāja Vamsāvali reveals that she was the daughter of the ruler of Karnata or Vijayanagar. However, most of the scholars have identified the king of Kanchi of the Kanchi-Kaveri tradition with Saluva Narasimha who was a powerful Viceroy of Vijayanagara and a contemporary of Purusottamadeva. But

---

14 Ibid.
the father of Padmavati was the ruler of Kanchi too. Saluva Narasimha's capital was not Kanchi. It was Chandragiri. Kanchi was rather the capital of the famous Pallava dynasty and as such had become famous as a political and cultural centre. Thus in the Kāñchi-Kāveri tradition of Orissa, Saluva Narasimha has figured as the king of Kanchi.

However, the marriage of Purusottamadeva with Padmavati has not been mentioned in any of the contemporary records of the Vijayanagar empire. Probably the chroniclers of Vijayanagar did not like to keep a record of such a disgraceful episode. Krishnadeva Roy, the subsequent Vijayanagar emperor, defeated Prataprudrādeva, the son and successor of Purusottamadeva and forced him to give his daughter, Annapurna in marriage to him. This historical fact also does not find mention in any of the documents of Orissa. It seems that a political marriage under forced circumstances was considered a disgrace to the ruler and to the country as well. As such no references were made to such marriages in the records of the concerned countries. Therefore, it is not surprising

if there is no mention of Purusottamadeva's marriage with the daughter of Saluva Narasimha in any of the contemporary records of the Vijayanagar empire.

The date of Purusottamadeva's marriage with Padmavati is shrouded in controversy. According to Mukherjee, the Kanchi expedition took place some time after the 16th April of 1467 and before the conquest of the Telingana coast by Muhammad III in 1471 A.D. Possibly 1469 was the date. But it is not corroborated by any of the inscriptions. Panigrahi opines that the expedition seems to have been a dashing raid. As such no record of the expedition is available. Prataprudradeva, the son of Rupamvika (Padmavati), succeeded his father in 1497 A.D., when he was matured enough to sit on the throne. If Rupamvika is identified with the daughter of Saluva Narasimha then plausibly the marriage between Purusottama and Padmavati took place in the early part of Purusottama's reign and not in the later part when he defeated Saluva Narasimha and captured Udayagiri.

Yet there is another view regarding the identification of Padmavati. It is known that shortly after the

---

19 Panigrahi, K. C., H. O., p. 218
22 Ibid.
death of Kapilendradeva, Purusottamadeva invaded
Kondameru and brought one Chandravati Dei as captive.
If Kondameru can be identified with Kondavidu and
Chandravati with Padmaavati then the marriage of Purusottamadeva might have taken place with the daughter of
Saluva Narasimha before the death of Kapilendradeva.
Furthermore in order to suppress the revolt of his son
Hamvira, Kapilendradeva led an expedition to the south.
During this expedition he defeated Saluva Narasimha who
had joined hands with Hamvira, occupied Kondavidu and
forced him to give his daughter in marriage to Purusottama.
The peculiar circumstances in which Saluva
Narasimha had to give his daughter Padmaavati in marriage
to Purusottama seems to have been the basis of the
romantic story of the Kanchi-Kaveri, tradition. Whatever
may be the circumstances which led to the marriage of
Purusottamadeva with Padmaavati, the daughter of Saluva
Narasimha, the Kanchi-Kaveri tradition is based on
authentic historical fact.

In 1497 A.D. Purusottamadeva was succeeded by
his son Prataprudradeva. He ruled for thirty-six years.
He inherited a vast territory, extending from the Ganga

