

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF ROYAL WOMEN IN TRAVANCORE

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INTRODUCTION

The word “Travancore” is derived from the Malayalam term “Tiruvitamkur” or “Thiruvithamcode” in different period. The state was called in different names such as “venad,Vanchidesam and Thiru Adi-Desom.Venad is a corruption of ‘Vanavanad’ the land of the celestials. “Vanchidesom” means either the land of treasure or the land of bamboos. “Thiru Adi-Desam “, means the royal feet and represented the usual form by which the people addressed the rulers of Travancore. It is ruled by various kings in various durations. The kingdom gives to equal power to the women. Sometimes the throne ruled by the women. There is 3 women ruled Travancore throne. Such as Gowri Lakshmi Bai, Gowri parvathy Bai, Sethu Lakshmi Bai. In this aim of the article is brings out the women participation of the Travancore throne.

During the sangam period, the whole South India was under the control of Chera, Chola, and Pandiya Empire. South Travancore was also a part of this political system during the Sangam age. Chastity of women was honored during the Sangam age. According to a double standard of morality, respectable women had to be chaste but respectable men did not. Chastity of women was glorified on many contemporary men did not. Chastity of women was glorified on many contemporary whorls like Tolkappiyam, Akananuru, Silapatikaram etc. Kannaki was noted for her chastity. Love marriage was common during Sangam period¹ many folk also tells us about the rule of Aravalli, Sooravali, Pavalakkaodi and others who were petty rulers in Tamilaham. Women have been glorified in Tamil Literature as the ‘Lamp of home’ women are always referred as ‘Mangala Mahalir’, ‘Melliyal Mahalir’, ‘Seyelai Mahalir’ and ‘Manaiyal’ during the Sangam period. There is no yagna, no prohita and no typing of tali, after Aryan influence in the later period the above things were practiced. The Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Mauryan, Megasthenese had mentioned in his book India about the rule of a queen who shares the throne equally with her husband.²

Kalingattuparani, which deals with Kalinga War, says about some privilege of Thigavalli, wife of Chola king Kulotunga I had. She shared the throne with her husband and supported the king in the day-to-day administration. Queen Mangammal, Rani Meenakshi, Muththirvai Machiyar of Ramnad, Velu Nachiyar of Sivaganga and Lakshmi Devi of Sreerangam were some of the important women who ruled many parts of South India.³

During 15th and 16th century there was so many unworthy practices and customs in South Travancore. Feudalism emerged in all parts of South Travancore and they become defacto rulers. Namboodri and Nairs acted as feudal lords. Slavery untochability, dowry, Devadasi that pulled women into untold misery.⁴

ROLE OF WOMEN MISSIONARIES OF L.M.S:

Ringeltaube came to Tharangampad in 1804. He started a school at mailady in 1809, in that school they taught Tamil, Malayalam, English and Maths⁵. Wherever he built school nearby them. To abolish illiteracy in Travancore he started education system. Macaulay was the Resident of Travancore during Ringeltaube’s period. At that time, Government and Christian leaders had a good relationship due to him and so he was called as the “ Prince of Travancore Resident’.

After Ringeltaube, Rev Charles Mead came to Travancore in 1817⁶. He landed at Colachel and came to Mailady during his time Carnel Manto (1810) was the resident of Travancore. He was known as the “Father of Travancore Missionaries”. He contributed a lot for the development of Christianity. He felt a lot by seeing the caste system in Travancore as a head for his education system Reformative Missionaries like Ringeltaube, mead, James Emlyn, Mault, Rev.louid etc had done great jobs for the development of poor people in Travancore⁷. They also sow seeds for Reformation in Travancore and take steps to make this reformation to reach the people. The wives of Missionaries had also contributed their best for the development of Travancore.

