

WOMEN EDUCATION AND NOTABLE WOMEN SCHOLARS DURING THE NAYAK RULE OF TANJORE

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Introduction

Education is a crucial tool for social liberation and the development of the human spirit. The acceptance of women into the official education system indicates a culture's willingness to address the issue of gender roles in society. The importance of education for women was to extend their thoughts and increase their ability to deal with problems. Education, a plentiful resource, is the foundation for the enrichment of one's life, the upliftment of society, and the growth of a country. The four goals of human pursuit have been defined in the Nannool (A Sangam Tamil Work) as *vig.*, a righteous life, the creation of wealth, the enjoyment of the good things of life, and finally the renunciation of all of these and the attainment of salvation or bliss, in short- virtue, wealth, pleasure, and bliss. It was primarily economic factors that encouraged women to pursue careers that matched their aspirations and qualifications. Women's economic freedom would be the only way to end all gender discrimination in society. In terms of psychology, job provided women with a break from the monotony of household responsibilities. Women today have a sense of accomplishment and fulfilment in their life as a result of their work. People's ability to acquire knowledge, as well as a country's progress and wealth, is largely dependent on the expansion of its educational system. The state did not take an active interest in promoting education to the populace under the Vijayanagar era by constructing schools and institutions with government finances. However, several of the Vijayanagar monarchs' mutts provided religious and secular education. Vijayanagar's kings did not maintain the policy of earlier rulers such as the Pallavas and Eastern Chalukyas, who constructed schools and colleges to boost people's educational opportunities. During the Nayak period in Tanjore, renowned women scholars like as Gangadevi, Molla, Madhuravani, Ramaabadramba, Rangajamma, Muddupalani, and Oduva Thirumalamba are highlighted in this paper.

Female Education

Even though it grew in popularity with the passage of time, female education in India was not wholly unknown in ancient and mediaeval India. It should be noted that just a few women in high positions in Bharatachandra and Ramaprasadan Vidyasundari have been depicted as educated ladies. Nellore's Rani Bhavani and Sridevi Ahalyabhai were both well educated women. The position of ordinary women, on the other hand, was dreadful. They were crammed into cabins and cribbed. Only a small number of women were educated in mediaeval Tamilnadu. Avvai Uppai, Uruvar, Valliamma, Gangadevi, Nachchier, and

Tirumalamba, for example, were all well-read. Female education benefited from the arrival of the Europeans. The Bible was available in Tamil, Hindustani, Urdu, and Hindi, as well as Bengali and Oriya, Tamil, and Singhalese. For the first time, the missionaries democratized education. The Brahmins' monopoly was shattered. Everyone was allowed to attend. For the first time in Indian history, the caste monopoly was shattered. In addition, the missionaries offered education a new direction by incorporating useful and lucrative information in secular life and making it a tool for character and personality development.¹

After the Vedic period, Indian civilization placed women next to men. Boys were given importance and prominence, which resulted in girls being neglected. The family had a patriarchal structure. A girl kid was not rejected, but she was not expected nor desired. There is no inscription for ladies. However, few of the women have broken free from their traditional roles as housewives and achieved something in their fields of interest. With examples of their prose, poetry, and written writings, it can be pasteurised. The environment's influence, the pressure of the situation, their hunger for knowledge, and their attentiveness may have aided them in eliminating inferiority amongst them. As a result, many women have found success via poetry and other forms of expression. Paravidya and Aparavidya are two types of education. Paravidya was a place where people may have fun and relax in the world. The intelligent lead a worthwhile life, while the foolish lead an unworthy existence.²

Women were regarded as purely recreational objects. As a result, there are no allusions in the literature to a child or an elderly woman. Even a woman's tears sounded like melody to their ears, as seen by the comparisons of 'Varudhini' with 'Kalaswanam,' Satyabharma with 'Kakali dwani', and Girika with 'Kamboja mela vipanchika ravam.' They regarded a lot of wives and concubines as status symbols since women were treated as objects of pleasure. Tenali Raman slammed Dhurjati for being a womaniser without hesitation. Sri Krishana Devaraya was commended by Thimmana and Peddana. The maid servants in the queens' rooms and wealthy mansions were usually prostitutes. These women fanning the king, assisting him with his footwear and assisting him with his jewels. Prostitution was very common. These women lived in luxury and affluence. Yet, as evidenced when pravarkhya rejected Varudhini in favour of his wife Somidamma, there were husbands who treated their spouses with love and respect. To keep his wife's eyes from watering, Vishnuchitta set up a dry cocoa-nut fire in the kitchen for cooking. In another case, Nigama Sharma's brother-in-law organised his father-in-law's at his wife's request. Workers lived in huts alongside their fields with their wives, who fed them and entertained them with ragi gravy brought from home. For their confinement, women went to their mother houses. Women in the capital had a good education. Madura Vijayam was written by Gangadevi, Kumara Kampana's wife and a distinguished scholar. The authoress of the Raghunathabhyudayam, Ramabhadramba, claims that Ragunatha of Tanjavur's court had many accomplished ladies who could produce four types of poetry.³

