



## Women's Condition in Early Medieval Northern India

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The position of women in northern early medieval India in the social framework reflects the progress of society. In Indian society women are generally seen with great respect and honour. However, the attitude of society towards fair sex differs from time to time. In this period marriage has been looked upon as a great and sacred social institution that unites man and women in the social and religious bonds.

Women were not regarded independent in Ancient India. According to Manu a female must be a subject to her father in childhood, in youth to her husband and in old age to her son; a woman must never be independent.<sup>1</sup>

According to Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*, in the first part of their life, the women were called *Kumari*, *Kisori*, *Kanya*. Some women remained unmarried through life (*Kumaryamvayasi*) were still called *kumari*, now in the old age these women were called as *Vridhdha kumari*, *Janat kumari* etc. when a unmarried girl became mother, then the offspring was called '*kanina*', which means, the issue of a *Kanya*, not formally married".<sup>2</sup>

When *Kumari* become engaged she was called as *Vritya*. In this period girls were free to choose their husbands if they are unmarried till the mature age and now they were called as '*Patinvara*' (chose her husband by herself). The newly married bride was called as '*Sumangali*'.<sup>3</sup>

### Education :

About the women's education of this period we find that by about the period the marriageable age of girls was further lowered to 9 or 10, this gave practically a death blow to any education worth the name. No doubt two or three years were still available, when some primary education could have been imparted, but both the girls and their guardians used to devote their attention during this period more to the problem of marriage than to that of education.<sup>4</sup>

Vatsyayana gives a list of sixty four subsidiary branches of knowledge (*angavidya*) which should be learnt by a *Ganika*. These include not only music, dancing and singing solving riddles of words, chanting recitations from books, completing unfinished verses, knowledge of lexicons and metres, archery, gardening, logic, making artificial flower, teaching parrots, languages, flower arrangement, preparation of perfumes and cosmetics, gymnastics, carpentry, writing in cipher etc.<sup>5</sup>

*Kavyamimansa* describes higher education for the women of royal officials rich families and the class of dancing girls.<sup>6</sup>

J;Urs n";Urs p jktiU;ks egkeklngfgrjksa xf.kdk%

dkSrqfdHkk;kZ; 'kkL= izfgr cq};% do;os

Daughters of high officials, courtesans and concubines were also supposed to be highly skilled in various arts especially religious debates and poetry. Among the ladies different books of Vatsyayana, Bharata, Vaisakhala were very much popular.<sup>7</sup>

Cultured and rich families were naturally few in society and they had sufficient resources to enable them to employ special teachers for their daughter's education. Ordinary families, however, could not afford to do this and their daughters, who had to be married at this time at about the age 10 or 11, could therefore hardly receive any education.<sup>8</sup>

1. Manu Smriti with six commentaries, Bombay, 1886, V, p. 148.

2. Agrawal, V.S., India as known to Panini, Allahabad, 1963, 87, 88.

3. Ibid., pp. 100.

4. The classical age, M.M. Munshi, R.L. Majumdar, A.D. Pulascar, A.K. Majumdar, Bombay, 1954, p. 566-69.

5. Kamasutra of Vatsyana with commentary, Jayamandal, Banaras, 1929, I. 3, 12 (Knowledge of Sastras by Princesses etc.).

6. Kavyamimansa of Raj Shekhar, Bombay, 1934, Chap. 10.

7. Harsh Varsdhan, Ratnaval, Vol. 1, p. 305.

8. पुरुषवधोषितोपि कर्वाभवेयुः। श्रूयन्ते दृश्यन्ते

Among the subjects in which women expected to cultivate were singing, dancing, music, both vocal and instrumental. Other arts, they were recommended to master were painting, gardening, garland making, toy making, house laying etc.