---

24 Ibid., p. 218
in the north to Nellore in the south, including important forts like Udayagiri and Kondavidu. While Kapilendradeva had created this vast kingdom, Purusottamadeva, in spite of many hurdles, was able to retain it. During the reign of Prataprudradasa, the kingdom not only rapidly declined, but was on the verge of collapse. Prataprudra too was a great warrior like his father and grandfather. But the military strength and spirit of the Orissan forces deteriorated during his reign due to corruption, treachery and lethargy. The kingdom of Orissa during Prataprudradasa's time was accessible by roads from the south, the south-west and the north. The Vijayanagar empire in the south had lost two formidable forts, namely Udayagiri and Kondavidu, to the Gajapati Kings. So the Vijayanagar empire was waiting for an opportunity to regain those forts. Saluva Narasimha died two years after his defeat in the hands of Purusottamadeva in 1491 A.D., leaving his minor son Immadi Narasimha. His general Taluva Narasa Nayaka acted as the regent and became the de-facto ruler of Vijayanagar. Narasu Nayaka made an attempt to regain the lost territories during the reign of Prataprudradasa, but failed. On the other hand Prataprudradasa too could not achieve any significant victory over Narasa Nayaka.

Narasu Nayaka died in 1503 A.D. Then his son Vira Narasimha succeeded him who in turn was succeeded
by his younger brother Krishnadeva Raya. Meanwhile Prataprudradeva marched to the south towards the Vijayanagar empire. But unfortunately Orissa was at this time invaded by Sultan Alauddin Hussain Shah of Bengal from the north and taking advantage of the king's absence, the Sultan besieged Cuttack, the capital of Orissa. Prataprudradeva was compelled to give up his march to the south and hasten back to Cuttack. His southern campaign of 1509 A.D. thus ended in disaster, enabling the new ruler of Vijayanagar, Krishnadeva Raya to gain an easy victory over the army of Orissa.

In the meantime, Krishnadeva Raya made an elaborate preparation to put an end to the Gajapatis' rule in the south once for all. In early 1512 A.D. Krishnadeva Raya started his expedition against the Gajapati. So Prataprudra concentrated his troops in Kondapalli. Krishnadeva Raya invaded it in 1516 A.D. and inflicted a crushing defeat upon him. In this conflict a number of officers of the army of Orissa and some Oriya chieftains including a son and a queen of the Gajapati's were taken prisoner and were sent to Vijayanagar. Krishnadeva Raya pursued the Gajapati's army upto Simhachalam. To commemorate his victory over Prataprudradeva he constructed

---

25 EI, Vol. VI, pp.110-11, the Mangalagiri Inscriptions.
Prataprudradeva realised at last his incapability of defeating Krishnadeva Raya. He was forced to sign a peace treaty with Krishnadeva Raya in August 1519 A.D. According to this treaty, the river Krishna was agreed upon as the southern boundary of Orissa. Krishnadeva Raya released the queen of Prataprudradeva who had been detained as hostage in Vijayanagar. According to the terms of the treaty Prataprudradeva gave his daughter in marriage to Krishnadeva Raya. Nuniz, the Portuguese chronicler, writes that Krishnadeva Raya made it one of the conditions of the treaty.

Prataprudradeva had two daughters. The queen of Prataprudra during that time used to stay with their son Virabhadra in the fort of Kanakagiri, situated to the south of Vijayawada. Both the princesses of Prataprudra used to stay with their mother in the fort of Kanakagiri. Rachiraji was the eldest daughter of Prataprudradeva. She was also called Pata. Rachiraji was given in marriage to Pusapati Madhava Varma. Prince Virabhadra and son-in-law Madhava Varma looked after the administration of the southern territory of Orissa. They ably looked after the administration with the advice of the princess Ruchiraji.

* Rachiraji was the eldest daughter of Prataprudradeva. She was also called Pata. Rachiraji was given in marriage to Pusapati Madhava Varma. Prince Virabhadra and son-in-law Madhava Varma looked after the administration of the southern territory of Orissa. They ably looked after the administration with the advice of the princess Ruchiraji.

* Rachi a Vedic name and raji means queen.
and Sixteen Patras or noblemen.

The youngest daughter was Annapurna or Jaganmohini. The name of the princess variously appears in the records as Jaganmohini, Tukka and Bhadra. Annapurna was born with all the good qualities and beauty of her grandmother, Padmavati. She was well versed in Sanskrit, Oriya and Telugu literatures. She wrote a collection of five verses, a poetic work in Sanskrit called 'Tukka Panchakam'. It bears testimony to her knowledge in Sanskrit.