Notable Women Scholars

Tanjore's Nayak queen was interested in the arts and literature. Some of them have left an indelible mark on Sanskrit and Telugu literature. The emergence of the southern school of Telugu literature may be seen in the poems and dramas written during this time. Madhuravani and Ramabadramba were two of Ragunatha Nayak's consorts (1600-1630 A.D.). They demonstrated exceptional artistic and literary abilities as women, earning the adoration of their male counterparts. ⁴

a) Gangadevi

Gangadevi was the queen of Kumara Kampana or Kampanna II, who defeated Shambuvaraya in 1361 and the Sultan of Madura in 1371, bringing the entire Tamil region under the Vijayanagar Empire as far south as Setubandha Rameshwaram. She married Kumara Kampana of Vijayanagar, whom she accompanied to the south during his operations against the Sambuvarayas and the Sultan of Madura, and she was a highly educated and accomplished woman. She wrote the Madura Vijayam, a magnificent Sanskrit epic about her husband's great accomplishments. She has given substantial attention to the Sanskrit poets of the Telugu region, such as Agastya, Gangadara, and Vishwanatha, in the eulogy on poets at the commencement of her Madura Vijayam. ⁵

Last but not least, there was the preceptor, from whom she learned everything she knew. Special attention is paid to the poet Tikkaya, whose poetry resembles moonlight, which is eagerly consumed by thirsty poets such as Chakora (sweet-voiced birds). This Tikkaya is none other than Tikkaa-Somayaji, the author of fifteen of the Telugu Mahabharata's eighteen Parvans (books). Gangadevi, Vishvanatha's student and a fan of Tikkanna Somayaji's poetry, was clearly a Telugu princess. Kampanna's conquests in Tamil land are described in Madura Vijayam. Gangadevi rose to prominence as a poetess and was the most famous of the women poets of mediaeval south India who used Sanskrit as their medium of expression. She had taken various situations and descriptions from Kalidasa's writings. ⁶

b) Molla

Molla came from a poor background, as the daughter of Keshava Shetti, a potter from Gopavaram, a few miles north of Nellore. Molla was the first and greatest Telugu poetes, flourishing during Emperor Krisnadevaraya's reign or a little earlier. She mentions the famed poet Srinatha, who lived in the last years of the fourteenth century and the first part of the fifteenth, in her praise on the poets of her Ramayana. The Ramayana by Molla is a poem of remarkable poetic and literary worth. Molla was a prolific author. Her style, though simple, is dignified, and it has earned her a permanent position in the galaxy of immortals that have enriched Telugu literature and language. ⁷

c) Madhuravani

Madhuravani has excellent grammatical and prosody skills, as well as the ability to complete Samasyas (incomplete cryptic verses) and ashtavadhana (attending to eight things at a time). She was also a talented musician, known for her ability to play the vina. Madura-

Vani was her name (of sweet tone). The following emperor, Vijayaraghava, included her as a character in his Yakshagana Raghunatha bhyudayam, referring to her as an Ashukavitavani (one who compare verses off hand). Her Ramayana, which is divided into fourteen cantos, is said to be a Sanskrit translation of Raghunatha Nayaka's Telugu work. Their style is simple, graceful, and dignified, and it has worked well in a variety of settings.

