CHAPTER III

POSITION OF WOMEN

Man was engaged from the beginning of the civilisation in procuring food and shelter for his family. Women had to shoulder the responsibility of rearing children and maintenance of the household. In Sanskrit housewife is called grahini. It is said that the prosperity and reputation of the family entirely depend upon the grahini.1 The position of women enjoyed in any society is the index of the civilisation and culture of the society. If woman enjoyed good position and had status in the society, it ushered in the development of the family at the lowest level, and finally the development of the society and the civilisation itself.

From the Vedic period onwards the birth of female child was not the occasion of rejoicing. But girls were also taught Vedas during the Vedic period. The thread ceremony was also performed to female children. There were women scholars like Gargi Lopamudra, Visvara, Sikata Nivari and Ghosha.2 On the auspicious occasions both husband and wife had to perform in rites (punyā-Vachan) and even now this tradition is current. However, by the early centuries of Christian era a general decline of the woman has set in.

Position of royal woman:

The earliest reference to the women from royal families
of Goa is from Prithvimallavarmarman's copper plate which mentions that Chetasadevi, the daughter of Nellika on triyodasi (13th day) of Shukla paksha of Jyestha donated field. From this is evident that the queen could exercise influence over the king in making grants to Brahmins. The mention to the women of early Chalukya ruler Vijayabhattarika who ruled in Iridige Vishaya is found in the copper plate. These copper plates also bear testimony to the status and position enjoyed by the women from the royal families. For exercising influence over the king in issuing grants or shouldering administrative responsibility some training and education were essential. The women from the royal families and the elite were taught writing and reading. The women from the ruling dynasties of the region took keen interest in patronising learning and art. The chief queen Kamaladevi of Peramadi, Kadamba ruler of Goa was a great patron of learning. Kamladevi with the assistance of Peramadi founded a number of agrahāras. In these agrahāras, Veda, Vedāṅgas, Nyāya, Mimansa, Sānkhya, Yoga, Vedānta, Smriti, Itihās and purāṇas were taught. The queen Kamladevi built Nārāyan temple and Mahālakṣmi temple.

As regards the marriage among the royal families as well as other sections of the Hindu society, it was considered as one of the important sacraments (samskāra). The objectives of Hindu marriage were duty (dharma), progeny (praja) and
pleasure (Kāma). There were no pre-puberty marriages in Vedic period. However, by e. 200 A.D. the smṛiti writers started advocating pre-puberty marriages and these became popular only among Brahmins. Among Kshatriyas there were no child marriages even up to the Vijayanagara period. The Kshatriya women particularly from the royal families had considerable freedom in choosing their life partners. The references to such svayamvaras are available.

The matrimonial alliances among the royal families of the Deccan were common. There were matrimonial alliances between Ishvakus and Kaikeyas. Kadambas of Banavasi and the Vakatakas and the Kadambas and Guptas. The Narendra inscription records that when the Kadamba king, Chattaya went towards the country of Mammuni of Thane, the latter welcomed him and gave his daughter to him. He presented five lakh gold coins to his son-in-law. Similarly Jayakesi I the son of Sastadeva gave his daughter to Chalukyas emperor Vikramaditya. Hemachandra refers the royal marriage of the Kadambas of Goa and Chalukyas of Gujrat in Devashraya. Mayanalladevi the daughter of Jayakesi I fell in love with king Karna of Gujrat and subsequently they were married.

The kings married many wives and the favourite among them was the chief queen. Due to polygamy practised by many rulers, their harems were full of rivalry and jealousy. A queen had the title "Whip to the backs of rival wives of high repute."
The queen was supposed to treat her subjects both rich and poor without discrimination. Queen used to participate in the public functions.\textsuperscript{12}

\textbf{Purda System:}

It seems, that by 300 A.D. some royal families thought that the women from their families should be seen by the selected few while moving in public. However, from the evidences it is clear that purda system was confined to northern India. The paintings of Ajanta and the data from Dharmashástras and classical literature clearly reveals that there was no purda system in South India and particularly in Goa.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Marriage and dowry system among Brahmins and the masses:}

