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Pre-eighteenth Century Oriya Literature and Women

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Abstract

Medieval Orissa basically from fifteenth century to eighteenth century produced a rich culture of Oriya literature. But these literatures portray women as a luxury items for patriarchal Oriya society. Contemporary scholars, poets, have depicted about women education, social evil customs like dowry, widowhood, sati, child marriage, rituals and practices for women folk. Though women were playing vital role for the progress of Oriya society and culture but their achievements were neglected by male dominated society. Always Oriya women were facing the problems of restriction on their freedom. The rules and regulations were constructed to restrict their liberties and confined them within the four walls of house. Again the Brahmanical principles made their condition more deplorable. Pre-eighteenth century Oriya literature which was mostly influenced by *riti* literature of the period portrayed Oriya women as an inferior group in the society.

Keywords: Orissa, Oriya literature, Women.

1. Introduction

Oriya literature began from fifteenth century when Sarala Das wrote Oriya Mahabharata. Before it Sanskrit literature had the dominant position in Orissa. Sarala Das like Chaucer freed Oriya literature from the thralldom of Sanskrit and made it people's literature with independent status. He shaped it as it would be appropriate for the mass in Orissa. Then number of Oriya poets and scholars came and produced a rich culture of Oriya literature.

However, literature of Orissa of ancient and medieval time did not forget to depict the image of women in the society. Unlike Indian literature, Orissa literature also followed the steps of the great poets and scholars of India who has portrayed women characters vividly in their works. From the beginning of the Vedic period onwards Indian literature had been given great importance to women characters and depicted their position and status in the society. In spite of various restrictions women succeeded in creating her own place in the contemporary literature as well as in the society. Instances like the Karuvaki, the queen of Ashok, traditionally accepted as belonging to Orissa; the queen of Kathaeans who fought so bravely with Alexander the Great; the Lichhavi princess Kumardevi who was instrumental in laying the foundation of the vast Gupta empire; the great Mahadevi Dhruvasvamini who was the chief queen of Chandragupta – II; Prabhavati Gupta, the daughter of Vikramaditya by another Naga queen Kubernaga, Rajyasri, the wife of the great Mukhari king Grahavaerman – II; the great queens of Kasmiri like Didda etc. mentioned by Kalhana in his *Rajatarangini* and Razia Sultana of the thirteenth century are the examples of women power and position.

The ancient history of Orissa gives names of great women like Karuvaki, Kalyanidevi, Mohadevi etc. However, in the case of Political history of Orissa patriarchal features are found in many old works. Such as the '*Talapatta Jataka*' records the conversation between on Orissa royal couple like this, "gentle lady, I have no power over all inhabitants of the state, nor am I their master; I have only Jurisdiction over those who revolt against the ruler and indulge in harmful activities. It is because of this that I cannot give you the authority over the whole Kingdom".¹ Above stanza indicates that women were considered as an inferior group who are unable to handle the political administration of the state which was considered entirely as a manly affair.

In spite of that, Oriya women were not limited within the four walls of the house. Ancient history of Orissa recorded many examples on Oriya women who had succeeded in both their political and social life. According to a tradition in coastal region of Orissa, Ashok (Magadha) invaded Kalinga being attracted by the beauty of Karuvaki the fiancé of the

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crown prince of Kalinga. After his victory over Kalinga, Ashoka was converted to Buddhism as Karuvaki desired that she should marry only her co-religionist. That Karuvaki mother of Trivara was the second queen of Ashoka who made huge religious endowment. Queen's edicts of Ashok described it.

During the time of Kharavela (2nd century B. C) royal ladies were appearing in public in the company of their husbands to witness dancing performances or to attend religious ceremonies. *Ranigumpha* cave have contained some sculpture of royal women who accompanied their husbands to religious places. Some other women were well acquainted with military exercises, driving of elephants and horses, killing of lions, climbing of trees, nursing a wounded soldier and so on. *Manchapuri* cave was dedicated by the chief queen of Kharvela for the use of Jain monks in Kalinga.

According to epigraphic records royal mothers and queens were playing vital role in politics as well as in religious matters. The *Saildbhava* record mentions that Queen Kalyana Devi the wife of Dharmaraja – II (705-725) patronized Jain monks. The chief queens appear to be quite important personages, whose presences at the time of donating grants have recorded in the copperplate characters. The *Kesari copperplate* of Satrubhanja Deva reveals that at the time of making a grant of the village Syallamayi in Urttvisaya, the Mahadevi Anakadevi along with other high officials of the kingdom was present. The Adipura copperplate of Durjaya Bhanja reveals that at the time of the grant was made, Chipa Mahadei with Yuvarajdeva was present. This shows that the chief queen was closely associated with administration.