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iq';dekZjHks"kk tkrk izoh.kk oh.kklq fu'kdqyk dqykpks.kq  
dq'krk 'kydkys;s"kk izcq}kizc/kkykspuiq pkrqjkuk;tu  
fofnfdRlklq xfru'R;ok/kkfn"kk fofk"VdU;dksfpr loZ f'k{kkf;RokA<sup>9</sup>

Girls of ruling families used to receive some administrative training. We learn from legends of the medieval coinage, the names of the queens – “Didida and Sugandha” of Kashmir and “Somaladevi” of Rajputana, who took part in the administration of the states.<sup>10</sup>

Women in this period were also gaining education in religious and literary fields. In Kadambari Bana mentions about *Mahasveta*, as performing the *Sandhya* daily and muttering the *Agnamarasana Mantra*.<sup>11</sup>

Yet we have examples of highly accomplished women in the period, both from fiction and real life. In Dandapala's romance, “*Tilakamanjari*” (10<sup>th</sup> cen.) “*Malaya Sundari*” is a well educated girl and the heroine *Tilakamanjari* practically knows everything that a girl of her social background is expected to know. Besides this Rajashekara compares her to goddess Saraswati herself.<sup>12</sup>

'kCnksFkZ;ks% l;ksxqQ% ikapkyh o`fRrfj.k;rsA  
'khyHkV~;fjdkokfp ck.kksfDr"kk p ;k lnkAA

Rajashekara's wife, a kshatriya by caste was a good literary critic and poetess. A drama, whose central theme is an important political revolution at Patliputra, has proceeded from the pen of a lady courtier. Marula, Morika, and Subhadra are the other poetesses referred in Sanskrit anthologies.<sup>13</sup>

Bana mentions that Harsha's sister Rajsri was expert in most of the arts like painting (*alekhya*) dancing (*nartana*), singing (*Gita*), Grammer (*Vyakarana*), writing (*lekhana*), reading books (*Pustaka pathana*) and playing the *veena* etc. She was well versed in debates on different subjects and she attended the general council of Harsha and debated on the questions of philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

Yuan Chwang, a Chinese traveller tells about the intelligence of Rajyasri.<sup>15</sup> Except Rajyasri we find the name of several lady scholars, those have attended the Buddhist council in the period of Harsha. We find the name of some poetesses like *Shilabhatarika*, *Vikatanitamba*, *Vijayanta*, *Prabhadevi*, *Subhadra* etc.<sup>16</sup>

### Purdah System :

Purdah was not much common in this period, but this system was not strict and popular as we find today. Harsha in his work mentions that “village wives hastened to the neighbouring villages with baskets filled with various forest flowers.”<sup>17</sup>

It seems that, the ladies of higher families did not observe strict purdah, because Yuan-Chwang records that Rajyasri was present at both religious assemblies at Kannauj and Prayag without any veil.<sup>18</sup> In Ratnavali of Harsha we find that “some ladies took the vow that they would see the face of none, but of their husbands, but there is no

च राजपुत्र्यो महायात्रदुहितरो गणिका कौटुम्बमयिश्चि  
शास्त्रप्रहितबुद्धयः कवयश्चा, Kavyamimansa, p. 53.

<sup>9</sup> . Harsh Vardhan, Priyadarshika, Vol. I, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> . In Pala inscription, it has been described that a Brahmana vatesvara Sarmana used to read Mahabharata to the queen. Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, vol. XIX, p. 67, Yr. 1909.

<sup>11</sup> . Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>12</sup> . These verses are attributed to Rajashekara in the Suktimuktavali.

<sup>13</sup> . शीलाविद्यामारुला मोरिकाधाः कार्यकर्तुं संति विज्ञाः

सि पार्थस्य मनसि स्थानलेभं खलु सुभद्रया

कार्वानाच वयोवृत्तिचानुर्यण श्रुभद्रया ।।काव्यमांसा ।।

<sup>14</sup> . HCCTH, p. 121, HCCTH, pp. 154-155; HCK Canto, Harshcharita by E.D. Thomas & Cowell, Poona, 1929, 5, p. 30, 31; HCCTH, p. 254.