It has been mentioned earlier that by c. 200 A.D. child marriage became common among Brahmins and the masses. The intercaste marriages became rare after c. 800 A.D.\textsuperscript{14} As in other regions of the country in Goa a special social function was held when a married girl commenced her first menstrual period. From this it is evident that there were pre-puberty marriages in Goa also.\textsuperscript{15} Due to the rigidity of caste rules, finding a suitable match for the girls seems to have become a problem for the parents.\textsuperscript{16}

Dowry system is associated with consummation of marriages
as **dakshina**. Hence this is called **Varadakshina** (the gift offered to the bride grooms). This gift consisted of cash or gold. Among the masses the amount of the dowry was not sizable. The father of the bride offered dowry according his capacity. The Konkani proverb cautions the bride-groom not to be fascinated by the amount of dowry offered by the father-in-law. If the bride-groom accepts huge amount of dowry, he would be a slave of his wife (at least a hen-packed husband).

Another Konkani proverb says that the culture which the mother of the bride has transmitted to the daughter remains but not the dowry given by the father. Dowry is not permanent asset and this might vanish if it is not in the safe custody of the newly married boy. Therefore, the society which coined these proverbs was against the dowry system and attached considerable importance to the cultural background of the bride. Yet another proverb of Konkani adumbrates the similar sentiments. Observe the mother and then marry the girl, as you taste the quality of the milk while purchasing the buffalo.

From the above proverbs it is evident that mother had an important role to play in educating the girl in shouldering the responsibility of the joint family. A girl who had not yet reached teen-age has to go to the house of in-laws and the husband of the girl was one of the member of the joint family. The family consisted of father-in-laws, brother and their wives, the brothers and sisters of husband etc. Therefore, the mother had to train her daughter to serve the
husband as well as elders like father-in-law and mother-in-law etc.

The parent of girl always considered the female children as the asset of other families. Immediately after the marriage, the girl lost all her rights in the family of her parents. The house of her husband was her house. This is evident in Konkani proverb which says that the married woman has right to grind the pepper on the baldhead of her husband but she has no right to grind pepper on the stone of her brother. The status which housewife enjoyed entirely depended upon the status which her husband had in his family. If the husband was enterprising resourceful and hardworking, he was in a commanding position. The position of the wife such husband was equally high. The Konkani proverb expresses the same thought according to which hen rises through the might of the cock and the woman through the might of her husband.

The married daughter used to come to their parents occasionally during the festivals or for delivery. Such visits were for a short period. If the daughter had lost her mother and if the only father was alive, the house of the parents was no more heaven had already vanished. There she could lead a life of dignity and comfort.

A married woman who died before the death of her husband was considered as the most fortunate.
mentions the anniversary celebrated in honour of the married woman who predeceased her husband. This was a special death anniversary (shrāddha) performed during Bhādrapad (August-Sept) on the 9th day of the dark half. This was called avidhavā navami (9th day of unwidowed lady). On this day priest was invited for food as well as for performing rituals. Besides him a married woman who had her husband alive (sumangali) was invited for food. She was offered dakshina, blouse piece, bangles, garland and girdle. From this it is evident that sumangali was considered as auspicious. Married woman whose husband was alive supposed to have five auspicious ornaments namely nose-stud, toe rings, neck lace black beads (mangalosutra) and glass bangles and red mark on the forehead. In Konkani such a woman was called savāsan (sumangali). A woman who lost her husband became inauspicious as she lost privilege of using the above five auspicious ornaments.

Position of widows

From the vedic period till about 500 A.D. there were widow remarriages. The Vedic society accepted Niyoga or levirate by which the childless widow could have an issue. But the sword of widowhood hung on the head of married woman. The widowhood was considered as a great calamity. The Konkani proverb says that today's married woman is the widow of tomorrow. Therefore, the parents were always worried about the daughter is she would be jumping into funeral pyre or she
would touser her hair.

The *smritis* prescribe austure life to the widow. She was to sleep on the bare ground and not comfortably on the cot. She was not to wear blouse but cover her upper part by means of the *pallu* of sari. She could not wear the saris of various colour but only colour white. She was prohibited from using any cosmetics or turmeric powder for face. She could not use any scents. She took only one meal a day. She made oblations every day in memory of her husband. She listened to recitation of the Puranas. She was prohibited from using any cosmetics or turmeric powder for face. She could not use any scents. She took only one meal a day. She made oblations every day in memory of her husband. She listened to recitation of the Puranas. Brahmins widows were normally following the above restrictions and lead an austure life.