Bhauamakara dynasty (736-942 A. D.) is significant in the political and social history of Orissa. In this dynasty six queens constituted one third of the total number of rulers. They ruled over such a vast kingdom comprising the whole Midnapur, Baleswar, Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam and Mayurbhanja. Of them, Tribhuvan Mahadevi (846 A. D.) became the ruler since her son was a minor. She is known to us from Dhenkanal Grant plate. Gauri Mahadevi became the administrator of the Bhaumakara dynasty for a short period and she was succeeded by her daughter Dandi Mahadevi (916 and 923 A. D.). She assumed the titles of *paramamaheswari*, *paramavatarika*, and *parameswari*. Many records, land grants in northern as well as in southern Toshali suggests that she had full control over both the regions. Vakula Mahadevi (940 A. D.), the second queen of Suvankaradeva V ascended the throne after Dandi Mahadevi. Dharmamahadevi (945 A. D.) was the last known ruler of the Bhaumakara dynasty.

Early medieval period also witnessed many women scholars and artists who were born in Orissa. Lakshmikara (729 A. D.), the sister of Indrabhuti the king of Odiyan was a famous luminary in Tantric Buddhism and was revered as one of the eight four *sidhas* of tantric Buddhism. Perati Somidamana (13th century A. D.), wife of Narasimha Bhattapodhyaya, was trained in the Vedas, shastras and puranas. Achchhipati Bhattarika (13th century A. D.), wife of the Ganga ruler Danarava, was a learned and wise lady as known from Tekalli copper plate land grant of Indravermana III. Sivarani a noble lady of Ganga lineage and mother of Saptaya

Pradhani, a minister of the Gangas, is described as *Kaliyuga Saraswati* or goddess of learning.

Chandrika Devi a daughter of Aniyankabhima – III was a well known artist in music. She also built *Anantavasudeva Temple*. The *Meghaswar* Temple inscription contains information about her. The sculpture of a woman, writing love letter in the *Mukteswar* Temple at Bhubaneswar showing that women of the period were well aware about education in medieval Orissa. And many dancing image of women on the temple walls indicates that medieval Oriya women were experts in the *gandharva vidya* and *Devadasi* dance or *Mahari nurtya* in Oriya culture. Some scholars argued that a dancing girl could become a queen. Karpurasri, a dancing girl achieved this success and became queen of Karnakesari, Somavamsi king.

During the medieval period, Tukka, the daughter of Gajapati king Prataprudradeva and wife of Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagar Empire composed five verses in Sanskrit known as *Tukka Panchakam*. In fifteenth century, Madhavi dasi a great poetess wrote many kavya and poems. She wrote a Sanskrit drama, known as *Purusottamdeva* and some Kirtanas mostly devotional and love songs in vaisnava literature. Brundavati Dasi was a famous poetess who wrote *Purnatama Chandraodaya* in twenty adhyayas. She was very learned in various Sastras and quoted them also in her works. Pre-eighteenth century witnessed the emergence of culture of literature which did not look back after Sarala Das's revolution in Oriya literature. Large number of scholars and poets wrote numbers of works in Oriya language. Bishnu Das (16th century) was a great poet of the period. He wrote *Varsa Bhavana Chautisa*, *Sukhi Chautisa*, *Mandakini Chautisa* etc. In view of his poetic talent, the 16th century Oriya literature may be turned as the age of Bishnu Das. Deva Durlabha Das (16th century) wrote *Rahasya Manjari*, Harihara Narendra (16th century) wrote *Manakalas*, Sisusankar Das(16th century) wrote *Ushabhilas* – a love story between the hero Anirudha and heroine Usha, depicts the picture of Oriya traditions and customs of that period, Karttika Das (16th century) wrote *Rukmini Vibha* – which portrays the marriage of Rukmini and various Oriya rituals and traditions were prevalent in the society, Paratap Roy (17th century) wrote *Sasisena* – a typical oriya words used in this kavya and story based on the folk tale i.e. princess Sasisena's love affairs with Ahimanikyia the son of a minister named Kusalavarmana. Balaram Das (16th century) wrote *Jagamohan Ramayana*, *Laxmipurana* – it is a women oriented work based on the theme of patriarchal domination and caste system of the medieval period. Jagannatha Das (16th century) wrote *Bhagavat*, *Gajastuti*, *Manasikshya* etc., Achutyananda Das wrote (16th century) wrote *Surya Samhita*, *Malikas*, Yosovanta Das (16th century) wrote *Chaurasi Ajna*, *Sivasorvodaya*, Ananta Das (16th century) wrote *Arthatosini*, Vajari Das, Haladhara Das Devananda Das Chaitany Das Narasimha Mishra all belonged to seventeenth century produced large amount of oriya works. Purusottam Das (17th century) wrote *Kanchikaveri* – a historical works based on the story of Gajapati Purusottam Deva (15th century) and his invasion in South India.

