

Position of Women from 13th century AD to the end of the 15th Century (Religious and Political activities and role as a Daughter)

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Abstract

In this study an attempt is made to study the position of women from about the thirteenth century A. D. to the end of fifteenth century A. D. Any serious study of these aspects is beset with certain difficulties, which must be borne in mind from the beginning. On the one hand, the chronicles provide comparatively little information on those activities of women to which the student of social history should attach importance. On the other hand, even the information these we find is limited to women belonging to courts circles or to the nobility. But, the role of ordinary women in society would certainly deserve great attention, for which some literary sources throw light. In addition to that, there are a number of epigraphic records which contain much information about subject. The research is mainly based on primary sources. Wherever necessary material will also be obtained from limited secondary sources on the social history.

Key words: Religion, Politics, *Bhikkuni*, Buddhist Canon, *aṭṭakārakā*, *GangoḍavilaSubhadrārāmaPirivena*

Introduction

While S. B. Hettiaratchi (Hettiaratchi, 1988) has done research into the position of women from about the fourth to the tenth century AC, IndraniMunasinghe (Munasinghe, 1998) has done it from about the sixth century BC to the fifteenth century AC. In the present study an attempt is made to study the subject from about the thirteenth century AC- down fall of the Polonnaruva with the invasion of Māgha- to the end of fifteenth century AC. This period is generally known as the medieval period of Sri Lanka.

1.1 Religion and woman

Women rendered valuable services to religion. Two fruitful research areas with regard to women in early and medieval Sri Lanka are their contribution to religious life and their role in the political life of the country. In the preceding time to our study, there was a *Bhikkuni* or nun's organization. Many scholars have dealt this topic.(Hettiaratchi, 1988: 99-106); Gunawardhana, 1988:1-59; Munasinghe, 1998: 24-42). Nuns played a dramatically prominent place before our research period. Many nuns have donated caves to the monks living in various places. Tiśa (*Inscriptions of Ceylon*, Vol. I, 1970: I, No. 8) Śavera (*Ibid.*, p. 2,

No.13) Yahaṣini (*Ibid.*, 7, No.89.), Pālā (*Ibid.*, 18, No. 224), Raki (*Ibid.*, 13, No.161b), Tiṣa (*Ibid.*, 37, No.482), Macaka (*Ibid.*, 66, No.857), Revati (*Ibid.*, 76, No.969), Rohani (*Ibid.*, 26, No. 332), and Naga (*Ibid.*, 55, No.725) who were mentioned in caves as nuns, attributable to the 3rd century BC, have donated caves to the monks.

The *Dīpavaṃsa* and the *Mahāvamsa* describe the arrival of Sanghamitta and nuns who accompanied with her. Sanghamitta's main two roles were the planting the Bo- plant and foundation of the order of nuns. *Dīpavaṃsa* mentions a fairly long list of names of nuns from the time of King Vaṭṭagāmaṇi such as Mahasonā, Dattā, Sīvalā, Rūpasobhinī, Nāgā, Nāgamittā, Dhammaguttā, Dasiya, Sapattā, Channā, Rēvatā, Mālā, Khēma, Tissā, Samuddanāvādēvi, Sīvalā, Nāgapālī, Nāgamittā etc. (*Dīpavaṃsa*, XVIII, vv. 27-30.). These nuns have been described as the nuns who resumed the task of teaching the Vinaya after the troubled period which lasted from 102 to 89 BC. (*Dīpavaṃsa*, XVIII vv. 31-33.). When *Dīpavaṃsa* mentions about the Nuns, it describes the names of nuns with qualifying adjectives such as *Mahāpañña*, (great wisdom), *mahāyasā* (great fame), *pañḍitā* (cleverness), *Vicakkhanā* (discerning wit), *vinayevīsārādā* (confidence based on the knowledge of the vinaya), *Saddhammavamsa- kōvidā* (deep understanding of the tradition of the dhamma), *Dhammakathikamuttamā* (foremost preachers of the Dhamma). Due to the great paying of attention to the nuns in *Dīpavaṃsa*, some scholars have said that *Dīpavaṃsa* was composed by a group of nuns. (Gunawardhana, 1988: 16). If we accept that opinion, nuns not only tried to study the Buddhist Canon, but they were also pioneers in historiography in Sri Lanka. According to the *Samantapāsādikā*, litigation was a serious problem within the community of nuns. It mentions a category of people called *aṭṭakārakā*. It means law suit makers. Because the expansion of the order of nuns, many problems have been affected nuns. Therefore, it would imply that many nuns would have opted for litigation for finding justice. Besides, it is recorded that Sinhalese nuns were engaged in missionary activities in China, Japan, Tibet according to the historical sources. (Gunawardhana, 1988: 39-59).

