



Status of Women's and Women empowerment in Chitradurga: a conceptual research on social & education system in during Vijayanagara Empire

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Abstract:-

Role of women in behind of very history, every society, every community, every density, every nation, every revolution, every change, every conflict, every event & incident, every problems, every solution, every failure and every success, there is woman's, whether there in positive or negative happen in that movements. Many of the historical records had witnessed that "without woman, there is no historic movements was happen in the world and their sacrifices are becomes most voluble things in build 'swathick society or community'", thus, role of man and women has been taken equally role responsibilities in all aspects from beginning of the world. In this present study, is discovered and described the Social and educational system in Chitradurga and find the status of Woman's as Housewife, Woman as a warrior, Woman as a Merchant, Woman as a wrestler, Woman contributions identifications by inscriptions, Women played a role of Mandaliks, Women in Shaphashaya Status of common woman in Chitradurga during ruled by Vijayanagara Kingdom in 13th to 15th century of history.

Keywords: *Social system, Educational system, Women status, Woman role, Chitradurga Vijayanagara kingdom.*

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1.0. Introduction

The Vijayanagara Empire was the most powerful and influential in medieval Indian history. In order to install voluminous empire they adopted the federal system of administration. That means decentralization of power. Chitradurga was one of the integral or associated territorial divisions of the system. From primitive stage to the Palegars period it had its own unique history. This part of the land was ruled by Mouryas, Shathavahanas, Kadambas, Chalukyas, Pandyas, Rashtrakootas. After these rulers then came the most influential and powerful Vijayanagara dynasty which ruled Chitradurga. During their period Chitradurga was at the strategic location of the empire. They further divided Chitradurga territorial division into different administrative units and ruled competently. In Chitradurga territorial division several ranking officers such as *Pranthapalaka*, *Vassals*, *Amaranayakas* were present. Through these personalities they brought the reformations socially, economically, religiously, culturally and contributed a lot to the Chitradurga district. Thus Vijayanagara emperors in their period had served the citizens by doing public works. These were inscribed in the inscriptions. Vijayanagara kings in Chitradurga territorial division had given encouragement to marriage, festivity, fair, lakes, tank, tax structure, agrahara, charities, construction and renovation of temples^[1].

1.1. Social system in Chitradurga

The man who is living in this world since multiple thousands of years by virtue of experience, beliefs, behavior and ripped thoughts, we believe this would be the base root of our culture. The word '*culture*' could not be expressed in words, the man who celebrates any custom with proper method and gain experience out of it. This may be called Culture. Neither a man, nor could a society gained in a single day. In the field if you plant the sugarcane stump and it takes several months to grow to get the yield. On the same lines the men they lived for thousands of years accumulate good behavior and understanding, results in gaining sacrament (Samskara) called '*culture*'. Whichever society that would be, it has its own culture. The culture gives inspiration to the society. If you look at the history from the ancestor's period the people who were living in this region had strong belief about their religion. Therefore the religion was the powerful base for the formation of this culture format. The 'Dasa' (who recites devotional songs), philosopher, were involved in streamlining the society through their literature and poetics, highlighting the social evils. They used to oppose the unlawful custom and throw light on real truth of religion, which would bring normalcy to the society. Vijayanagara kings had

made some noteworthy attempts to build the society on the base of uniformity in all walks of life. These were inscribed in the inscriptions, which would be helpful for the research^[2]. Even territorial division of Chtiradurga the Vijayanagara kings had done social works that would be inscribed in inscriptions.

As we found in ancient Indian history, even during the period of Vijayanagara Empire, family was the fundamental unit of the society. It was small and powerful unit in the larger society. The historians had of the opinion that the family of that period was the primary organization of the society. But some other had of the opinion that the family was the central point of the society. The person is the important component in the family, who acts like connecting link. It also acts like primary organization to establish the foundation for the person's future. While we were debating the cultural of Vijayanagara kings period, any social life of the society the study of the family should be considered the first unit .In general family in one way continuously changing dynamic organization^[3].