<sup>15</sup> . Samuel Beal, Buddhist Record of Western World, tr. from the Chinese traveller Huen-tsang, Vol. 2, London, 1906, p. 176.

<sup>16</sup> . M.K. Bose, *Late Classical India*, Calcutta, 1988, p. 112.

<sup>17</sup> . Ratnavali, p. 305.

<sup>18</sup> . Harshcharita, Vol. I, p. 97, PO, vol. XVI, p. 106.

statement as the 'Purdah system', but "*Parpurushadarshana*". Bana also mention this word, but he simply indicates the undoubted loyalty of wives towards their husbands.<sup>19</sup>

We also find the terms like '*Antahpur*' and '*Avarodhika*', which indicates atleast partial seclusion of women. Abu Zaid and other Arab travellers mention that the women of royal harems came to the court rooms without veil in the presence of courtiers and members of public. He also tells about the free mixing of sexes on the occasion of different hindu festivals and celebrations.<sup>20</sup>

**Widows :** Widows were the most unhappy sections of the female population in the society. Widows were regarded as inauspicious and had no place of any recognition on auspicious occasions, like a marriage ceremony, where only "unwidowed" ladies were sought after to add grace by their participation.<sup>21</sup>

Bana informs us that queen Yasomati wanted to die unwidowed in order to avoid the disgrace of widowhood and loss of the venerable position, she held in the royal household. According to Harshacharita widows abstained from all sorts of personal embellishments; they did not apply collyrium to their eyes, nor did their faces glisten with the yellow pigment. They tied their hair simple.<sup>22</sup> They were obliged to wear white garments only.<sup>23</sup> In his work Bana mentions about the peculiar *Veni*, i.e. braid of hair of widows<sup>24</sup>.

About the re-marriage of widows we find in Yuan Chwang work that widow remarriage was unpopular in India, but not absolutely forbidden. This kind of marriage was not allowed in higher varnas, but in the lower varnas this system existed.<sup>25</sup> We have many references of the provision of re-marriage in circumstances, while Vatsyayana pointed out that a marriage for the second time for a women neither liked or disapproved.<sup>26</sup> Amarkosa gives the synonymous opinion not only for the *Punarbhū* (remarried widow) and her husband but also for twice born man, having a *Punarbhū* as his principal wife.<sup>27</sup> Katyayana refers to the case of a widow betaking herself to another man regardless of her adult or minor son, and deals under his law and partition and inheritance, with the share belonging to the son of a women, who has left her impotent husband.<sup>28</sup>

Besides the remarriage of a widow we find some information about the custom of "*Niyoga*" (levirate). This was a system, by which a widow makes relation with the other man to find a son (*Devaratasutopalli*), but popular opinions were against this practice.<sup>29</sup>

Widows of kings conquered and slain in battle appear to have been reduced to the condition of servitude in the family of conqueror, therefore such women preferred death to servitude. Such women in the family of conqueror might have also often been reduced to the condition of concubines. The harems of kings consisted of a large number of concubines or courtesans. The latter, of course, easily exchanged their position with one king for that with another greater king.<sup>30</sup>

**Stridhan :** Most schools of law allowed a women some personal property (stridhana) in the form of jewellery and clothing. The husband had certain rights over his wife's property, he might sell it in dire emergency, and he might restrain her from giving it away wantonly, but for practical purposes it was her own, and when she died, it passed not her husband or to her sons, but to her daughters.<sup>31</sup>

**Sati System :** An assessment of the position of women will remain incomplete without writing something about sati custom. The custom of sati was ofcourse prevalent when a wife burnt herself with her dead husband in fire is called as '*sati*'.

<sup>19</sup> . अधन्ये हतास परपुरुषदर्शनं ब्रूतेन कादोसपाठो परव, p. 166; Ratnavali, p. 305.

<sup>20</sup> . Satishchandra, op.cit., p. 47-48.

<sup>21</sup> . Harshcharita by Banachatta, Jagannath Pathak, Sanskrit Series, Chawkhamba, 1960, p. 124.