Many nunneries have been mentioned in various sources. Upasika Vihara, (*Mahāvamsa*, XVIII, ix-xii.), Hatthālhaka nunnery (*Vamsattappakāsini*, Vol. II, 411), nunnery Nālārāma which was done by minister Sena, (EZ., Vol. V, 339-340). nunnery Tissārāma which was done by General Sena (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, 34-38.), Mahindārāma which is mentioned in Kukurumahandama Pillar Inscription was also set up by General Sena (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, 23) nunnery Padalānchana which was set up by Vajira, the wife of the Sakka Senapati in the period of Kassapa IV (*Mahāvamsa*, LII, v. 63), Mahamallaka nunnery which was set up in the period of Mahinda IV. (*Mahāvamsa*, LIV, v. 47). In the light of the above findings from the chronicles and inscriptions, it is clear that there were a reasonable number of nunneries in early period. And also there were a fairly large number of nuns. But, after the Anuradhapura period, Bhikkhuṇī Sāsana dispersed. After the Cola occupation of Rajarata, we here nothing of the *Bhikkhuṇī* order. The word *meheṇi* has been read in an inscription discovered during recent explorations at a site near the *Ālāhana Pirivena* at Polonnaruva. (Prematilaka, 1982: 25). Prematilake says that apparently this was the first instance that refers to Buddhist nuns after the well known Sigiri poems. (*Ibid*, 26). If this idea is accepted, this would indicate the existence of the *Bhikkhuṇī* order during the Polonnaruva kingdom. Lesli Gunawardhana and Kiribamune respectively suggest an alternative reading of the newly discovered inscription, which has been correctly attributed to the twelfth century AC on palaeographical grounds. (Kiribamune, 1990: 34). She was convinced that *mehenimavavadāla* translated as “brought up by the nun” should be read as *mehenimavavadāla* which means “set up here”. Present writer of this research investigated the ni of the word. If there was the word *meheṇi*, ni should be cerebled. But it was not there. Therefore, this inscription cannot be attributed to the Polonnaruva period. Had there been an order of nuns, the kings and queens of Polonnaruva who spent so much time on prolific building activity would not have forgotten to provide residences for the *bhikkhuṇīs*, if they were around. Infact, with the Cola onslaught and the disruption

caused thereby, both the *bhikkhu* and *bhikkhūni* orders disappeared from the country. Fortunately for the monks, some Sinhalese *bhikkhus* who had taken refuge in Burma were located by Vijayabāhu I and having invited them over, the *bhikkhu* order was restored. (*Mahāvamsa*, 1992, 60: iv-viii).

Hettiaratchi states, quoting the *NikāyaSamgrahaya*, that the king brought the *aramanavādi* monks (those who had gone to *Aramana*) Therefore, he brought the monks belonging to the three sects prevailing in the Island before the Cola occupation and re-established the higher ordination of the monks of the respective sect. Therefore, Parākramabāhu I, had to unify the sects and made them into one. The *bhikkhunis* had either perished or given up robes during these troubled times and perhaps no Sinhalese nuns were available for a revival of the order.

It may be referred to the religious life of women. They have contributed to the Sasana as lay devotees. As a lay person, a woman could serve the Sāsana in a number of ways such as by providing the Sangha with food, clothing etc, offering contributions towards the maintenance of the viharas and constructing new *pāsādas*. It may be interesting to examine a few examples.