The family system in Vijayanagara period we could find many types. The important among them were single husband and single wife one life partner family system or nuclear family. A man could have many wives called polygamy system. The main responsibility of the family was to obtain children, nurture and provide good education to them. Finally they would be introduced to the king's court. In the family system they should provide appropriate status to the family members. If any old aged elderly members and vulnerable blood relatives of the family should be given proper attention by the family head. This was the condition prevailed in the higher level family system. But the system was pathetic in the lower strata of the society. They used to lead their life as a bonded labour in the house of landlords. Even their kids used to work as bonded laborers till the end of their life^[4].

The caste system and social organization which was prevailed in the Vijayanagara king's period was deep rooted in all walks of life. In the social set up, there were no individuals who were not influenced by the caste system in the society. Even if there were their number was scarce. The people were celebrating traditional festivity, jathra, fair, feasts and many more. These were having paramount importance in their life. On the same lines in the social set up from the beginning till the end caste was playing predominant role. This was not an exaggeration. This was in one way deciding the Hindu religious rite^[5]. During the period of Vijayanagara rulers apart from affluent class or upper class, there were majority of them

belonging to middle class families. Majority of them were involved in business. They were leading better life than the common man of the society. These factors were prevailed in the social set up of Chitradurga during Vijayanagara period.

The 'Sathi-Sahagamana' (if the husband dies then the wife also sacrifice her life) system was extensively present during Vijayanagara period. If husband dies along with his body she had to lay along with him on the pyre or in case of burial system the wife bound to be buried alive along with her husband, this system called 'Sahagamana'^[6]. An inscription relating to this system was found in the entire Vijayanagara Empire and whole of territorial division of Chitradurga. In 'Sathi-Sahagamana' system either wife used to jump on to the pyre and sacrifice her life or she had to be buried alive along with her husband. Even Vassals adopted this Sathi system in Chitradurga territorial division was quite significant indeed.

1.2. Education system in Chitradurga

We could gather many facts through the inscriptions with regard to education system during the period of Vijayanagara Empire. Few information among them were really instill curiosity indeed. Not only that the contemporary literatures of that period throw light on this. The educational activities were confined only too few themes of the education system. For that intellectual, moral and ethnic themes were the main base. On these ethical values of foundation stone, that empire stood firmly^[7]. The primary education during that period was called 'Balabhodhe'. Kanakadasa in his *Mohanatarangini* had explained about the primary school teacher. A primary school teacher had worn stitched shirt, holding a stick in his hand and drawing medicinal figures on the board. The children books were composed with colourful pictures. In the initial stages the child used to practice alphabets either on the mud or on the sand, this was a well known fact. For this they used to call 'Dholakshara'^[8].

A foreign tourist had mentioned that the students used to learn the lessons from their teacher and they had a peculiar skill to remember the lessons that they had learnt. They used to by heart and reproduce the lessons in an excellent way. For example *O'ndu ondle ondu'* was recited by one person and other children used to recite same thing orally by writing on the sand with their finger. In this manner the primary education was going on. He appreciated the primary education system. In those days the students used to learn to read and write neither by using paper nor ink. This was the simplest method because there was no material wastage^[9]. On the other hand the students used studies certain literatures. They were *Jaimini Bharatha*,

Vidhuraneethi, Amarakosha, Panchatantra, Someshwara Shathaka and some other students used to learn *Samvatsara, Nakshatragalu, Diksoochi*. In addition to this they bound to learn some poems or songs which would be written on goddesses praising their special features^[10]. The Vijayanagara Empire was giving highest prominence to the education system during that period. Even today the Agrahara, temples and Mata are standing as live examples of the past glory. In primary stage child was suppose to learn how to read, write and basic mathematical calculations. As per our '*Nanudi*' "Mother is the first teacher and home is the first school for every child'. As per this Lakshmidhara was the minister in Devaraya-I court. His mother while feeding him with milk, she used to recite build the lake, dig the wells, construct the temples, release the refugees from the imprisonment, provide shelter to the friends, rule the kingdom like a king. He had grown up by hearing those knowledgeable and enlightening thoughts uttered by his mother. Those facts were going to reveal the affection of a mother, the duties of a king and concern towards the common man. This is called '*Thayee Sanskriti*' (mother nurturing the culture to the kid)^[11].