<sup>22</sup> . HC, VI, p. 128.

<sup>23</sup> . P. Purana, XXIV, 63.

<sup>24</sup> . वघ्नतु वैघन्यवेणी वरमनुष्यता, H.C., p. 236.

<sup>25</sup> . Watters, Yuan-Chang's travel in India, Delhi, 1967, vol. I, 168.

<sup>26</sup> . Kamasutra of Vatsyana, Banaras, 1929, Vol. 1, 5, 3.

<sup>27</sup> . HTW, p. 1-168, vol. II, 6, 23.

<sup>28</sup> . Cf, vol. II, S.65, VV, 562, 571-574-77, 860.

<sup>29</sup> . B.N. Sharma, Social Life in Northern India (AD 600-1000), Delhi, 1966, p. 18-19; MS IX, 59; Manu IV, 176.

<sup>30</sup> . See the mention of the concubines of the king of Malwa, who was conquered and killed by Rajya, presented by Bhandi to Harsha. "अप्सरस इव बुहसमस्स सहस्त्रानुरया वतीर्ण वारविलासिनी, भग्णं च 302,

<sup>31</sup> . A.L. Basham, *The Wonder that was India*, Oxford, 1975, p. 138.

The epigraphic records of early medieval period throw much light on the practice of Sati and smriti laws of post Gupta period strongly urge the widow to sacrifice herself on her husband's fire. Such as *Sankha*, *Angiras* and *Harita* are definite on this point<sup>32</sup> except the self immolation by a brahmana widow still the smritis of Gupta age prescribed a life of vows and strict celibacy for widow and allow her to inherit her husband's property.<sup>33</sup>

The Arab travelers also refer to the practice of sati in hindu society. The merchant Sulaiman states that the queens cast themselves upon the pile and burn themselves when the corpse of a king is burnt.<sup>34</sup> It was left for them to choose whether they will do so or not, but Alberuni's statement on this point is clear and according to him the queens had to burnt themselves along with dead king.<sup>35</sup> Kalhana records the cases of concubines and sarvants (besides queen) burning themselves along with dead king.<sup>36</sup> Kalhana mention that even unchaste queens like "*Jayamati*", the wife of king Uchchala have seen immolating themselves on their husbands funeral pyres.<sup>37</sup>

nkSj'khY;el;kpjUr;ks ?kk;Ur;ks·fi cYyHkku~A  
gsy;kizfj'kUr;fXu u L=h"qk izR;,% Dofpr~AA<sup>38</sup>

Bana mention about the sati of Harsha's mother queen 'Yasomati'. He wrote that she gave away her ornaments, took a sacred bath, put on all the marks of a lady with her husband living (*avidhavamaranachitrnamuduahanti*) and entered the funeral pyre.<sup>39</sup> There is a description about the sati and queen Yasomati as "she was wearing a red scarf which was a sign of sati women (*Maranaprasadhana*), and she wear a necklace of red thread round her neck, she applied lots of red saffron on her body, one corner of scarf, the red flowers tied to worship fire, she wear garland and holded a painting of her husband".<sup>40</sup>

We also find the information that after the treacherous assassination of Grahavarmana, Rajyasri his wife, was prepared to entire the pyre but saved by her brother Harsha.<sup>41</sup> Among the Rajputs this custom became very popular between 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. The average Rajput Princess welcomed the opportunity to become a sati and would not allow her husband to be cremated alone.<sup>42</sup> We find about the sati of the mother of the Chahmana king chandramahasena, she became a sati in 842 A.D. The next case is that of Somapalladevi, who became a sati at Ghaliyala in Rajputana in 890 A.D.<sup>43</sup> An inscription from Haveli (Jodhpur) refers to two cases of Sati of Rajaputa queens.<sup>44</sup>

So during the period 700-1100 A.D. sati became more frequent in northern India. Bana, Kalidasa, Bhasa Sudraka and Kalhana tends to show that the sati custom was getting gradually popular in the royal families of northern India during the period from 200 A.D. to 1000 A.D. Sometimes we find that queens burnt their bodies after the death of their husbands, who died in wars. This was technically called "*Jauhara*".