Generally, the women of high dignity in this period joined in the public work with their husbands. According to the Alavala Amuna inscription, the consort of King Bhuvanekabāhu IV participated in erecting the Lankatilaka Vihara with her husband. (Paranavitana, *UCR.*, Vol. XVIII, 1960: 38-45). The wife of Sēnālakādhikāra also gave her contribution to erect the Lankatilaka Vihara with her husband. (*Ibid.*, 1960: 4-14). It means that Sēnālakādhikāra erected the vihara with the contribution of his son and wife. Although elite women had participated with their husbands in public work, it is debatable whether those women had proprietary rights. Gaḍaladeni Vihara inscription records that many elites and officers donated various kinds of items to that vihara. (*Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. IV, 1934- 1941: 90-110). According to that, except Sēnālakādhikāra, Senevirad and Vīrasimha Patirāja granted the sowing extent of six amunas of sprouted seed paddy from Ilupādeniya, Sēnālakādhikāra also granted the fields of the sowing extent of one yala and ten amunas of seed from Samdessa which had been held as maintenance lands of him. *Kēsava Vannakkā* and *Dangamu.....man* granted at the beginning of the work the sowing extent of amunas of sprouted seed paddy from the two shares of the Gaḍaladeni village. *Dēvagiri Patirāja* granted the sowing extent of ten amunas of seed from piṭigama which is a maintenance land of him and ten head of cattle. *De Patirāja* of Bisōwelag granted fields of the sowing extent of a yala of seed from Uturalla in Elirata. *Kalu Siṭana* granted the fields of the sowing extent of ... seed and one house and garden from the batgama, Mayatgama and *Nissanka Patirāja* donated the sowing extent of an amuna of seed from Pamunuwa. *Vijaya Patirāja* endowed the fields of the sowing extent of two amunas of seed from Rangama and three heads of slaves. Prince *Vīrasundara* donated fields of the sowing extent of an amuna of seed from Naramriyan and Anurā Attara granted fields of sowing extent of five amunas of seed from the village of Gannoru and desima reserving the right for his relations to enjoy {them} paying the usual dues and tithes. Prince *Jīwasimha* donated fields of the sowing extent of ten amunas of seed from Minginiyapotta and Prince *Suva* granted fields of the sowing extent of ... amunas of seed and one *gam kaḍavara* from Samdessa. *Suva Patirāja* granted one *gam kaḍavara* and fields of the sowing extent of one amuna of seed from *Uḍavela* and similarly he granted fields of the sowing extent of two amunas of seed from Dālivala an amuna from Pilimalavuwa, an amuna from Kirivavula, an amuna from Sāpana, an amuna from iddavela, an amuna from A... three *pālas* from Ambulmīgama, three *pālas* from Unapatanga, three *pālas* from Mangalagama, two *pālas* from Piligama. *Digili Sēnānāyaka* donated the sowing extent of two amunas of seed from *Boke- Kumbura* from Ambakka and *Min Dahampasaknā* donated the sowing extent of an amuna of seed from Kirivavula.

Seṭṭi donated some paddy fields and *Peragama Sēnānāyaka* has donated some extent of paddy fields to the Gaḍalādeniya Vihāra. According to the above mentioned list of donators, the unique thing is the lack of any name of women. Niyamgampaya inscription also mentions that the monastery was done by Vijayabāhu Āpā,

ParākramabāhuĀpā, Alagakkōnāra, JayamahaleSiṭāna, All mudaliars, all Sinhala and Tamil soldiers including *Mūlaagampādinand Nettiagampādin*, all brahmanas and settis. Women are not mentioned in this inscription and end of the Vigulavatta inscription had been signed by SivalkolulakdivuAdhikāra, Sēnālamkādhikāra, ParākramaAdhikāra, JayasimhaPatirāja and VīrasimhaPatirāja. All those names are under the male category. (*Ibid*, 1934-1941: 90-110). A question arises as to why the names of women are not mentioned. Accordingly, it can be suggested that there was no ownership of propriety to the elite women in this period. Many facts may be gleaned to prove this opinion. Women may have had some property. But, it may have been little compared to men's.

MangulMahaVihara inscription also refers the religious activity of women of the relevant period. (*EpigraphiaZeylanica*, Vol. IV, 1934- 1941: 161-169). According to the inscription, Vihāramahadēvi who was the consort of the two brother kings named Pārakumbāor Parākramabāhu, completely renovated RūṇumahaVehera, the ancient monastery at the site which was then abandoned and ruined in the wilderness. She renovated this Vihara with the donations of darugam[the land supplying] the requisites for the maintenance of the Sangha and the attendants having made it to be resided in continuously. This meritorious activity was done by Vihāramahadēvi , the consort of the two brother kings named Pārakumbā who reigned in *Ruhunurāṭa*. Prof. SenaratParanavitana also could not understand the names of the two king brothers Pārakumbā mentioned in the inscription. Firstly, Paranavitana considered these two kings as king Bhuvanekabāhu IV (1341- 1351 AC) and king Parākramabāhu V (1344- 1359 AC). (Paranavitana,*EpigraphiaZeylanica*, Vol. IV, 106). But, because they reigned in the Gampola and Dādigama, the two brother kings were considered as provincial rulers in the Ruhuna. (*EpigraphiaZeylanica*, Vol. IV, 1934-1941: 163). This queen, who describes the meritorious activity of her in MangulMahaVihara two inscriptions, had mentioned that Vihāradēvipirivena was located in the proximity of that vihāra.