Even during Vijayanagara period they gave lot of priority to education system in the Chitradurga district. The major educational institutions were Agraharas, Matas, Temples, Brahmapuris and Ghatikasthanas. Among them Agraharas, Matas, Temples were acquired highly prosperous position. The Vijayanagara kings had donated in abundance to the Agraharas, Matas and Temples during their period. Even in Chitradurga districts they had given lot of donations and those were inscribed in the inscriptions.

1.3. Status of Women's

We have got lot of literatures and temples as supporting documents like open book, to throw light on the study of the history of Vijayanagara Empire. Through their help we could assess the status of the women in the king's court as well as the position in the society during that period. From the above records it was observed that the women were occupied prominent positions in the field of politics and administration. They were economically gained strength. But this would apply to only three percent of women community in the empire. But the remaining major part of women community was living like prisoners in the social shackles^[12].

In Vijayanagara king's period there were many instances the queens ruled the kingdom during the king's absence. There were many records about this. The woman during that period had played a role in various discipline of the society. She played a role of housewife, warrior,

business woman, wrestler, poet, lyricist, governors, administrator, maid servant for a queen, farmer, prostitute in the society^[13].

1.4. Role of Women's

1.4.1. Housewife

Normally married woman used to wear the ornaments as an auspicious sign. Bangles, nose ring, ear ornament, toe-ring, red powder vermillion, flower, 'Taali' (golden ornament tied around the neck by the groom to the bride), collyrium were the auspicious sign of a married woman. As per those the married woman had special and sacred status in the society. Normally during auspicious functions such as marriage, thread ceremony, they used to beautify their look by wearing the above mentioned ornaments information was mentioned by foreign tourist Payas^[14].

1.4.2. Woman as a warrior

In the battle normally beautiful women warriors were accompanying the king and the soldiers. The main intention was to keep the king and the soldiers in lively mood. It was quite common that the beautiful women warriors were meant to ease the lust of the Vassals or Palegars. The local and foreign research scholars had mentioned about it. There were instances even women had fought in the battle field during Vijayanagara period. The temples built during that era had figures woman holding the sword carved on the stone structures^[15].

1.4.3. Woman as a Merchant

During Vijayanagara period the women were very good traders. During 'Santhe' (periodical fair) and 'Jatre' (fair) women used to participate in trading in large numbers. Vegetables, spices, fruits, gold, silver, dress materials, cosmetics were some of the important trading things by the women merchants^[16].

1.4.4. Woman as a wrestler

In unique way the Vijayanagara kings used to celebrate 'Mahanavami' festival. This was called 'Dasara'. During this festivity the king used to arrange wrestling competition to the women on Mahanavami mound. This was inscribed in the inscriptions. Kings personally used to watch the competition and they used reward the winners by appropriate title or prizes, which was common sight during that period. Women were educated scholars during Vijayanagara period. They gained wisdom in Telugu, Kannada and Sanskrit languages.

1.5. Woman representation in the inscriptions of Chitradurga district

The status of women was clearly mentioned in the inscriptions found in the Chitradurga district of Vijayanagara era. Neralakere was situated in Mathodu Grama of Bagooru hobli and this one was in Hosadurga taluk of Chitradurga district. In Narasamme possession a copper inscription was found comprised with five leaves. It was written in 'Nagarakshara'. There was no clear cut information about the period of inscription^[17]. In this inscription there was a reference about the king of Vijayanagara Veeranarasimha and the god Sree Veerupaksha. Based on this they came to conclusion that it was belonging to Vijayanagara period. In the first leaf the following points were inscribed 'Devayageepathe..., Devakinanda... Kousalya.. Sree Sumithraye'^[18].