During that time Narasa or Narasimhadeva Raya was the ruler of the old Vijayanagar empire. The famous Krishnadeva Raya happened to be the son of Narasimhadeva Raya and "Nagamma", his Phul-Vivahī dāsī. Since Krishnadeva Raya was a dāsī-putra (son of a maid-servant), he was acutely conscious of his inferior origin. So he planned to marry a princess of a high and reputed family in order to overcome his sense of inferiority. In course of time, when he came to the frontiers of his empire he chanced to come across the beautiful princess Annapurna. Krishnadeva Raya was anxious to marry her, because of his low birth. To gain her he fought against the mighty

---


Kalinga empire in spite of the advice of his ministers to the contrary. As mentioned earlier, it was most unfortunate on the part of Prataprudradeva to be defeated by Krishnadeva Raya. Since Krishnadeva Raya could not marry Annapurna because of his low birth, he forced Virabhadra to fence with an ordinary soldier so as to break down the differences between the high and low castes. Virabhadra saved the dignity of the Oriya noblemen of his age at the cost of his life. To save his daughter-in-law (Virabhadra’s wife) from the hands of Krishnadeva Raya’s soldiers and commanders, the mighty emperor Prataprudradeva, was at last forced against his own wishes to sue for peace on the advice of Kashi Mishra, the Rajguru. He also ceded all his territories to the south of the river Godavari to Krishnadeva Raya and gave his daughter princess Annapurna or Jaganmohini in marriage to him. It seems that Krishnadeva Raya forced Prataprudradeva to offer him the hand of his daughter. Muniz also writes that Krishnadeva Raya made his marriage with Annapurna, a condition of the peace treaty. Prataprudradeva was forced to agree to this condition perhaps to save the

*Rajguru, the priest of the royal family.

28 Sewell, R., A Forgotten Empire, p.320
Aiyangar, S. K., Ancient India and South Indian History and Culture, pp.171-172.
yjjuvarāṇī, the wife of Virabhada. For his daughter's sake the emperor showed great honour to the dasi-putra.

The name Tukka seems to have been given to her after her marriage with Krishnadeva Raya. Krishnadeva Raya has not mentioned in any of the inscriptions which were issued by him along the way of his advance towards Orissa upto Simhachalam. As such some scholars doubt whether the marriage between Krishnadeva Raya and princess Annapurna did ever take place. They also doubt the accounts given in local literatures in this regard as well as the accounts of Nuniz. However, it may be noted that all the inscriptions which were engraved under the orders of Krishnadeva Raya before 1519 A.D. recorded his exploits in the Orissa campaigns. He signed a peace treaty with Prataprudradeva only in 1519 A.D. and his marriage with Annapurna was performed only after this treaty. As such this event has not been mentioned in his earlier inscriptions. Paes writes that Prataprudradeva's daughter was one of the principal queens of Krishnadeva Raya. But it is said that on her bridal night princess Annapurna told Krishnadeva Raya before he had touched her, "You are

29 Accounts of the Narapati Kings (Further sources)
my father's enemy; just look at me, but do not touch me."

Krishnadeva Raya did not pay any heed to her. Full of his own strength he proceeded to embrace Annapurna. At that moment her Oṣiṇ̄i, an ornament studded with diamonds and other valuable stones, fell down from her waist, revealing a dagger that had been concealed in it.

Krishnadeva Raya was surprised to see the dagger and in fear he left the bridal chamber. Nuniz mentions that Annapurna was not happy after her marriage, and in order to avenge her brother’s death and father’s humiliation tried to poison Krishnadeva Raya at her father’s instigation. This story seems to have been based on court gossip.

Krishnadeva Raya had a number of queens and princess Annapurna was one of them. The age-difference between Krishnadeva Raya and Annapurna was very great. It is said that he was older than Prataprudradeva and died earlier than Prataprudra. As it was a political marriage it ended in failure. Krishnadeva Raya most probably did not trust the princess and deserted her. She lived a secluded life at Kambham in the Kurnool district. It seems Annapurna had another name, Tirumala. But as she

* Oṣiṇ̄i, a gold ornament of the waist. See Appendix, Fig. No.11.
33 Panigrahi, K. C., H. O., p.228.
was noted for her beauty in Orissa as well as in Vijaynagar, she became famous in the name of "Jaganmohini". She was known in Vijayanagar empire as Tukka, Varada, Rājajemā. Later on when she changed her mind Krishna-deva Raya called her "Varada".