Sarala Mahabharata and Women

Oriya women had occupied a major portion in the Pre-eighteenth century literary works. In *sarala Mahabharat* (written by Sarala Das in 15th century A. D.) women appeared as ideal character. She is portrayed as a housewife and taken all responsibilities of the family. She was not limited within family sphere, and also she was giving appropriate advice to her husband when it is required. In *Sarala Mahabharat*, Gandhari gives advice to Dhutarastra (her husband) not to feel unhappy on his luck. Dyuryadhana's wife Bhanumati gives suggestions to her husband to give five villages to Pandavas. *Sarala Mahabharata* also describes that women of the period were aware about education. Draupadi, Bhanumati were experts in *Sastras*. Temple images of the period are the living example that testifies the prevalence of education among the women. Apart from that, Sarala Mahabharata also depicts Oriya tradition and customs which led the degradation of women position in the society. *Jautuka* (dowry) was a popular custom of the period which was offering during marriage ceremony by bride's father. According to Brahmanical religion, no sacrifice is considered complete without payment of appropriate fees or honorarium to the priests. According to Sarala Das, the presents offered to the bride groom were known as *jautuka* (dowry). The other literary works like *Dandi Ramayana* of Balaram Das, *Parimala* of Narasihna Sen, Arjun Das's *Ramabhiva* and Jagannatha Das's *Bhagavata* mentions about dowry which was prevalent in the society.

In *Saral Mohabhara* it is portrayed that after marriage a woman should considered her husband as God and obey him always. She would live and die for him. She was to be faithful and devoted to her husband throughout her life. The highest aspiration of the women was to remain a loyal and devoted wife. The pre-eighteenth century literature is clearly indicative of the prevalent social concept of marriage, and that is this: a husband is husband, good or bad, drunkard or debauch, but wife must look up to him as a demo god. Probably married women were depended on their husband economically during medieval period. Thus she did not have other option to disobey her husband besides worshipping him. However, this custom was not applicable in the lower strata in the Orissan society. Women from this level could do menial labour and moved out to earn their livelihood and also they could remarry.

There are many women characters in *Sarala Mahabharata* such as Kunti, Draupadi, Gandhari, etc. who are the important characters of this Mahabharata bears some features of Oriya culture and tradition. We can give a brief outlook on these characters.

Gandhari: she was born in a day like *Amabasya* for which she was considered as inauspicious. Twenty one grooms died when they sat with Gandhari on the marriage stage. Thus at the time of the marriage proposal of Gandhari with Dhutarastra, on an examination of their horoscopes, the matches was found to be inauspicious. Hence here Sarala Das refers to a custom to put an end to this problem by marrying *Sahada tree* (*Strebulus Asher*) which prevalent in the society.

Kunti: through the character of the Kunti the poet portrays that an unmarried girl when she becomes mother the whole society stands against her and she has to face the society and lived with great patience. Even she has not hesitated to adjust in the lower level of the society, though she belonged to a royal family. But later on Kunti became the guide and supervisor of Draupadi who had been suffered by marrying five brothers.

Ganga: Ganga was a muddy woman who killed her six sons and tortured Santunu (her husband) a lot. She was an arrogant lady and many times she has beaten her husband. This is the real picture of the Oriya society which has been depicted by the poet in his *kavya*. Though husband beating is not a common tradition like wife beating in Orissa but it sometimes happens in rare cases. Mostly in the matriarchal family and among the lower classes of the society this type of cases happens.

Draupadi: Draupadi, the heroine of *Sarala Mahabharata* who was a leading character is representative of medieval elite women of Oriya society. She was a woman of high qualities and had given importance to her purity. Even she had taken bath in the fire to regain her purity. During pre eighteenth century bodily purity (mostly for women) was an essential quality. Without it she was considered as characterless women and it was difficult for such type of women to exist in the society. Even today's Oriya society has not forgotten this culture. The Poet portrays Draupadi as a simple village woman of courage who took revenge on Dushasana who humiliated her before the royal court by killing him through Bhim. In *Mahabharata*, poet has given importance to the special type of women like Ganga as a arrogant, Kunti as a simple and submissive, Draupadi as an elite class woman of strong mind, and Gandhari as an ideal woman.

In all his works, Sarala Das describes about the society and portrays the picture of women and their position in the pre-eighteenth century Orissa.