The Christian missionaries started schools in many parts of South Travancore. Women were encouraged for education. Most of the communities hesitated to send their daughters to school. The missionaries opened separate girl’s school and women’s colleges. The work of Christian missionaries and the growth of western education made social awareness among the people⁸.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF ROYAL WOMEN:

It is pitiful to see in our long recorded history, very rarely women raised as rules of a country. Sultana Razia Begum, Durgavati, Lakshmi Bayi, Hazrat Mabal are the few who showed their talent as par with men in administration. in Travancore history many women showed their talent in administration. Umayammai Rani lakshmi Bayi, Gouri Parvathy Bayi, Sethu lakshmi Bayi are some of regents who showed their outstanding performances.⁹

GOURI LAKSHMI BAI 1810-1815:

King Bala Rama Varma died on 7th November 1810 leaving no male member in the family to succeed. The only members in the ruling family at present were four princesses Lakshmi Bayi, Parvathy Bayi, Lakshmi Bayi’s daughter Rukmini bayi,and a young female child who died shortly afterwards. Finally Gouri Lakshmi bayi assumed as the queen of the Travancore she was barely twenty years old and possessed little

experience of the world for in those days the members of royal family led more or less secluded life with in the walls of the palace. Mean while Col munro assumed the Diwanship in addition to the resident. With the help of Diwan, Gouri Lakshmi Bayi the introduced a number of reforms that made for reaching changes in Travancore. She introduced some reforms in local government. She introduced 'Pattayams'.¹⁰ Pattayams contained the extent, tenure, government demand etc of each riots holding and a land register was who compiled. The output of paddy and other produces was sougthed increased by taking away fields from the possession of indifferent and indolent owners and gave them to others who were ready to apply the requisite quantity of labor. Market regulations were ready to apply the requisite quantity of labor. Market regulations were duty when sold in the markets. The sale of tobacco, arrack and other intoxicants was regulated in all centers of trade such as Padmanabhapuram, Trivandrum, Quilon and mavelikara. The amelioration of the condition of slaves was another achievement of her administration. Zilla Courts were established at Padmanabhapuram, Trivandrum, Mavelikarai Viakom, and always for the trial of offenders and decision of civil disputes.¹¹ A court of appeal was established at the capital with five judges, one whom was the Dewan himself. Police force was strengyhened. The Devaswams which look after the temple administration was also modified. Gouri Lakshmi bayi continued her reforms in the country¹².

In 1814, Col Munro was relieved form his duties as Dewan. He was succeeded by Dewan Padmanabhan. Rani was ready to accept Munro's advice. But in certain situations she was enough to take decision on her own. Gouri Lakshmi Bayi died in 1841 AD. The region of Rani Lakshmi Bayi though short was a bright period in the history of Travancore she respected the traditions of the past, but was anxious to affect reforms¹³.

GOURI PARVATHY BAI:

After the death of Queen Rani Lakshmi Bai, Raani V.Gouri Parvathy Bai was recognized as regent. The reign of Rani Parvathy bai was remarkable as one of the best periods in the annals of the State. The beginning of the social reforms was carefully laid. Members of the communities low in the social scale were, for the first time, allowed to use ornament of gold and silver. The poll tax levied on castes such as Ezhavas, Vannars, Kavuthis Chettis etc,was abolished. The trend of legislation tended in the direction of doing away with invidious rules of social precedence and establishing civic equality so far as it was possible on those days. Women were constrained to remain unmarried till their thirtieth or fortieth year of age and consequently many untold things are seen to happen. The queen issued proclamation that 'All virgins in the families of Namboodiries and potties should be married between the ages of ten to fourteen.'¹⁴ The export duty on rice paddy and other cereals was abolished to make cultivators to obtain maximum profit. The tolerant religious policy of Rani Parvathi Bai elicited the appreciation of the erection of building. In Nagercoil a large number of bungalows were granted to them besides a sum of Rs. 5000Rev. Mead,one of the missionaries was appointed a judge of the Zillar Court at Nagercoil.

SETHU LAKSHMI BAI:

Sethu Kakshmi Bai ruled the country from 1924 to 1931 she introduced many reforms like Village Panchayat Act By which local self government was introduced in rural areas. She also introduces many social reforms like abolishing devadasi system, prohibiting animal sacrifice in temples, etc. In 1931 the Sre. Chitra Thirunal Bala Rama Varma became major and took over the charges.¹⁵

CONCLUSION:

This article deals about the political participation of Royal womens in Travancore Kingdom. During the time of Gowri Lekshmi Bai the administration was do the advice of Dewan Manro. There are various reforms make the royal women in Travancore. So the Travancore Kingdom gave more power to the women. In this Article proved that.

END NOTES

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