The inscription dated 1412AD was found at Hidambheshwara temple which was situated atop the hill of Chitradurga. Sree Veera Mallanna Odeya was the Mahamandaleshwara, the subordinate ruler of the Vijayanagara emperor Sree Veerapathapadevaraya. Kunchiganahalli was situated at the east of Bemmatthukallu. In his mother Mallavva name he handed over on charity, this village to Lord Sree Hidimbhanatha from the point of worship. In Mallapura he built a stone tower in his mother name, which was also inscribed in the inscription. In 1417AD the first inscription found at Somerahalli which is in Hiriyooru taluk. This was belonging to the period of Vijayanagara King Veera Prathapa Harihara Maharaya. In this inscription the reference about Kamayee the wife of Payana, their son Jakkadeva along with five sons came to this place from Kashi Township. Byeranayaka of Kandhikere Seeme had installed his family deity Lord Someshwara of Sourashtra at the southern part of Hiriyooru the river Muddhehalla was flowing. He built a temple for the god on the bank of the river. There was also a mention in that inscription, that he built a lake there^[19].

1.6. Women played a role of Mandaliks

Vijayanagara emperors were usually used to nominate subordinate rulers in the regions where they had won in the battle. Among them Mandalikas were significant among them. Such rulers used to submit a tributary amount to the emperor based on the volume of land they had been awarded to them. Chitradurga Palegars were ruling as Mandalikas of Vijayanagara emperors. If the situation demands even the woman can show her bravery. Sajjemutthe was the Daphedara during the Chitradurga Palegars period. About his connection there was a mention of his family tree. In that details on Myasanayaka and Kamanayaka were given. In this family tree there were 7kings, 77Palegars and 101princesses were associated. They used to go to the forest all of them together for hunting. Chitradurga was ruled by Palegars. In their family there were

Six Nagathi(queen). They normally ruled their regime directly or indirectly. But their name was not registered in gazetteer. The inscription inscribed on a boulder found near the lake, which was atop the hill of Molakalmooru. There was no mentioning about the period. In that inscription there was a reference about Lakshamimma Nagathi mother of Sreemanmanayakacharya Hattikasthoori Mallappanayaka. The Nagathis were never restricted to administration but they built wells, plantation or gardens and agraharas^[20]. During their regime marriage, gifts, dowry, polygamy, off spring, Sathi system, sacrifice, cremation and many traditional rituals were performed. During the period of Chitradurga ruler's only bad customs were into force about the women section. In majority cases women were confined to be trained in music and dance. But some instances had revealed that they were also trained in horse riding, sword fight and battle. The women not only restricted to administration but also had contributed a lot to literature. By reviewing all the above inscriptions we would draw to conclusion that the women were restricted to govern only to the religious customs.

1.7. Women in Shaphashaya

The '*Matha-pitrugalellavu aeppattuelu kotivarashta barampula narakadalikke*' was explaining about the bane in the inscription dated 1356AD found at Chitradurga. '*Dharmakke aliphidaru, tanna matha pitrugallannu go brahmanarannu varanasiyalli kondha papakke saluvaru*' this was inscribed in the inscription dated 1537 found at Guntanooru of Chitradurga district. '*Swadatta, puthrika dhatri, pitrudattasa hodari, anyadatta matru, chadatta, bhoomi parithya chattu*' this was inscribed in the inscription dated 1568AD found at Gopalakrishna temple of Holalkere. The gist of these lines reveals that once anything is given to any one as a gift or charity, which is the end of it. The person who has given the gift loses one's authority over it. '*Thandhe -thayee-guru -gobrahamana varanasiyali kond papake hoharu*' these lines were inscribed on the inscription dated 1528AD found at Dummi of Holalkere taluk. The inscription dated 1537AD and 1559AD found at the same Grama the similar lines were inscribed. '*Thandhe- tayege oda huttidavarugalige hage andhare*' these lines were inscribed in the inscription found at Jajooru grama of Holalkere taluk.