Some scholars like Kumudini Barai (a feminist historian of Orissa) argued that women were not underestimated during the said period. But in reality, in many cases women suffered due to many rigid traditions and customs which were prevalent in the Orissan society. Such as early marriage, patriarchal domination, restriction on widow remarriage, sati tradition, etc. made life of women miserable. Even girl's marriage was happening at the age of seven. Sarala Das argues that if a girl gets her puberty in her parental home then all the family member will go to hell. According to him girls should marry before puberty. The presence of a young unmarried girl in the house of her father is taken to be inauspicious. Hence, early marriage was a common and ideal customs during the later medieval time. No age limit was fixed for the groom. He could marry in his old age. Sometimes, the greedy father gave his daughter in marriage to old persons in return of money. During this time the birth of a female child was considered as a curse and at the same time the birth of a male child was welcomed with great joy. Polygamy was also a well known tradition which made women position more deplorable.

Sarala Mahabharata also describes about dowry which was prevailing during that time. It was given in various forms like

gold, silver, land, ornaments, servant's etc. Love affair was not encouraged by the society. Prostitutes were considered as outcastes or *chandala* class (lower class people in Hindu Varna fold). Mahabharata vividly depicts about prostitution. To earn their living prostitutes offer their body to persons irrespective of their age and caste. The poet argues that prostitutes do not hesitate to offer their body even to their fathers and other such elders. The story of Mudgal ponda, a Brahmana and the prostitutes Hiranyakshi, gives us a clear picture of this trade. This pre eighteenth century work also portrays that a Brahmin widow was having illicit relations with the Sudras and such girls were driven out from the society. Mahabharata gives the picture of the dress-ornaments of the contemporary periods. It is described when poet mentions about the marriage ceremony of Draupadi. Lower caste women were not restricted within the four walls of the house. They were involved in many businesses like milk selling, shopping, etc. for their livelihood. But at the same time the middle class and high class women were limited and many restrictions were imposed on them which restricted their life styles and freedom.

Monogamy was also practiced in medieval Orissa. Sarala Das also has given many instances about this practice. He also praised the person who had one wife and hated them who had many wives. In Sarala Mahabharat, there are number of characters who had one wife such as Duryadhan had one wife, and Drona, Ekalavya Santipani Ananta etc. had monogamous families. Indeed, only the lower class families liked to monogamy tradition but the rich and status person maintained many wives.

Polygamy, was not a medieval culture, it had very old root from ancient period. However, this system became more popular during the medieval period. Probably the feudal system which prevailed in the medieval Orissa made this system more popular and made women life worse than before. In Saral Mahabharata it is depicted that high class people had many wives like King Yayati married nine girls and their name were Devayani, Tara, etc.

Female Education, in generally did not get any popularity during pre-eighteenth century period. Only the middle class and high class family could enjoy this facility. Some of the Private institutions where education was imparted were *pthasala*, *chatasali* (primary educational school), and religious institutions like temple, *Mathas*, *Biharas* etc. but common women's education system was badly affected due to rigid caste system and various restrictions imposed on them. Mostly the early marriage system was the main obstacle before women education.

The poet Saral Das portrays that in *Mhabharata*, Bhanumati, Draupadi and Pravati had the knowledge of *Sastras*, *gyotish vidya*, etc.² Haravati and Mayavati were well trained in *Tantra vidya*. Even a maid servant of the princess Draupadi was well trained in Arithmetic. It is stated that when Draupadi was going to Svayamber sabha she asked Mudusuli the meaning of *Koti Sagar Akasauhini* (an arithmetic question). Then Mudusuli explained it to her.

In general female education was well established in Orissa. Temple sculpture of the period also has proved that women education was not neglected. In the mean time, common women and lower caste women were not getting educational facilities like middle and high class women. Though economic condition was a major problem for female education but the social stigmas and the caste discrimination deprived them from it.

Sati was not popular during Sarala Age as in the northern India. There are various descriptions in contemporary literature about sati but it was not popular like other customs like polygamy, widowhood etc. Sarala Mahabharata mentions that Satya, a Brahmin widow burnt herself on the funeral pyre of her husband. Uttara hanged herself after receiving the news of the death of her husband. But contemporary historical documents like Persian chronicles and travel accounts on Orissa do not give any references about custom of sati.

Prostitution was a well known institution of the period. The Sarala Mahabharata clearly mentions that prostitutes occupied a major place in the society. The poet also says that a man becomes shameless when he is in love with a lady other than his wife. this institution was a source of immorality. Prostitutes were given as gifts in marriage. According to Utpala Nayak, it is disrespect to the womankind.

Bhagavata of Jagannatha Das (16th century) and *Dandi Ramayana* (16th century) of Balaram Das also portrays that prostitution was an evil practice in the society which created many social issues and problems. The marital life of the people turned into tragedy life due to this institution. Mostly, women became the victim of this system. The medieval Oriya society was made like this that only women can be find guilt and her birth is only for adjustment in the society.