SATI

There are evidences to Sati from 316 B.C onwards. But it was not widespread through out India. Only after 10th century A.D. it spread to many regions. During the Silahārā-Kadamba period sati system might have spread to Goa. Between 1000-1400 A.D. epigraphs record only 11 satis. However, from 1400-1600 the number of satis rose to 41. there were two Jaina widows who became sati and the remaining were Gaudas and Nayakas. The latter two communities predominantly formed the army. The above data clearly shows that during the Vijayanagara period sati system became extremely popular. It continued even after the downfall of Vijayanagara. The region of Goa of Bijapur and the Vijayanagara fighting against each other. The widow of the
soldiers who died in the conflict and the widows of the Generals jumped into the funeral pyre. The number of sati stones scattered all over Goa clearly indicates that many women who lost their husband became sati. The sati stones (Satikal) were erected in memory of the sati who jumped into the pyre. These depicted hand in the pose (mudra) of assurance (abhaya). Some times two hands are also found on the sati stones. It was believed that sati who jumped into the funeral pyre would live in heaven with her husband for three crore years. The right hand of sati was considered as auspicious and was symbolising her chastity. Some times two hands are shown in the above position. This hand symbolically represents the two widows (the departed husband had two wives) who both jumped into the pyre. In State Museum of Goa and Old Goa Museum have sati stones each depicting the funeral pyre and widow is shown getting ready to jump into the pyre. Some sati shrines were built in Goa as in some these are all having the status of affiliating deities (parivār devt) and there is only one independent shrine of sati in Pedne. Sati continued in Old conquest (Tiswadi, Bardes, and Salcete) till 1560 and the Portuguese were the first to abolish it in India.

b) Tonsure of Widows

In Goa the practice of tonsuring hair among the widows of Saraswats, Karhadas, Padhyes and Kramavant Joshis was
prevalent. Even among the Panchala Brahmin widows tonsuring of hair was current. The tonsuring of widows was abolished in Goa by the Portuguese like the sati system.

Devadāsi System

Some scholars have dealt devadāsi system in the chapter on society. However, as the devadāsis are women it would be appropriate to discuss the devadāsis in the chapter on the position of women. Devadāsi literally means the servant of God or the slave of the God. The word devadasi became current only after late 1930's of this century. In Goa the devadāsis were called Kalāvants and some used to call them Naikins. This word has originated from Sanskrit Kalā which means art. They claimed their origin from celestial nymphs (apsarās and gandharvās). In addition to the Kalāvants there were temple servants called Bhāvins. The earliest epigraphic references to this word occurs in Marathi inscription of 1402 A.D. from Velus village in Sattari Taluka. This inscription records the grant of three and half tanka to Bhāvin per annum.

The Hindu devotees considered god as a living entity and offered him all the comforts which rich men enjoyed. Inscriptions from Karnataka refer to angabhoga and rangabhoga. Giving bath to the deity (offering abhishekha applying sandal paste (gandha) offering flowers, essence, scent etc. is angabhoga. These were all applied to the body of the god
(anga) hence these were forming part of angabhoga. Dance and
music concerts held in the temple are rangabhoga. 41

There are evidences to indicate that by Gupta period
devadāsi system was taking roots in India. 42 There are
references to devadāsi in Puranas as well as āgamas also. 43
The antiquity of Devadāsi system in the neighboring region of
Goa, Karnataka goes back to 8th century A.D. An inscription
from Virupaksha temple of Pattadakal refers to the donation
made by a devadāsi. 44 In an inscription of Rattaraja the
Southern Silahara king who was closely associated with Goa,
the devadāsis are called dārikās. 45 Indirect references to
devadāsis are found in Jogeswari inscription near Bombay.
There are references to the courtesans in the inscription of
Goa Kadambas. Tambur inscription records there were streets
meant for courtesans and these have been called suligere (sule
means a prostitute in Kannada). The Yavani epigraph furnishes
the description of the eye brows of prostitutes. In Dharwad
inscriptions prostitutes are called ganikās. No stigma was
attached to the prostitutes. The courtesans were not treated
as degraded section of the society but they were treated with
respect. The kings and the nobles took pride in associating
themselves with the courtesans. 46