The summary of the line is *Mother having a lust on her own siblings*. '*Thandhe -thayee varanasiyali kond papake hoharu*' this line was inscribed in the inscription dated 1516AD found at Beycharak thygadahalli of Holalkere. '*Thamma tayege thappida hale*' this line was inscribed on the inscription found at Gundasamudra Grama of Holalkere taluk. '*Thandhe -thayee*

varanasiyali vadhisiidha papake hohar’ this line was inscribed on the inscription dated 1546AD found at Bagooru Grama. In the same grama inscription dated 1554AD was found. ‘*Thandhe – thayee varanasiyali kond papake hoharu*’ the same line was inscribed. Another inscription dated 1520AD found at the same Grama inscribed lines as follows ‘*Thamma thande-tayeege tappidaru, thamma thande, Thamma thayee, thamma guru.go brahmanarugallannu Varanasiya Ganga thadiyali kond papake hoharu*’. In the same grama the inscription found dated 1523AD had a line written in the commas ‘*Avara hendiranu Bagooru hole madhigarige kottavaru*’. “*Thandhe –thayee varanasiyali kond papake hoharu*’ this line was inscribed on the inscription dated 1535AD found at Kallekere Grama Hosadurga taluk. The inscription dated 1569AD found at Kanbeyhalli Grama of Hiriyooru taluk inscribed line was as follows ‘*Thamma Thandhe thayeyanu kashiyali vadhisiidhoru*’ ‘*Thamma Thandhe –thayee varanasiyali kondha papake hoharu*’ this line was inscribed on the inscription dated 1570AD found at Chikkakarpoorakatte Grama of Hiriyooru taluk. ‘*Thamma Thandhe –thayee varanasiyali kondha papake hoharu*’ this line was inscribed on the inscription dated 1553AD found at Doddauarthi Grama of Challakere taluk. ‘*Thamma Thandhe –thayee varanasiyali Vadhisiidha papake hoharu*’ this line was inscribed on the inscription dated 1553AD found at Kamasamudra of Challakere taluk and ‘*handhe –thayee varanasiyali kondha papake hoharu*’ this line was inscribed on the inscription dated 1576AD found at Sayagondanhalli Grama of Challakere taluk. ‘*Thamma tayee-Thandhege thappidavaru gurudrohigalu*’ this line was inscribed on the second copper inscription dated 1549AD found at Ramasagara Grama of Molakalmooru taluk. Thus, in Vijayanagara empire period this kind of ‘*Shapashaya*’ inscriptions found throughout Chitradurga district.

1.8. Status of common woman

The life of a common man was quite critical indeed. They had neither food to eat nor to dress to wear. There was an opinion among common men that ‘*to born as a common man is a sin*’. They were depending on agriculture for their livelihood. The situation was pathetic, if there any rainfall they would grow food grains else death was the only option for them. Majority of women health condition was very low. They neither had oil to hair nor comb for combing the hair. They were spread like spikes on their head. They used to cover their body by dress material made of animal leather. Whereas men used to cover only the waist of the body with a piece of cloth or bark of the tree. This was mentioned by Barbosa^[21]. It was bound to specify the pitiful state of common man during that period. During Vijayanagara period the widow and the barren

woman were ignobly treated. At what extent the untouchability was deep rooted in the society, in the same manner the woman also exploited. In case if a widow after the death of her husband refuse to oblation by sleeping on the pyre or never accept Sathi system, her livelyhood was worse than the animals or dog's life. She was banned in participating any auspicious occasions. It was like a house arrest to a widow. Even in her house there were many obligations. There were ominous feeling that seeing the face of the widow soon after waking up in the morning and while going to attend any auspicious work it was forbidden to see the widow face on their way. So finally she was leading her life like a living corpse.