After staying in Kambham fort for some time Jaganmohini adopted a son of her elder sister's. She arranged his coronation, too. Since her husband was a dasi-putra, she called her adopted son "Pusapati Gajapati." That was because while the boy belonged to the Pusapati dynasty, he was also a grandson of the Gajapati dynasty. She looked after the administration of Kambham for fifteen years. Annapurna is the name of Goddess Lakshmi, i.e., the Goddess of wealth of the Hindus. Princess Annapurna became a beloved ruler. She excavated water reservoir, established new villages and constructed huge palaces and forts. Prataprudradeva supplied her with large amounts of money and she also sold her jewels. She used to spend large amounts of money for the welfare of the people.

Queen Annapurna all of a sudden changed her mind. She realised her father's sorrow. So she secluded herself.

---

35 Ibid., p.43.
* The present royal dynasty of Vijayanagar is known as Pusapati-Gajapati.
for three years in order to meditate and pray to God. During that time the old minister of Vijayanagar came to meet her. Annapurna treated the minister with royal honour. In course of their discussion she commented that though Krishnadeva Raya, her husband, was a dāsī-putra, yet he was born in a royal family. The old minister without any delay informed Krishnadeva Raya of the great change which he had found in Annapurna. Krishnadeva Raya remarked to a Sakhī (maid-servant) of Annapurna that her princess probably wanted to put on an Odiani in order to kill him. The Sakhī replied that the princesses of Kalinga always carried such weapons on principle for self-defence. Then Krishnadeva Raya could realise his mistake.

One day Krishnadeva Raya came with the poet Thimmanna to visit the Simhachalam temple. They lost their way and later on reached Kambham fort. Poet Thimmanna met queen Annapurna and narrated everything. Queen Annapurna put all sorts of auspicious items on a gold plate as per the royal custom of Kalinga and to the accompaniment of the sounds of conch and hulahuli welcomed Krishnadeva Raya with great honour. The King

* Ladies make the typical sound in the mouth on all auspicious occasions.
was overwhelmed. After dinner, with the permission of the Raya, Annapurna sang in her beautiful voice a touching song written by herself. The Raya could not check his tears and begged pardon for his misunderstanding. He embraced her. The poem sung by Annapurna is famous as the Pancharatna in Sanskrit literature and is known in Telugu literature as Tukka Panchaka.

Krishnadeva Raya lived with Annapurna happily in Kambham for a long time. After that on an auspicious day he went with Annapurna to Vijayanagar. Annapurna, seeing the humble attitude of the other queen at Vijayanagar accepted her with love. Then they went to Tirupati where she covered the main temple with golden leaves. She also constructed a copper statue of Krishnadeva Raya in the prayer pose, keeping herself to the left of the king and the younger queen to the right of the Raya, which can be seen today in the Tirupati temple. Her daughter was "Mohanangi" who was very accomplished and beautiful.

After that Krishnadeva Raya never lived without queen Annapurna. Whenever he used to go on tours he took Annapurna along with him. Similarly Annapurna, while

36 Chatterjee, S. K., Languages and Literatures of Modern India, in Telugu Language.

* Side Appendix, Fig. No.12.
accompanying Krishnadeva Raya, always took along with her the younger queen Chinnamma. Vijayanagar, established by Annapurna, is still in existence.

Some scholars are of the opinion that Krishnadeva Raya died in 1529 A.D. But he died a long time after the death of Prataprudradeva. Prataprudradeva could not get the news of how his daughter Annapurna lived happily with Krishnadeva Raya, as he was busy in religious discourses. Communication with his daughter was completely shadowed by his Rājguru Kashi Mishra.