A group of women with close links to the Buddhist religious establishment were the female employees of monastic institutions. We meet them in a thirteenth century inscription. Employed in the Galapātavihāra during this time were slave families of two categories: slaves by birth and purchased slaves. Some slaves were, infact, bought out of monastic funds. (*EpigraphiaZeylanica*, Vol. IV, 1934- 1941: 210-211). The practice of employing slaves, both male and female, in temples is also evident in the reign of Parākramabāhu IV in the fourteenth century, when the king is said to have offered male and female slaves to the sacred Tooth Relic. (*Mahāvamsa*, 1992: LXXXXX: 76). Sweeping was apparently among the tasks assigned to female slaves since an inscription of the reign of Kalyāṇavatī refers to female slaves employed to look after the terrace of the Ruvamvālisaya. The same inscription mentions female garland- makers and women who filled the foot- basins with water at the stupa as regular temple employees. (*EpigraphiaZeylanica*, Vol. IV, 1934-1941: 259). However, the absence of restrictions on female employment in is noteworthy, a practice quite unacceptable in Sri Lanka today. The naming of the large number of monasteries after females seemingly did not bother the resident monks. This practice is noticed as late as the fifteenth century in the days of Parākramabāhu VI. (*Mahāvamsa*, 1992: LXXXXXI:24). King Parākramabāhu VI honored his mother in this way. Some rulers gave viharas the names of women who erected them. Kalyāṇavatī seems to have given her name to a monastery established by her. (*Mahāvamsa*, 1992: LXXXX: 35-36).

In the light of foregoing discussion, it becomes clear that the constructing of monasteries which are mentioned above some facts about the social background of ancient Sri Lanka is revealed. These religious buildings were erected mainly by queens. Although it is not relevant to our period, a much respectable position was afforded to the mothers of kings. Vihāramahadēvi, Sundaradēvi, Queen Ratnāvali can be named as examples. It could be understood that there was more freedom to the queens and mothers of kings than their daughters in the construction of monasteries and other religious activities. Mothers, who had had

Ulakuḍayadēvi or LōkaNāthāthe daughter of King ParākramabāhuVI, had done without any shortcoming ten meritorious activities which have to be done by a Buddhist. Ten meritorious activities are considered as *Dāna* (arms giving), *Sīla* (discipline), *Bhāvanā* (meditation), *Pin dīma*, *Pin anumōdanvīma*, Preaching, Hearing of dhamma, Respect for people, *vatāvatkīrīma* and *pāsasiyayuttanpāsasīma*. *SālaḷihīṇiSandēśa* mentions as follows that Ulakuḍayadēvi had observed the *AṣṭhāngaSīla* (eight precepts) perfectly on every full moon Poya day. (*SālaḷihīṇiSandēśa*, 1972: v. 102). According to the above, the attitude of women to religion in ancient Sri Lanka could be understood. The religion of ancient Sri Lankan women was adorned, due to the affection to the great qualities of Buddhism such as *Dāna*, *Sīla*, *Meditation*, treating others and good interrelationship.

1.2 Politics and woman

Next, it may be appropriated to examine the political achievements of women during the period under the survey. Such a study is, however, seriously affected by the paucity of materials. Kiribamune has explained that there was a patriarchal social organization akin to the contemporary Indian social system. This further elaborates that the earliest political women cannot be considered as queens. The prominent place occupied by an indigenous Yakkhini Kuveni in the colonization stories of the chronicles, the belief there- in of an island with a purely female population, the story of assistance given by yet another yakkhini, Chetiya, to Pandukabhaya, the fourth ruler of the Vijayan line, to win the throne, the existence of the cult worch of Cetiya, and the allusion to the worship of the Western Queen- these could all interpreted as suggesting a strong female element in the political and religious life of pre- historic society. Such speculation based on legendary material cannot however, be considered historically valid. (Kiribamune, 1990: 16-17).