Widow Remarriage was not allowed in Orissa during the pre-eighteenth century. After the death of her husband she had to stay alone and followed some rituals of the Hindu Religion. Sarla Das argues that if a widow loosed her purity, she has no place in the society. In Sarala Mahabharata, there are numbers of instances of widow immorality. A Brahmini widow Bamadeva gave birth to a daughter from a man of sudra caste. But she could not stay at home due to shame. Hence she left her house and wondered in the forest as a mad woman. She threw her daughter into the water. Unlike this, Kuranjani, the widow of the Brahmini Madhusravan, gave birth to a son from a sudra man named Saseka. After this she left the society and lived in the forest due to shame and the torture from the scoeity.

In this way women were suffering in the medieval Orissa. Cruel society was only looking for the exploitation of the women and widow women were the most exploited and dominated people in the society. Not only rituals and social laws made her situation more deplorable but many times she had to face the physical exploitation. From the contemporary literatures, it is proved that how the social laws and orthodox society forced her to leave the society and live like an animal in the forests.

Jagamohana Ramayana and Women

Jagamohana Ramayana has described in details about the marriage, rituals, traditions related to women. There are number of women characters like Sita, Monthara, Vedavati, Rambha, Supranarekha etc. who have occupied major place in this work. Swayambara type of marriage was prevalent in the high class society. Sita of *Jagamohana Ramayana* married in *swayambara* marriage. Balaram Das has also mentioned about the prostitution which was in vogue. He gives a story of Rishysringa and prostitutes But in this work poet has given importance to the marital life and tradition of monogamy and portrays the story of Rama-Sita, Ravana-Rambha, and Vibhandaka-Urvasi who were bonded and followed the custom of monogamy. Though polygamy was prevalent in the high class society but in general, medieval Oriya society had given importance to the monogamy.

Balaram Das vividly describes about the widowhood life in the medieval Orissa. In Dandi Ramayana, he portrays a picture of Tara, the wife Bali. How the life of Tara became a dead body after her husband's death it is the most tragic part of this work. She wore white saree, no oil on head, no kajala in eye, and no cosmetics for her. She had to live with water and limited meal. Poet's description clearly shows that the widows had a hell of life.

Laxmipurana and Women

Laxmipurana, was a great pre-eighteenth century work on women (or goddess Laxmi) written by Balaram Das (16th century). This is a work which narrates the strong Brahmanical ideologies and opposition of a woman against it. The patriarchal domination and the caste discriminations are the main themes of this work.

Laxmipurana provides details about the days devoted to worship of Goddess Laxmi. People of all classes and castes from chandal to Brahmana, worship the goddess on her holy days in the month of Margasira which is the essence of all the twelve months, the season of harvest, as the narrator Prasara explains to the sage Narada. Story of *Lxmipurana* related to the Jagannath Temple and Jagannath, because Jagannatha is considered as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. The story is like this:

Once, Laxmi went out for her regular visit to the world outside the temple complex of Puri. In a human form (as old Brahmin women) she crossed the boundary of the temple complex. She arrives at the house of Sriya, a poor outcaste woman. Sriya's hut has been cleaned and prepared for the goddess. Pleased and impressed with the women's sincere devotion to work and worship, Laxmi manifests herself in her hut on the lotus flower that Sriya has painted on her front porch. She blesses Sriya and grants her boons. When she returns to the temple, the Lord Balaram (elder brother of Lord Krishna) and Lord Jagannath prevent her from re-entering, because she was in an outcaste's house. At Balarama's insistence, the younger brother Jagannath tells Laxmi that she must leave the temple. Then Goddess Laxmi left the temple and promised to teach them a lesson.

The two brothers (Jagannath and Balaram) suffered a lot after Laxmi's departure from the temple. Even they did not get food, water and moved from place to place, and door to door for searching food by keeping them disguised. Laxmi

with the help of other Gods and Goddesses made the situation more difficult for the two brothers. At last the brothers arrive, unknowingly, at the new house that Viswakarma, the architect, god of carpenters has built for Laxmi and decided to beg for food there. The goddess instructs her maids to tell them that here is the house of an outcaste woman. Hungry and desperate, the brothers agreed to eat food cooked by a *chandaluni* (lower caste women). Laxmi cooks an elaborate and splendid feast for them. Then Jagannath recognized the Laxmi's food style and regrets his decision and seeks forgiveness. Laxmi demands more that the egalitarian values she has defended in the world outside be recognized inside the holiest of holy spaces, the Puri temple. She asks that within its premises, Brahmana and *Chandal*, people of all castes and classes be allowed to eat together, feed each other on every single day and Jagannath agreed with her demands and Laxmi returned to the temple complex and harmony restored to the cosmos.