**Temple dancers:** In the period we find some information about the temple dancers those lived in northern India from the ancient time but became more popular after the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Female dancers, as described by Kalidasa in his *Meghaduta*<sup>45</sup>, danced before the siva Idols in Ancient times. With the growth of a luxurious ruling aristocracy and the increase in the rituals and ornamentation of ritual worship in the early medieval period, the practice of temple dancers acquired greater prevalence as well as prominence. The *Rajatarangini* refers to a very accomplished

<sup>32</sup> . The three quoted by Vijnaneswaran Yajanavalkya with the commentary of Apararka, Poona, 1903-04, I, p. 86.

<sup>33</sup> . Parasar, IV, 31. Vriddha Harita IX, 205 and Vriddha Visnu etc. quoted by Vijnaneswara on Yaj II 135-36 (widow's right to husbands property), Yaj II, pp. 287-298.

<sup>34</sup> . Elliot History of India, as told by own historians, vol. I, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> . Sachau, Al-Brunis India, London, 1910, vol. II, p. 155.

<sup>36</sup> . Raj Taranzini, Kalhana, Bombay, 1892, vol. 481, 1488, VII 724, 859.

<sup>37</sup> . Raj Tarangini, vol. 481, 1488, VII, 724, 859.

<sup>38</sup> . Raj Tarangini, VIII, 366.

<sup>39</sup> . Harshacharita, Banbhata, Banaras, 1990, 600 K V.

<sup>40</sup> . HCCT; p. 254; अबलानाहिपरिपत्त्व बासलम्बना .... केवल्य देहि मे आग्रपुसस्वस्य चूणारत्नं सेनेद हदयेकृत्वा ज्वलन प्रवेशेनात्यान संताप्रभयनचयामि । Naga Nandini, p. 146.

<sup>41</sup> . E.D. Cowell and Thomas, op.cit., p. 17; HCCTH, pp. p. 150-151.

<sup>42</sup> . Tod, Annals, vol. II, p. 837.

<sup>43</sup> . Epigraphia Indica, XII, p. 211, V, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> . E.I., vol. XX, p. 58. Tod's annals and antiquity of Rajasthan, vol. II, p. 737-40. There are other three cases referred to (E.I. vol. XX, p. 168).

<sup>45</sup> . Megaduta, V.S. p. 35-36.

courtesan who was a devadasi and lived in *Pundhravardhar* (Bengal) in the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.<sup>46</sup> In the '*Pavananduta*' of Dhoyi we get a reference to adevadasi dedicated to temple service.<sup>47</sup>

The "Kumarpala Pratibodha"<sup>48</sup> and the "Upadisa rasayana"<sup>49</sup> reveals that dancing girls had become quite common in the Jain temples also. This feature was prominently noticed by the Arab travellers. Ibn Asir (an Arab traveler) informs us that three hundred female dancers danced at the gate of the temple of Somanatha.<sup>50</sup> Alberuni also noticed and criticized the undue prevalence of this practice.<sup>51</sup> "*Devapara Prasasti*" of Sena king Vijayasena informs that the monarch assigned one hundred beautiful girls to his temple.<sup>52</sup> Hiuen-Tsang is said to have noticed the dancing girls in the temple of Multan.<sup>53</sup> A royal edict (V.S. 1147) of the Chahamanas of Nadatula reveals the role of the courtesans in temple festivities of the age. It is stated that a number of them were attached to every temple, and on the occasion of the religious festivity (*Yatra*) of a god, the courtesans of other temples were also required to assemble along with their associates in order to perform music and dance in honour of the god concerned.<sup>54</sup> In the different works like in the works of Kalidasa, and later works like *Rajtarangini* we find that the courtesans like temple dancers were not only living in the society but were alike in the art of music in the period under review.<sup>55</sup>