No women reigned as sovereign queens during our period. Even in the earlier or later period up to the present time we find only few queens who ruled the Island. Of these only Lilāvati and Kalyāṇavati each of whom succeeded their husbands in the later Polonnaruva period, had some importance. (*Mahāvamsa*, 1992: IXXX: 30, 50 and LXXX: 34). Although there were some controversial opinions about widows, they could enjoy as queens due to their being wives of the late kings. During this period Kalyāṇavatī (1202-1208 AC) the widow of King Niśśankamalla, the Queen of Niśśankamalla secured the support of the general public to succeed to the throne. Her reign can be considered to be a long one, although *Mahāvamsa*, *Pūjāvali* and *Rājāvali* record that her regnal years were six years. But, Minipe slab inscription describes that Queen Kalyāṇavatī reigned eight years and there was a Tamil invasion in her eighth regnal year. It is shown as follows;

Abhāsalamevan Kalyāṇavatisvāminvahansēṭaataṭavannedemalamahasenmelakaṭabāsa... (Epigraphia Zeylanica, Vol. V, 1963: Part I, 157). According to the *Mahāvamsa*, although, minister Āyasmanta reigned in the name of a three months old infant from Polonnaruva, Queen Kalyāṇavatī was considered as the legitimate political power by the people. Therefore, the opinion of the Kiribamune was that the same regnal years may have included the minister Āyasmanta. Taking into consideration of the confused political background of this time, ruling a country for eight years is a prominent factor. Queen Kalyāṇavatī is titled as *Abhāsalamevan* according to some inscriptions. Batalagoḍavāva inscription records that as *...thrīsinhalayehiekset... rajasiripāmiṇi... Abhāsalamevankalyāṇavati. (Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. IV, 1934- 1941: 78). Similarly Bōpiṭiya inscription says that as *Sri Abhāsalamevankalyāṇavatisvāminvahanse (Epigraphia Zeylanica*, Vol. II, 1929: 191). This inscription is corroborated with the Batalagoḍavāva inscription. Coins were also issued in her name. And her regnal years have been used for purposes of dating records, confirming her complete legitimacy as a sovereign ruler. However, kingship was not normally within the reach of women. According to the inscription of Niśśankamalla in Polonnaruwa, women had an opportunity to get the kingship by inheritance. They can be

the queens, if there was not a king, sub king or Princess. It is mentioned in the inscription. We read it as follows;

maharajatanpatväsīṭiyavunnätitānekāyuvārajavasiṭiyavunhōunudunātahotrajakumāravarunhōunudunātahot bisōvarun (EpigraphiaZeylanica, Vol. II, 1929: 159). *Saddharmaratnāvali* also describes that women had a qualification to be a king by the expression of *Bisōvarunṭarajakamaṭahākiheyin.* (*Saddharmaratnāvali*, 1985: 362). It means “as kingship is possible for queens”. After the Polonnaruwa period, queens do not seem to have been considered worthy of the throne. By the fifteenth century, it appears that grandsons were preferred to wives or daughters; Parākramabāhu VI, named the son of his daughter Ulakuḍayadēvi as successor. (*Rājāvali*, 1926: 60). Parānavitana pointed out that there was a matrilineal element in reckoning lineage. (Parānavitana, 235-240). Although the ultimate beneficiaries were the males in the royal family, women were brought into public focus and in a sense came to matter in the public life of the country. In an inscription attributable to the fourteenth century made of a certain Viharāmahadēvi, it is mentioned as the chief queen of two brother kings who were provincial rulers of Rohaṇa. (*EpigraphiaZeylanica*, Vol. IV, 1934: 161). In about the same period, we have the instance of Alakēśvara and his two brothers trying to achieve their political ambitions by becoming the joint husbands of Jayasiri, the sister of Vikramabāhu III (1357-1374 AC) (MS, 1928: v. 39). These queens seem to have been mere pawns in the game of power politics and owed their position to a confused political situation in which men who had no legitimate right to reign tried to rule.