Balaram Das's Laxmi is not a goddess who represents the whole Oriya women who raise her voice against the patriarchal and Brahmanical nature which was prevalent in the contemporary society. Laxmi who dedicated her whole life in serving to Jagannath and the temple is restricted from entering into the temple and told to leave the home. Like Lord Jagannath Laxmi also the Goddess of the earth, she has the right to see her devote without any discrimination. But the decision of Lord Jagannath asking Laxmi to leave the temple was irrational and based on a patriarchal value. Medieval Oriya society which was so patriarchal in nature did not see the progress of women due to the rigid Brahmanical traditions. They were always considered as inferior groups in the society. For this importance were not given to them, even they did not have the right to say something to defend herself. From the above description it is clear that Oriya women during the pre eighteenth century were dominated and exploited by the male society.

Kanchikaveri and Women:

Kanchikaveri was written during the last part of seventeenth century by Purusottam Das, the story which was based on Gajapati Purusottamdeva (15th century) and his Kanchi invasion in south India. In Orissan tradition *Kanchikaveri* or *Kanchi vijaya* story is a well known episode. Scholars also admitted its historical value. K. C. Panigrahi has written a book on this tradition. According to him, Rupambica was the daughter of Saluva Narasimha, after marriage with Gajapati Purusottamdeva her name changed into Padmavati. Name changing of a woman after marriage is a custom of Oriya culture. Similarly, the name of Gajapati Prataprudradeva's daughter Annapurna was changed to Tukka after her marriage with Krishnadeva Raya of Vijayanagar Empire.

The story of Kanchikaveri goes like this: Purusottamdeva proposed to marry Padmavati, the daughter of the king Kanchi. But the king of Kanchi rejected this proposal and said that Gajapati doing menial duty of a sweeper during the annual car festival of Lord Jagannath. So I could not give my daughter to a sweeper. However, the rejection of the Kanchi ruler was considered as an insult to both Jagannath and Gajapati Purusottamdeva. To avenge this insult, Purusottam promised to capture the Kanchi princess Padmavati by force.

Thus he led an expedition against Kanchi and in his second expedition, he capture the Kanchi and the princess of the kingdom. But Purusottamdeva denied to marry Padmavati due to the humiliating words of the Kanchi King. After one year, at the time of car festival, the minister of Gajapati cleverly arranged the marriage of Padmavati with Purusottamdeva.

In this story, the poet gives a clear picture of the rural women and their status in the society. Manika, is a leading character of the *Kanchikaveri* who acted as a milk maid. Gajapati Purusottamdeva met her when he was proceeding towards Kanchi. Manika belonged to a lower class society and used to sell curd by moving from place to place. For livelihood Manika adopted this profession. The poet clearly depicts that lower class women were not limited within the family like middle and high class women. They were not forced to stay behind the veil. Lower class women were enjoying more freedom than the upper caste women.

In general, during pre-eighteenth century women's position in the Indian society underwent many changes as a result of the socio-economic transformations in the country. In Orissa there was a gradual degradation in the position and status of women in every sphere. During the ninth and tenth century there were number of women administrator ruling in Orissa. However, during twelve century no single woman ruler appeared in this position. *Sakti* cult which was popular during Bhaumakara period (8th-10th) gradually disappeared from the society and a new cult like Jagannath cult became popular in the Oriya society. Probably the rise of this male god was partly due to the undermined position of women in the society.

Thus patriarchal domination made the condition of women more deplorable in medieval Orissa. Institution of prostitution existed during pre-eighteenth century Orissa. This tradition was looked as an evil institution of the society. Prostitutes were looked as inferior groups of women who were staying outside of the city. Due to this institution common women were facing many problems and it destabilized their marital life. Devadasi which was a popular tradition during medieval period turned into the institution of prostitution. *Devadasi*, the slave of the god became the *Rajadasi* or slave of the king. Consequently she became the property of the whole society. Their presence in large numbers in the temple led to social vice and kings kept them as concubines. This practice later on also resulted in polygamy. Chodangagadeva (13th century) had as many as twenty queens and many concubines. This practice of polygamy definitely led to the sufferings as well as the degradation of women in the pre-eighteenth centuries. Another most tragic pre-eighteenth century custom was child marriage which made women position more disgraceful. Many contemporary literatures described this tradition. Pre-puberty marriage was in vague in the medieval Oriya society and it was the main reason for women suffering from widowhood, prostitution during that period.