These above epigraphs of the Kadambas of the Goa and the
solitary inscription of the Southern Silahara indicate that
the devadāsis were not treated as menial servants but they
were treated with respect as talented artists with freedom of sex. The society had a broad outlook towards devadāsisi or courtesans.47

It is mentioned that the Silahara king Arikesari and the Goa Kadamba king Sasta II visited Somanātha and there they saw the devadāsisi in the temple of Somanātha. Hence these rulers might have been responsible in introducing system in their regions.48 However, the inscription from the temple of Virupaksha and other inscriptions from Karnataka clearly indicate that the devadāsisi system was already in existence in the Deccan before the visit of the kings referred to above. Therefore this theory is not convincing. These are all from outside Goa and no inscription from Goa refer to devadeisi. There are no inscriptions referring to either grants given by the kings to the devadāsisi of a particular temple or donations made by the devadāsisi the temple. However, the absence of the inscriptions does not mean that there were no devadāsisi in the temples of Goa till 1402 A.D. As the inscriptions of Goa Kadambas from Dharwad district refer to devadāsisi, it seems that the devadāsisi were in existence in the temples of Goa during the Siḷahāra-Kadamba period.

There were Kalāvants in the well known temples of Goa like Saptakoteshwar, Mahālsa, Mangesh and Shāntādurgā. The village organisation which was established by the Gavdas (which has been already referred to in the previous chapter)
called Communidade looked after the maintenance of the temple as well as devadāsis.49

It has been mentioned earlier that there were two types of dancing girls associated with temples. The first type were called Kalāvants and they are well versed in vocal music and the second type of temple servants were called Bhāvins. They were to sweep the premises of the temple. They were to carry essence burner and put essences in the burner whenever required.

(1) In the Shantādurgā temple when the utsavamurti was taken out in palanquin for procession the Bhāvin was to hold the mirror in order to reflect sun rays on the deity.50

(2) Initiation ceremony called Shesh was held for the teen-aged girls of Kalāvants who were trained vocal music. In this initiation ceremony, marriage of the homogenous sex was held and it could be appropriately called a mock marriage. In a mock marriage the girls was married to another girls who was dressed like a groom with co-conut and areca-nut in her hands,. The girls then garlanded the co-conut. This ceremony was very popular among the Bhāvins. After the shesh ceremony the girls were permitted to be a mistress of only one and generally she was attached to the rich landlord or temple priest. A girl whose shesh ceremony was performed was not supposed to marry throughout life.51 Devadāsis not allowed to
marry in order to remain the devoted servants of God. It was believed that since the devadāsi had no family their maintenance was looked after by the village. This facilitated them to concentrate fully on music.52

In addition to singing in the palanquin procession, the Kalāvants were required to sing when ārati was performed at the time of the distribution of prasād at chouk (temple square hall). She was to sing during the month of Harijāgar (when the devotees were awake and conducting music concert in honour of the deity) for one month.53

Kalāvants made gestures while singing and even now they make gestures while singing. However, the earlier writers have misinterpreted the gestures made by Kalāvants as dancing. There was no tradition of classical dance in Goa54. The Kalāvants of Goa came under the influence of Hindustani music during the period of Adilshahis of Bijapur.

The devadāsīs who were supposed to be the servants of god generally became the servants of the priests and the mahājans. The priests of the temples were the agents of God and hence they received the offering made to the god. Therefore a devadāsi offering her body to the priest ultimately was received by God.55

During the Silahārā-Kadamba period Kalāvants, might have enjoyed high status in the society. However, after the
downfall of the Kadambas and subsequently during the rule of Vijayanagara it seems that the Saraswats became mahājans of important temples of God. From then onwards, the period of degradation of Kalāvants and exploitation begun and this continued till the establishment of the Portuguese rule in Goa.

The well known musicians like Babali Salgaonkar, Saraswatibai Jambawalikar, Mogubai Kurdikar, Anjanibai Malpekar, Hirabai Badodekar and Jyotsna Bhole were from Kalāvants community.56

From the discussion in this chapter, it is evident that the position of the woman in Goa was not different from the rest of India. Due to the lack of educational facilities they were ignorant and they were not in a position to be economically independent. They were subservient in a male dominated society.
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