It should be noted that there was the prevalence of marriages of convenience where royal maidens were traded for political advantages. Examples of such expedient marriages can be cited for most periods of history. Another hazard of being royal, female and young was especially in a medieval Indian context. This practice is not heard of in Sri Lanka until about the twelfth century, when Niśśankamalla makes certain exaggerated claims that kings of many foreign lands sent him royal maidens in order to ensure peace. (*EpigraphiaZeylanica*, Vol. II, 1929: 95). Gifts of princesses from different countries were forecast by astrologers as part of the future glories of Parākramabāhu II, (*Mahāvamsa*, 1992: LXXXI: 72) and Vijayabāhu IV, when the former defeated Candrabhānu, the jāvaka king, who is said to have captured the women of his court. (*Mahāvamsa*, 1992: LXXXVIII: 74). All these references relate to foreign princesses. The practice does not seem to have prevailed in the numerous internal wars. In this respect, Sri Lankan women were more fortunate than their Indian counterparts.

A direct information regarding the political role of women in a crisis situation dates to the 13th century. When Vijayabāhu IV (1270-1272 AC) decided to return to Polonnaruwa, which was abandoned once, the king's decision was hotly debated. Some of the officials, soldiers and others decided against it, but their wives and children were said to have taken an independent decision to return to the city. (*Mahāvamsa*, 1992: LXXXVIII: 37-39). This may be an isolated incident, but the fact remains that the author of this part of the *Mahāvamsa* gives voice to the idea that the mass of women could take an independent political decision for themselves and their children is worthy of note.

1.3 Daughter and society

The Vedic and the Buddhist epochs are marked by a striking difference in the position of women as daughters. In the earlier days, until they were married, daughters were apt to be regarded as unwelcomed burdens, and a birth of the girl-child was looked upon as an almost unmitigated curse or catastrophe. Nevertheless, at the time of the rise of Buddhism and during its early days, the status of unmarried women was higher than it had ever been in India before- and, we may add, than it has been since. This was reflected in the popular sentiment: among the ordinary people it was the child (*putta*) as such, and not the son as opposed to the daughter, who was the object of the parents' affection, and the centre of their hopes and

aspirations. When the mother delivered a son, she has been respected by the society. But, giving birth to a girl in Sri Lanka was not a sad position similar to ancient Indian society. Giving birth to girls in ancient India is considered as a bad omen. Kings also were very sad at the time when a girl is delivered. Buddha preached to King Kōsala that the women who treat aunts and uncles well, become superior as well. (Kōsala Saṃyukta, Pt. I, 1914: 93-27). *Samyutta Nikāya* tells us that if they can make their minds, it is no problem to become a woman. (*Samyutta Nikāya*, Bhikkhuṇī Saṃyutta, Pt. I, 160-170).

One objective of delivering children was the continuation of the generation without any disturbance. A statement of *Saddharmaratnavāli* is as follows; *daruvannātikalaṭavargaparamparāvanopavatvati*, (*Saddharmaratnavāli*, 1985: 101-102). It means that if there were no children, there will be no generation. Therefore, *Sumana*, a younger person requested the getting of a child by doing treatment to a banyan tree not hoping especially a son to her wife. Although people generally did not especially wish for a girl or boy, literature mentions that some women have expected sons very much in the medieval society. Therefore, on the one hand some female lay devotees requested from gods the getting of sons and some women observed Sil with the expectation of a son on the other. (*Saddharmaratnavāli*, 1985: 695). The requests from Gods existed in the period of the fifteenth century. It is shown in a poem of the *Kāvyaśekhara*. (*Kāvyaśekhara*, 1947: II, v. 43).

This practice existed from Indian kavyas. As an example, *Padyacūḍāmaṇi* could be referred. *Padyacūḍāmaṇi* is, according to the colophon, a mahākāvya, and consists of ten sargas of 641 stanzas in various meters. The work is attributed in the colophon to Buddhaghōsācārya and deals with the birth, marriage and other incidents in the life of Buddha. It is a highly artificial poem and the plan of the work follows the rules of poets laid down for the composition of Mahākāvyas. (*Padyacūḍāmaṇi*, 1921) When the King Suddhōdana had not children, according to the *Padyacūḍāmaṇi*, he invited to Gods to bestow a child. Thus read in the *Padyacūḍāmaṇi* :

Mahīpatirmānyagunōjjvalāyam
Tasyāmmahishyāmtanayābhilāshi
Pradīpadhūpapramukaikpadārtaik
Sadevatārādhanatparōbhūt. (*Ibid.*, v. 77.).

Due to the aspiration of a child, king invited the Gods by paying homage with light and various incenses.