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uk{;Urs Oo;fi e/kqJsf.knh/kkZdVv{kkukA

**Courtesan (Ganika) and Concubines:** The class of courtesans always enjoyed high esteem in the Hindu society. We learn on the basis of archaeological data that they were noted for their beauty and luxury. The high class men and women were also interested in music but the activities of *ganikas* have been mentioned in the inscriptions and represented in the sculptures<sup>56</sup> and paintings.<sup>57</sup> The details of dancing and fine dressing can be seen in Bagh paintings where female musicians with musical instruments are arranged round a dancer.<sup>58</sup> In Pahadarpur sculptures (8<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) many courtesans are shown with heavy jewelry, they are dancing with vigorous movement.<sup>59</sup>

We are told by Vatsyayana that the widows used to live with wealthy people as their mistress when they failed to follow the ideal of celibacy.<sup>60</sup> It shows that these courtesans furnished a profession for women to earn their livelihood. It was the fate of the queens and other females of the place of the conquered and slain kings to submit to concubinage. Bana narrates that when the king of Malwa was defeated killed by Rajyavardhana, the women of inner apartment were presented to Harsha by Bhandi.<sup>61</sup> These captive females were thus reduced to the status of concubines who had to entertain pleasure keeping royal personages. Public women can be grouped under two heads, viz. ordinary or *vaisyas* and accomplished or *ganikas*. The ordinary harlots were the professional court dancers and singers.<sup>62</sup> Bhatrhari referred to the harlots who entertained royal dignitaries.<sup>63</sup>

Magha described the harlots who built their houses within a very short period and decorating themselves. With new dress they used to entertain guests with offerings.<sup>64</sup> The courtesans (*Ganika*), though public women,

<sup>46</sup> . Raj, IV, 321 off.

<sup>47</sup> . Pavana duta, V, p. 28.

<sup>48</sup> . Supra, p. 117.

<sup>49</sup> . See below

<sup>50</sup> . ED, II, pp. 469-70.

<sup>51</sup> . Sachau, vol. II, p. 157.

<sup>52</sup> . E.I. Vol. I, p. 310-24, Tejapur grant (J.A.S.B. IX, p. 161 ff).

<sup>53</sup> . Hiuen-tsang also observed at the shrine of Sun-god in the city east of Sindh (Walters II, p. 254).

<sup>54</sup> . E.I, XI, No. 4, pp. 27-28, The editor, D.R. Bhandarkar interprets "Satcampramadakulas" and Sutrapatas, occurring in the inscriptions as courtesans and their associates respectively.

<sup>55</sup> . Rajtarang, VII, 858. Kavya Mimansa Ch. 10, Kalidasa Purva Megha, 1, 39.

<sup>56</sup> . Temple sculptures at Bhrwaniswara and Khijuraho.

<sup>57</sup> . Bagh caves Pl. D and E.

<sup>58</sup> . Bagh caves, pls. D and E.

<sup>59</sup> . Neumismatic Asiatic Society of India No. 55, Pl. XXXIV (a); XXIX (d) and Pl. XXVII (d). I Conog. Of Budd, and Brahm, Sculptures of in Dacca Museum pl. XLVIII (a)

<sup>60</sup> . K.S. Gambler, p. 223.

<sup>61</sup> . HCCT, p. 225.

<sup>62</sup> . HCCT, p. 113.

<sup>63</sup> . V. Sataka, 65.