The barren woman life was more horror than drought. The following folklore lines would give us the horrible status of affairs of abandoned or lorn woman in the society. '*Banje bene arivalu malathayee madda ballale? Hotteli, Sutharu ella yendu voralalu huttu banjege phalavadhethi*', '*Sale banjeyappa Sathi nija purusha sangadolu palakalam erdode yenu erda menu Phalavadu dunte?*' '*Patthe baleya avandhadhim banje bene arivale*' '*Dattu putranegeke phitru and bhakti*'. The above lines depict the miserable life of woman in the society^[22]. But the poet Someshwara had written some good line about the woman. If a woman was born in a good clan had wisdom and character, though she was barren such woman were not abused. She was allowed to attend the religious and auspicious functions. In this way he had shown sympathy on barren woman where the society had ominous feelings about them^[23]. On the whole we could draw to the conclusion that during the Vijayanagara period although the woman was occupied any highest status, finally she was an object of enjoyment to satisfy the lust of a man. Though she was the queen of the empire, '*Uparani*' wife of the subordinate ruler, role of warrior in the battle field or expert business woman finally she was the victim of a male dominated system. In the inscriptions the associations of the women in the administrative sectors were seldom illustrated. At some places the illustrations about the queens of the emperors and wives of the subordinate rulers were found. In that they completely ignored the administrative aspects of the women but they restricted only to the religious functions.

The inscription found at Chitradurga belonging to Vijayanagara kings period, in that there was a reference about Veerakampannarayana(1356-1377AD).His father was Bukkaraya, his wife and the queen Gangadevi. Her literary works was '*Madhuravijayam*' or '*Veera kampilaraya charitha*'. The literary work was about the king. Thus, the participation of the women belonging to royal family was quite few but it was mentioned in the inscriptions. As for as the common

people were concerned, the inscription stood like a silent spectator. The illustration with regard to common woman in the inscription was count in numbers. Unlike the queens building the temples, Basadi and generously gifted the structures to the concerned, but they did noteworthy service to the society. Narayana was residing in Nulenooru Grama of Talya hobli in Holalkere taluk. In his cultivating land an inscription was found. In this inscription there was reference about Khaloza who was the son of Benakka. Generally the warriors participating in the battle were all common men. During the battle most of the times the daring warriors used to sacrifice the life for the sake of their land. Obviously common men were affected.

In such a situation the warrior wife, brother, sister, mother and lovable children in the family were subjected to great hardship and sorrow. Horaker devapura is in Talya hobli of Holalkere taluk. In this place beside spillway of the lake an inscription was found. Honni was the daughter of Mahabisi Ketha, who was a farmer residing at Horaker devapura. In that it was inscribed about her gifting the land for the purpose of service to the public. Doddullarthi Grama is in Talaku hobli of Challakere taluk in Chitradurga district. In this Grama a lake is present. At the southern part of the lake the spillway was built. Near to this the inscription was found. In that there was reference about Maraiah whose parents were Kambaiah and Nagabbe. His main weapon for defending was his herd of livestock. He used them in war. Majority of the women were preferred Sathi system instead of leading life of a widow in that horrible and religious system till their death. The damaged inscription dated 1665AD found at Santhegovi Grama of Parusharampura hobli of Molkalmooru taluk in Chitradurga district. In that inscription Thimmave was the daughter of Devaramane Gudlinayaka, who was 'Talawara' (village policeman) of that village. Women belonging to common people had great faith and devotion in the God. In the name of god they used to gift the land to the service of the public or to the temple.

1.9. Conclusion

The Vijayanagara kings ruled over Chitradurga district. The administration in Chitradurga Province has been ruled by the decentralization of the administration through their principals, vassals, officials and immortals. In his time, the legislative references to social, religious, economic and cultural factors. During Vijayanagara period, he performed constructive democratic functions like family, marriage, marriage duties, education, agraharas, charities to temples, renovation saints, construction of temples, etc. The kings of Vijayanagara have given a wide range of contributions such as donations, land sacks, tanks, tanks, irrigation systems, taxes,

trade, trade, commercial, agricultural systems, crops, production, trade, transport, communication, industry, mining, etc. Thus, the Vijayanagara rulers have made a unique contribution to the different social, religious, economic and aspects of Chitradurga district.

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