Although there were similar incidents, parents loved daughters and sons similarly without any change and they did not consider daughters as a bad omen in the society. There was a very high interaction between parents and daughters as well as sons.

At a time of hardship, some parents have killed their beloved children. The *Putra Vastu* of *Saddharmālaṃkāra* mentions about a couple of parents who killed their son, due to the lack of money to give a Dana to monks. Parents tried to collect items from those who came to the son's funeral. (*Saddharmālaṃkāra*, 1954: 372-375). Similarly, there was a woman who had not cared even when a son was stung by a serpent. She listened the Dhamma without any consideration about it. (*Saddharmālaṃkāra*, 1954: 416-417). Hearing Damma and alms giving were considered as very high virtues in the ancient society. They expected to become highly respected in the Buddhasāna. Therefore, they considered it the major objective and society did not consider about the way it was achieved. Another fact revealed from these examples is that some women were very poor in the society. Therefore, women as well as men tried to realize their religious concepts through a variety of means. However, these stories are fabrications of the monks who made up their minds to attract laity to offer them four requisites. Even after the marriage, parents did not neglect their daughters. They paid attention very carefully to their daughters. *Saddharmaratnavāli* records such a situation where parents were very kind to their daughters. (*Saddharmaratnavāli*, 1985: 443). This shows the extent of kindness of parents and their love to

the daughters. Even though daughters are married without permission of their parents, parents welcomed them very whole heartedly, when they are in difficulties. The status of consorts and kings' mothers created the status of the social condition of the ordinary women. *Rājāvali* and *AlakēśvaraYuddhaya* describe that there was a consort who was brought from Keerawellato King Parākramabāhu VI. (*Rājāvali*, 1926: 86). But, it is not mentioned in the *Sandēsas* or *PārakumbāSīrita*. The above mentioned two daughters who were born are not mentioned in any source. However, she helped to resolve a major political problem to the king. She could get assistance from the hill country, because she was a descendent from Keerawelle generation which had a connection with kings in Gampola. *AlakēśvaraYuddhaya* refers that she comes from Anuruddha belonging to the Bōdhāhārakula. Therefore, Keerawella generation is also descendants from that caste. The traditional belief is that the lamāṇi caste comes from the Keerawelle generation. According to the above description, King Parākramabāhu also was of the lamāṇi lineage. It can be indicated that the king expected the assistance of all relatives through her. We can get facts about king Parākramabāhu's daughters only from among the royal daughters. Those are very famous Ulakuḍayadēvi (Lōkanāthā) and Princess Chandrāvati. *SālaḷihīṇiSandēśa* was written, requesting Vibhiṣaṇa God in Kelaniya to help Ulakuḍayadēvi to give birth to a son. (*SālaḷihīṇiSandēśa*, 1972: v. 101-102). *PareviSandēśa* was written requesting a birth of a son and getting a husband from the sari caste to the Princess Sandavati. (*PareviSandēśaPahadanaya*, 1967: v. 203). Ulakuḍayadēvi is the most prominent among two of them. She invited Totagamuve Sri RahulaThera to compose the *Kāvyaśēkhara*. Not only that, she heard the Dhamma also from the *Kāvyaśēkhara*. "She was like a very kind mother. She participated in meritorious activities from her childhood. She observed pansil (five precepts) every day. She observed atasil on the full moon Poya day. She respected the Triple Gem. She gave Dāna like Viśākhā. She had learnt ThripitakaDhamma by listening. Her knowledge was like a university. She was a very kind woman. Those were the main features of becoming a high caste woman or *kulakāntā* in the society in the relevant period.

Conclusion

We have now completed the task of the describing the history and vicissitudes of the status and condition of women in the course of medieval history of Sri Lanka. The religious activities of women seem to have been of different kind. In the early period most of the offerings of women to the Sāsana were confined to alms and other such smaller items. But we saw that land and other valuable property were also at frequent intervals donated by women, restored some viharas, who thus contributed towards the maintenance of the Buddha Sāsana during the period under survey.

As in other periods, women did not prove very successful in politics. However, it is important to note that there were at least a few women who were courageous enough to take an actual participation in politics directly or indirectly, irrespective of what success they achieved. Therefore, the position of women on the whole was fairly satisfactory. The above mentioned facts reveal the high dignity and high treatment received as well as the unlimited kindness of a daughter who is very well respected in the ancient Sri Lankan society.

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