<sup>64</sup> . Sisupalvadha of Magha, Bombay, 1957, V, p. 27.

enjoyed a more dignified status than the ordinary harlots. Dandin gives a detailed description of the various aspects of the life of Ganika.<sup>65</sup>

The statement of Al-Baruni suggests that the evil and prostitution had increased to objectionable limits by the 11<sup>th</sup> cen. A.D.<sup>66</sup> The satirical writings of Kshemendra also tend to sow the same.<sup>67</sup> This state of affairs was natural with the growth of a luxurious court culture. A law giver like 'Vijnanesvara' would see it to be a sin, though not a crime; but one born and brought up in the atmosphere of court would consider it to be just a negligible vice.<sup>68</sup>

### Other occupation of women :

In this period between women were involved with the service in court as the personal attendant and the queen. Among personal attendants of queen Yasovati are mentioned the *cheti*, *Katyajanica*, *Dhatereyi*, *Katyayanika* was a old women having an experience of the ways of the world.<sup>69</sup> Dhatreyi was entrusted with the work of the queen's toilet and make up (*Prasadhana*).<sup>70</sup> Besides this we also find information about the female guards of the kings. The court Harsha was attended by a female chauri-bearer. She was listening to poetical compositions and enjoining confidential talks.<sup>71</sup> In this period females were also involved in the administrative service. In the Srinagar inscription which is preserved in Sri Pratam Museum, Srinagar we find the name of queen Didda in 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. In this inscription we find that Didda have been eulogized by the masculine epithet of Rajan (king) instead of Rajni (queen) which was her due. It may be observed in this connection that she was an energetic and powerful queen who reigned over the destinies of Kashmir for nearly half a century.<sup>72</sup> During the life time of her weakened effeminate husband, Kshemendra Gupta, she was the virtual head of the state and wielded sovereign powers. During the period she acted as regent first for her son Abhimanyu and after his death, for her grandson.<sup>73</sup> Women were also working as handmaids and nurses for their livelihood.<sup>74</sup> Princess Rajasri had an attendant named *Patratata* who served as an intermediary between her and brother Harsha.<sup>75</sup> Bana himself was acquainted with a female attendant (*Sairandh*) named *Kurangika* and shampooer named *Keralila*.<sup>76</sup> Queen Yasovati was attended by a hunch-backed girl and amule at the time of her face wash.<sup>77</sup>

There were other professions for which ladies were appointed as :

- *Gavadhyaksha* (who had access to cow herdesses)
- *Sutradhyaksha* (the superintendent of spinning and weaving, dealing with widow and helpless women and female medicants, who spun yarn for the Government and brought it to him for his approval and also for their wage).
- *Asvadyaksha* (the master of horses)
- *Kanchukiya* (women overseer of the women's apartments)
- *Mahattarika* (employed in Harems of kings).<sup>78</sup>

So the women's condition in this period was a little better than the earlier. The lowering age of marriage was one of sign of rigidity in this period. We have examples of highly accomplished women, both from real and fiction life. Some social vices like the *sati* and *jauhara* became more popular in the society which makes women's condition poorer but when we see that the women were occupying the administrative rights and following different occupations, shows the improvement in the women's condition in northern early medieval India.

<sup>65</sup> . D.C. Ryder, p. 69.

<sup>66</sup> . Sachau, F.C. , Al-Bruni's India, 2 vols. London, 1910, p. 157.

<sup>67</sup> . See e.g., Samaya Natra of Kshemendra.

<sup>68</sup> . M.P. int; p. XI.

<sup>69</sup> . Jaratya Samistutayadharyamanam 165. She was Arya Katyayaniska.

<sup>70</sup> . Dhatriya Cha nijaya prasachitam 165.

<sup>71</sup> . HCCT H, p. 70, 74.

<sup>72</sup> . In the inscription preserved in the Sri Pratap museum, Srinagar, she styled as Didda-deva, instead of Didda Devi (Srinagar inscription, E.I. XXVII, p. 154).

<sup>73</sup> . E.I., p. 155. Didda acted as regent for her son Abhimanyu and after his death for her grandson, from A.D. 958 to 98 A.D.

<sup>74</sup> . Brihatsamhita of Varahamihir, Bangalore, 1946, LXX VIII, pp. 9-10.

<sup>75</sup> . HCCT, p. 254.

<sup>76</sup> . HC, I, p. 138.

<sup>77</sup> . HCCT, p. 261.

<sup>78</sup> . H.C. Chakaldhar, *Social Life in Ancient India*, p. 187.