Thus, the women during the Gajapati rule played a momentous role in the socio-political life of Orissa. The social life of the women during this period has found mention in Sarala Dasa's Mahabharata. He has described with great care the different states of a woman, that is, as a mother, a wife, a sister, a daughter-in-law and a mother-in-law. The family was patriarchal where the husband was supreme. The wife always took proper care of the ambitions and aspirations of her husband. The position of women during the Gajapati rule was not underestimated by the society in general. Marriage was an important universal institution which determined the fate

* Vijayanagaram, District-Vijagapatam, Andhra State.
of a woman to a more considerable extent than the destiny of a man. An unmarried man was considered incomplete. That was because he himself was only half a person the second half being his wife. Marriage was performed for the creation of progeny. The girl's marriage was performed very early, sometimes at the age of seven. No age limit was fixed for the bridegroom. He could marry even in his old age. In some rare cases the greedy fathers gave their daughters in marriage to old men for the sake of money. When marriage was arranged between a bride and a bridegroom of unequal social status, age and money played an important role. Parents or other superiors, considering the family traditions, selected bridegrooms of character and learning. The parents gave their daughters in marriage with ornaments which they could afford. During this time Brahma, Gandharva and

38 Taithariya Brahman, II, 9, 4, 7.
40 Sarala Mahabharata, Madhya, p.353.
a form combining the two were the most popular forms of marriage which did not differ much from the present day marriage ceremonies. Marriage ceremonies were observed in great mirth and pleasure. Lots of arrangements and decorations were made in both the houses of the bride and the bridegroom. Generally marriages were performed in the bride's place during this time. The bridegroom with his friends and relatives, went in a procession with a band party to the house of the bride.

In Orissa during Gajapati rule, if a person did not have a child after marriage, he could marry for a second time. The birth of a male child was welcomed with great joy.

The institution of prostitution existed during this time in Orissa. It was called "Pramade". The prostitutes used to offer their body to people irrespective of caste, creed and age to earn their livelihood. But prostitution was looked up as an evil institution in the society.

The Kings were polygamous. In the aristocratic class a man could marry more than one woman. The first woman whom he married according to the socially recognised

form of marriage was known as *Byahi-Māipa* and the rest were *Thoila Māipas* or the kept. When a maid servant of the house occupied a dominant position she was called the *Poili-Māipa*. During this time in Orissa widow remarriage was prevalent among the lower caste Hindus, whereas there was prohibition of widow remarriage among the Brahmins. Sarala Dasa narrates that a woman of the Khanta class could marry even for a fifth time upon the death of her previous husbands.

Female education was prevalent during this time though it was restricted to a few only. Annapurna alias Jagammohini the daughter of Prataprudradeva, was well versed in Sanskrit. The sculpture of a woman writing a love letter in the Muktesvar temple at Bhubaneswar reveals literacy among women of Orissa in general. Women of the noble class were trained in horse-riding, driving chariots and archery. There was no school or college. Girls were educated at home. They were trained in using weapons. Some of them used to go to the gurus where they learned the Vedas and Vedanta. Woman education appears to have

46 Madhuchakra Chautisa, Pt. IV, p.69,
* Poili means maid-servant and Māipa means wife.
47 Sarala Mahabharata, Adi., p.301.
been limited to a few women of the noble classes of the society.

The queens observed purdah. It is evident from the Chaitanya Charitamrita that the wives of Prataprudraddeva used to go on the backs of elephants in covered litters. However, the system of purdah was not very much in use in the general Orissan society.

The practice of Sati was also quite unknown to the Orissan society. B. P. Sahu's opinion, "We come across evidences of Sati in Orissa after the eleventh-twelfth century A.D.", is not corroborated by facts. On the other hand, we come across widow remarriage and child marriage during the period.

Thus the position of women in Orissa during the rule of the Gajapatis was high. While playing sometimes pivotal roles in political affairs, they were known to have exercised a good deal of influence in the family. The profuse use of ornaments and their dress eloquently prove that they were properly looked after by their partners.

50 Sarala Mahabharata, Adiparva, pp.36, 176.
51 See Chapter VIII.