d) Ramaabadramba

Ramabadramba wrote the Raghunthabhyudhayam, a twelve-canto historical poem that describes the political and military events that occurred during the Raghunatha Nayaka period. This poem is significant in the history of Vijayanagar. It's a contemporary description of the political reassessment that expedited the Rayas' empire's breakdown and demise. She has a strong narrator's voice, and her descriptions of fighting scenes are captivating. Her verse runs freely like an unbroken stream, and her style is spontaneous. Another poem attributed to her is "Vijayavilasam".⁸

e) Rangajamma

Rangajamma was the consort of Vijayaraghava Nayaka and was the daughter of Pasupuleti Venkatadri and Mangamamba (1633-1673 A.D). She was also a multi-talented genius whose specialty was sensual poetry, yet she was assassinated by Rajaniti (politics). "Mannarudasa Vilasam" and "Usha- purinayam" are her two Telugu poetry. She also penned the Ramayana and Bharatasaram sarams, as well as a Yakshagana drama. ShaParinayam is undoubtedly her most famous work, and it deserves to be included among the Telugu language's major Prabandhas. She used Vijayaraghava's literary skills when writing the Yakshagana. Her style is uncomplicated and welcoming. Vijayaraghava, who was attracted by her charms and talents, spent most of his time in her company and in appreciation of her veracity bathed her in a shower of gold (Kanakabisheka).⁹

f) Muddupalani

The Bhonsle rulers of Tanjore carried on the Nayakas' literary and cultural traditions, which they had superseded. Muddupalani, the daughter of a courtesan in Pratap Singh's harm, was one of the greatest Tamil countries (1739-1763 A.D.) She, like the majority of the courtesans in Tanjore's court, was well educated and fluent in Sanskrit and Telugu; her mastery of the latter was outstanding. She was a dance and music prodigy, and her mastery of the Vina drew the respect of her peers. The Radhika Santwana or Illadeviya and the Ashtapati are two works she is the authoress of. The former, an erotic poem describing the loves of Radhika and Krishna, is a work of uncommon literary excellence and the style is simple, homely and graceful.¹⁰

g) Oduva Thirumalamba

Thirumalamba, a poetess of great merit who served in the court of King Achyutararya of Vijayanagar, was a genius, as well as a skilled musician and grammarian. She was a scholar of Indian epics, poetry, drama, and philosophy, among other things, and she had other achievements as well. She was a linguist with the ability to write in a variety

of scripts. She had to be stunningly beautiful in addition to all of these wonderful attributes. Achyutaraya was so taken with her that he elevated her to the status of queen. Varadambika Parinaya Champu, a Sanskrit romance about king Achyutarya and his elder queen Varadambika, was written by her. She created the prose-verse (Champu) romance only out of respect and care for Varadambika, as a sweet-natured woman. On the occasion of one of Achyutaraya's dana (gift) ceremonies called Anandanighi (mine of pleasure), she authored two Sanskrit poems and had them carved in several places. She wrote another lyric in 1455 A.D. to commemorate the king's gift of Swanameru (a heap of gold) to Brahmanas at Hampi. Raghunatha Nayaka was a patron of women scholars and poetesses, and Ramabhadramba and Madhuravani were the women of distinction. They had made a contribution to Sanskrit literature. Raghunadhabhyudayam and Ramayana Sara Kavya Tilakam are both outstanding masterpieces. Chandalva Kala Kavi, a contemporary poet, valued Ramabhadramba's work and referred to her as his mentor. In literary polemics, Madhura Vani was named the winner.¹¹

The best education of the period could be found in gurukulas, or single-teacher private seminaries, where the subject and method of instruction were the same as they had been for millennia. The degraded gurukula system of the 18th century is castigated as follows by Schwartz, who is normally a gentle critic. The education of the children is shamefully neglected under such a dreadful government. Only a few children learn to read, write, and calculate costs, and they are all boys." Private or public education was available to indigenous people. Defects were kept and handled by the people themselves, whether elementary or higher, were administered at home to boys and very rarely to girls. Brahmin boys in Patasalas were taught Hindu holy scriptures by rote by Vedic teachers. Chettis and the Kanakkars were proficient in accounting and book keeping, but they lacked knowledge of religious learning and its related disciplines. Cudgeon leaves were used for writing by students and teachers. Only a few copies of rare books were printed and published even after printing became popular. The pay for teachers was low and primarily in kind.¹² In any case, women's education was a rare phenomena. Few women, though, outperformed male poets and scholars. Anyhow the general condition of women was not so appreciable but definitely a lowered one.

Conclusion

One of the most important means of social freedom was education. Women's admittance into the official education system not only demonstrates society's willingness to provide education for women, but it also raises questions about gender roles in society. Despite the fact that education was only available to royalty, we nonetheless find several women poetesses among the common people who demonstrate the spread of education and wisdom to the lower strata of society. Overall, we can claim that the status enjoyed by women throughout this time period is comparable to that enjoyed by women today.

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