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Women in ancient Andhra (700 BC TO 700 AD)

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Abstract

Women in India are an intimate part of nature, both in imagination and in practice. at one level nature is symbolized as the embodiment of the feminine principle, and at another, she is natured by the feminine to produce life and provide sustenance. From the point of view of Indian cosmology, in both the exoteric and esoteric traditions, the word is produced and renewed by the dialectical play of creation and destruction, cohesion and disintegration. The tension between the opposites from which motion and movement arises is depicted as the first appearance of dynamic energy (sakthi). All existence arises from this primordial energy which is the substance of everything, pervading everything. The manifestation of this power, this energy, is called nature.

The player because Lila or play, as free spontaneous actively, in her nature. The will – to – become many is her creative impulse and through this impulse, she creates the diversity of living forms in nature. The common yet multiple life of mountains, trees, rivers, animals is an expression of diversity that prakruthi gives rise to. The creative force and the created world are not separate and distinct nor is the created world uniform, static and fragmented. It is diverse, dynamic and interrelated.

Keywords: Women, Traditions, Life, Andhra, Hinduism Buddhism and Jainism

Introduction

N The estimation in which woman is held, the status occupied by her in society and the treatment accorded to her have been justly regarded as marks of the degree of civilization and culture attained in any country. Our moral ideas regarding women have been too often conceived in a narrow sense as concerned with the development of what has been called sexual morality and with the obligations of chastity and marital fidelity. The ideas of womanhood include not merely the relations of husband and wife or mother and children or the intimate relationships of family life, but the recognition accorded to her personality, the nations we formed about her capacity, her character, her claim to equality, independence and freedom for development, her rights to personal liberty, to the ownership and control of property of the choice of her vocation and to her rights as well as duties as a member of society. In the unsettled conditions through which many societies have passed and in times when the need for defense against external enemies was imperatives, the special qualities and virtues of the weaker sex would have less scope for exercise and woman would be regulated to a subordinate position to men.

Nature as feminine principle: women in nature

Women in India are an intimate part of nature, both in imagination and in practice. at one level nature is symbolized as the embodiment of the feminine principle, and at another, she is natured by the feminine to produce life and provide sustenance. From the point of view of Indian cosmology, in both the exoteric and esoteric traditions, the word is produced and renewed by the dialectical play of creation and destruction, cohesion and disintegration. The tension between the opposites from which motion and movement arises is depicted as the first appearance of dynamic energy (sakthi). All existence arises from this primordial energy which is the substance of everything, pervading everything. The manifestation of this power, this energy, is called nature.

Nature, (maria mies 1986) ^[1] both animate and inanimate, is thus an expression of sakthi, the feminine and creative principle of the cosmos; in conjunction with the masculine principle (purusha), nature creates the world, nature as prakruthi is inherently active, a powerful, productive force in the dialectic of the creation, renewal and substance of all life. In

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Kulachudamim Nigama, prakruthi says.

“There is none but myself,
Who is the mother to create? (Ambedkar b.r. 1958) [2]

The player because Lila or play, as free spontaneous actively, in her nature. The will – to – become many is her creative impulse and through this impulse, she creates the diversity of living forms in nature. The common yet multiple life of mountains, trees, rivers, animals is an expression of diversity that prakruthi gives rise to. The creative force and the created world are not separate and distinct nor is the created world uniform, static and fragmented. It is diverse, dynamic and interrelated. (A.S. Altekar 1958).

Position of women in ancient period

The deterioration of the position of women

Deterioration is what, B.Waker called a “terrible degradation” degradation of the Hindu women in later times. It is the switch from healthy social system (early Aryans) to a system which is mered by social evils we distinguish between actual changes in the course of history which must be studied carefully.

The Arthasasthra In many ways more liberal than the religious law books, lays down regulations that appreciably milder than those we have outlined. “Moreover, deterioration was not a single event, but a series of individual process with little chronological connection of special social importance is Niyoga and sati we add the chastity of women and dowry deterioration was hardly spread over a millennium, maybe it was the spread over half a millennium, say 300 – 800 A.D.