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8. Arjun Joshi, *History and Culture of Khijjingakotta: Under the Bhanjas*, (New Delhi: Vikash Publishing Pvt. Ltd.), 81.
9. Ibid.
10. Utpala Nayak, *Women's Development and Social Conflicts: Historical perspectives on Indian Women (study in Orissa)*, (New Delhi: Kaniska Publication, 1999), 23
11. Umakanta Subudhi, *The Bhaumakaras of Orissa*, (Culcutta: Punt Pustak, 1978), 72.
12. Ibid., 77; Biswarupa Das, *The Bhauma-karas and their Time*, (New Delhi: Oriental Publishers and Distributers,) 82-83.
13. Ibid., 79. From Angulu and Taltali Paltas (undated) we known that Dharmamahadevi was the last women and ruler of the Bhaumakara dynasty.
14. Bina Kumari Sarma, Contribution of Women to the Devolopment of Oriya literature, in *Exploring Orissa History*, ed. Nihar Ranjan Patnaik, (Cuttack: Kitab Mahal, 2005), 260.
15. Utpala Nayak, *Women's Development and Social Conflicts: Historical perspectives on Indian Women (study in Orissa)*, (New Delhi: Kaniska Publication, 1999), 47.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibd.
18. Ibid, 51.
19. Ibid., 50.
20. Bina Kumari Sarma, Contribution of Women to the Devolopment of oriya literature, in *Exploring Orissa History*, ed. Nihar Ranjan Patnaik, (Cuttack: Kitab Mahal, 2005), 261.
21. Ibid., 261-262; Rnjita Nayak, Odiya Sahityare Narira Samajika Stiti O Swarupa, in *Narira Sanman O Swadhikar* (oriya), ed. Orissa Sahitya Academy, (Bhubaneswar: OSA, 1992), 69.
22. Utpala Nayak, *Women's Development and Social Conflicts: Historical perspectives on Indian Women (study in Orissa)*, (New Delhi: Kaniska Publication, 1999), 99.
23. Hare Krishna Mahatab, *History of Orissa*, 2, (Cuttack: Prajatantra Prachar Samiti, 1960), 251.
24. Ibid., 465-470.
25. Ibid., 253.
26. Sarala Das, *Mahabharata* (Oriya), ed., A. B. Mohanty, (Cuttack: Radharamana Pustakalaya, 1953), 163.

27. Ranjita Nayak, Odiya Sahityare Narira Samajika stiti O Swarupa, in *Narira Sanman O Swadhikar*, ed. OSA, (Bhubaneswar: Orissa Sahitya Academy, 1992), 69.
28. Utpala Nayak, *Women's Development and Social Conflicts: Historical perspectives on Indian Women (study in Orissa)*, (New Delhi: Kaniska Publication, 1999), 84.
29. Sarala Das, *Mahabharata*, Adi Parva, 311.
30. Arjun Das, *Ramavibha*, 75; Balaram Das, *Dandi Ramayana*, Adi Parva, 34; Narasihna Sen, *Paramila*, 48; Jagannath Das, *Bhagavat*, canto -10, 100.
31. Sarala Das, *Mahabharata*, Adi Parva, 80, 123.
*Gandhari boile more svamira je joga
mnu tara bharija sinha karibi ta bhoga
Svami dristi kasti mujin tanka sange kasti
Tanka dristi nahin kimpa thiba mora dristi*
Sarala Das, *Mahabharata*, Adi, 82.
Here when Kunti told Gandhari to open the seclusion from her eyes, she denied and replied that her husband is a blind person, and she is her wife so her duty is to follow him and worship him. She cannot see with her eyes when her husband is unable to see. So it is no need to open her eyes.
32. Utpala Nayak, *Women's Development and Social Conflicts: Historical perspectives on Indian Women (study in Orissa)*, (New Delhi: Kaniska Publication, 1999), 88.
33. Surendra K. Maharana, *Odiya Sahityara Itihasa*, (Oriya), (Cuttack: Orissa Book Store, 2001), 193.; Sarala Das (15th century), *Mahabharata*, Adi parva, 36-39. The line goes like this:
*Jesths masa krishnspaksha amabasya rati
kritika nakshetre sehu hela utapati.*
Sarala Das, *Mohabharata*, Adi parva, 35. The above stanza describes that Gandhari was born in a day like Amabasya which considered as an inauspicious day and Gandhari became the unlucky women in the society.
34. Ibid., 194.
35. Ibid., 180.; Sarala Das, *Mahabharata*, Varna Parva
36. Ibid., 195-197.
37. Draupadi had five husbands, so before going to her husband (any one) she was taking birth in fire to regaining her purity.
38. Kumudini Barai, *Role of Women in the History of Orissa*, (Culcutta: Punt Pustak, 1994), 129.
39. Sarala Das, *Mahabharata*, Madhya parva, 353.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., K. C. Sahoo, *Literature and Social life in Medieval Orissa*, (Ranchi: Pustak Sadan, 1971), 62.
42. Surendra K. Maharana, *Odiya Sahityara Itihasa*, (Oriya), (Cuttack: Orissa Book Store, 2001), 197.
43. Kumudin Barai, *Role of Women in the History of Orissa*, (Culcutta: Punt Pustak, 1994), 130.
44. Surendra K. Maharana, *Odiya Sahityara Itihasa*, (Oriya), (Cuttack: Orissa Book Store, 2001), 197.; K. C. Sahoo, *Literature and Social life in Medieval Orissa*, (Ranchi: Pustak Sadan, 1971), 64
45. K. C. Sahoo, *Literature and Social life in Medieval Orissa*, (Ranchi: Pustak Sadan, 1971), 64.
46. Ibid., 64-65.
47. Surendra K. Maharana, , *Odiya Sahityara Itihasa*, (Oriya), (Cuttack: Orissa Book Store, 2001), 197; Sarala Das, *Mhabharata*, Varna parva, 103.
48. Sarala Das *Mahabharata*, Adi Parva, 230, 220, 176, Udayoga parva, 38,76
49. *Eka buddhi tara more samana prakriti
eka bharija mohara ate Bhanumati
Eka bharijare sina rahe satkriya
alape ayusa tutte jara veni priya.*
Sarala Das, *Mahabharata*, Udayoga Parva, 10.
In this stanza, Duryadhana saying that his wife (Bhanumati) and he are both same quality and nature. Due to one wife he has a good marital life and who have many wives they have very small life line.
50. Ibid., Adi Parva, 4 and 6.
51. Ibid, Adi Parva, 114, Sabha Parva, 334, and Madhya Parva, 48-49.
52. Ibid., Vana Parva, 163.
53. Ibid., adi parva, 259.
54. Ibid., varna parva, 286.
55. Ibid., Drona Prava, 54.
*Jehun stiri swami sange na dianti jhasa
jibite hina huanti male narkavasa
Jehun stiri swami sange nasa hoithanti
swami kula pita kula udhara karanti.*
Here poet describes that, widow who are not jumping into the funeral pyre of her husband, they are dead in living body and go to hell after death. Widow, who burnt herself in funeral pyre of her husband they are the successful women for both husband and father's home.
56. Ibid., Uddyoga Parva, 99-100.; Utpala Nayak, *Women's Development and Social Conflicts: Historical perspectives on Indian Women (study in Orissa)*, (New Delhi: Kaniska Publication, 1999), 105.
57. Utpala Nayaka, a feminist historian of Orissa.
58. Utpala Nayak, *Women's Development and Social Conflicts: Historical perspectives on Indian Women (study in Orissa)*, (New Delhi: Kaniska Publication, 1999), 105.
59. *Para puruse mana dei, je nari ekante ramai
Tahar nahima sukha lese, narake hue parabese
Nindita hue nareloke, nirasa hoi svamisukhe
Bidhaba hue janma sata, se nari svami abhakata.*
Jagannath Das, *Bhagavata*, 1st Skanda and 10th Skanda, 166, 79.
Here poet says that women who are love in other man than her husband, she will go to hell after death and she became the evil women in the society.
60. Sarala Das, *Mahabharata*, Adi Parva, 164.
61. Ibid., Varna Parva, 140.
62. Ibid., Varna Parva, 320.
63. Ibid., 15
64. Ibid.
65. Balarama Das, *Dandi Ramayana*, Kiskinda Kanda
66. Ibid.
67. Utpala Nayaka, *Women's Development and Social Conflicts: Historical perspectives on Indian Women (study in Orissa)*, (New Delhi: Kaniska Publication, 1999), 101.
68. Balaram Das (16th century A. D.), *Laxmipurana*, ed. Govinda Ratha, Cuttack: Nityananda Pustakalaya ; Satya P. Mahanty, *Alteranative Modernities and Medieval Indian Literature the Laxmipurana as Radical Pedagogy*, *Diacritics*, 38, No. 3, (2008): 4-7.
69. Ibid., ; Satya P. Mahanty, *Alteranative Modernities and Medieval Indian Literature the Laxmipurana as Radical Pedagogy*, *Diacritics*, 38, No. 3, (2008): 8-20.

70. Kumudin Barai, *Role of Women in the History of Orissa*, (Calcutta: Panti Pustak, 1994), 118.
71. Ibid., 119-120.
72. Purusottam Das, *Kancikaveri*, 28-48.
73. Ibid.
74. Kumudin Barai, *Role of Women in the History of Orissa*, (Calcutta: Panti Pustak, 1994), 172-174.; B. B. Jena, *Orissa, People, Culture and Polity*, (New Delhi: Kalyani Publication, 1980), 111.; Utpala Nayaka, *Devadasi System in Ancient Orissa, in Society, Polity and Culture of Orissa through Ages*, ed. Raimohan Mohapatra, et al, (Bhadrak: Dr. Jagannath Patnaik Smruti Sansad, 2008), 12-14.
75. Utpala Nayaka, *Women's Development and Social Conflicts: Historical perspectives on Indian Women* (study in Orissa), (New Delhi: Kaniska Publication, 1999), 74.