The place was in history

Jainism and Buddhism, it is in agreed fact, had spread more rapidly among the non – Aryan peoples of the eastern and southern india. The Aithereya brahmana (800 B.C) where in we come across the Andhras for the first time as a trans-vindyan people, classes them with the non-Aryans such as the Sabaras and Pulindas where as the other brahmanical literature is unequivocal in castigating them as mlechchas. This may be one of the reasons for buddhas to enjoy wide popularity with the Andhras as attested by innumerable Buddhist sites that have been discovered and are being discovered all over Andhradesa. There is plenty of literary and archeological evidence which points to the advent of Buddhism into andhradesha before ashoka’s third sangiti (251 B.C), if not during the lifetime of Buddha himself. (Luders list-1909 to 1910) [8].

About the time of the advent of buddhism, Andhras appear to have been divided into several tribes and on the authority of Megasthenes (300 B.C) quoted by Pliny (100A.D), we may say that they possessed thirty walled towns and commanded together a large army. Next only to that of the imperial Mauryas in strength in equipment. We may not be wrong from this account that the andhras at that time were passing through the early phase of urbanisation and were divided into a number of tribal republics or city sites. Literary and archeological sources note some of these states Asmakas, Sebakas in Karim Nagar, Mahisekas in Nalgonda, Nagas at Dhanyakataka, Somakas at Vaddamanu, Yaksas at Battiprolu, Kalimgas at mouth of Godavari river. Most of these tribes were totemistic as their names suggest and were

worships of mother goddess and builder of megalithic cultures, the tradition of which were destined to influence later developments in the religious practices in the land. Almost all these tribes accorded enthusiastic welcome to buddhism (N. Krishnakumari 1997) [7] and the rich artisan and merchant classes of the walled cities liberally supported buddist institutions. Ashoka Maurya according to the ceylonese chronical mahavamsa sent Mahadeva bhikku to Mahishamandala and his proselyting activities extended to the neighbouring pallava bhogga. where the ancestors of ikshvakus, probably came under his influence Asoka erected pillars at Rajulamandagiri, Yarragudi, Battiprolu, Vaddamanu also have yielded Mauryan association. All these suggest the brisk economic religious activity in land about the middle of third century B.C.

The Kathavattu of the Abhidamma has recorded the leading role which the Andhakas – caityakas and the sailas – had played in the discussion and deliberation of third Buddhist council and it is an eloquent testimony to the mastery of the andhra Buddhist of the noble gospel. With rise of the Sathavahana, the Andhras entre the portals of the historical period (N. Krishnakumari 1997) [7].

However the heterodox religious were not allowed to go freely their own way. Brahmanism had already made considerable lead way in the deccan Bodhayana in Western Deccan (500 B.C) and Apastaniba at the mouth of the Godavari framed regulatory for the performance of vedic rituals and social order on the lines of brahmanical system.

Among the successors of Satavahana the Ikshvaku and Vishnukundins also appear to have entered the brahmanical fold through brhamanism. The early Vishnukundins are clearly known to have been Buddhism. After down fall of the Buddhism women place also downfall in early Medieval Andhra.

Women in this period-early phase (ASWI-VOL VI)

Women occupied a prominent position in society. the idea women being a chattel of her lord with no rights and privileges which make life worth living, was quite alien to the period. In the western cave and Amaravathi inscriptions we come across a bevy of ladies making some times very costly donations. A great number of the exquisitely sculptured rail pillars, toranas and stupa slabs at Amaravathi were donated by ladies of the nearly 145 epigraphs from Amaravathi 72, out of the thirty at Kuda 13, out of the 29 from nasik 16, either records gift by ladies or gifts in which the ladies are associated. Women joined hands with men in construction chaitya cave at Karla the most excellent mansion in Jumbudvipa. The base of the right of the central door carved with rail pattern and similar piece on the left were the gifts of two nuns. A belt of rail pattern on the inner phase of gallery was also a bikkhunis gift. The remaining pillar on the open screen in front of the verandah was the gift of a house wife. These instances unmistakably show that ladies were allowed to possess property of their own (ASSI VOL I)

Ladies even got the titles of their husbands E.g: Mahaboji, maharathnis, bhojiki, kutumbini, gahini, vaniyini etc. widows were shunning ornaments and to the bent oneself control and restraint and penance (E I VOL VIII NASIK).

In the time of 4th 5th 6th 7th centuries position of women was degraded. Buddhism was also declined. Hinduism was raised. Occurred tantric practices in religions were the major

cause to the decline of Buddhism, degradation of position of women.

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