



Full Length Research Article

Professional Woman of Jain Harivansh Puranaa

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Accepted 10th May, 2015; Published Online 30th May, 2015

ABSTRACT

Woman is a special creature of the human society, recognized in various leadership roles, be it business, politics, battle field or any other field. In India, the woman has always proved that she is no less than man. The author attempts to analyse professional status of the woman of Saurashtra, 1700 years ago from today through a few case studies available in Jain Harivansh Puranaa. Some historians believe that the story was delivered to the disciple Jinsen by his Guru Kirtisen, which, if believed, makes this analysis of the woman of an older era of say 600 years older. Hence the time frame of which we talk about woman's situation in the economy is looked at in this time period only, the author has named it as 'Harivansh Puranaa era' in further analysis. The book deals with the story of great personalities of Jaina community. The author has created a list of fifteen occupations/professions taken up by Jain Harivansh Puranaawomen.

Key words:

Ancient India, Ancient Indian economy, ancient literature, Ancient Jain literature, Jain literature, professional woman, professions, sex workers, pilots,

INTRODUCTION

The study attempts to analyse professional status of woman in Jain community of Harivansh Puranaa era. Analysis of professional status of women has been done by studying women entrepreneurs and professionals depicted in case studies of the book. Education of women is also looked at in this process.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Material used for the purpose of proposed research are case studies available in Harivansh Puranaa - Collection of Jain stories of Lord Krishna, Arishtnemi, Samudravijay and other historical Jaina characters. Along with these characters there are cases available for research in the form of stories of women from different classes of the society, Revati, Disha Kumaris, Apsaras, Neelanjasa, Prabhavati, Vegvati etc. The list is too long and the author has tried to give the readers a glimpse of the cases which familiarize us with professional status of woman in ancient Jain society

Research Questions

- Was education available to women in Harivansh Puranaa era?
- Was Harivansh Puranaa woman professional?
- What was the quality of professions of Jain women in Harivansh Puranaa era?

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Jain Harivansh Puranaa

The book was written in Shaka Samvat 705 (which is equivalent to vikrama samvat 840) by Jinasena in a place somewhere near New Saurashtra. In the series of stories of Jainatirthankaras, the book addresses the story of two great heroes Yadavas – Neminath and Krishna, they were first cousins. This gives the readers Jaina point of view of Mahabharata which is quite different from the popular Hindi version in terms of historical facts like Draupadi being wife of Arjunaonly, Karna being son of Pandu and Kunti only, but born before their marriage. Such Purana as are collections of stories and reflect the society of their era.

Harivansh Purana Woman: Education and Intellect

Harivansh Purana's woman had full right to education, equal share in the property of her father and many other rights. she had the right to divorce the husband in case of disputes or attraction toward some other man. In Harivansh Purana, the woman is shown having equal and at some places more than equal rights in religious education and preachings. Samosaran was the largest and most prestigious religious meeting of that era, the oldest form of meeting of intellectuals. In chapter 59/verse 131-132 the data of women and men present in such a meeting is available. In comparison to one lakh sixty nine thousand (shrawak) male followers of Jainism there were three lakhs thirty six thousand female followers. This does not seem the case of just one 'samosaran' because we see that out of twelve 'sabha' (boxes) of samosaran, six were essentially reserved for women (57/160). This high number of presence in intellectual lectures shows the level of intelligence of Jain

woman of the era. Brahmi was the creator of many scripts while Sundari was a great mathematician. Another woman (34/19) preetimati was also highly educated. Salsa, another scholarly woman challenged many men and defeated them in debate. Chapter 28, verse 131 clearly states about certain arts and subjects which were not open to men, only women could study those topics., while all subjects were open to women for study and research.

Professional woman in Jain Harivansh Puranaa

All female characters of Jain Harivansh Puranaa are not professional. A majority of characters comes from rich and elite classes who do not allow their women to work. But the book throws light on the status of middle/lower middle class women like Kansa's mother, maids of elite class women of the society. These women can be called professional, though the percentage is not very high but high enough to give the reader a glimpse of professions taken up by the woman of that period.

List of Professions of Jain Harivansh Puranaa Woman

Jain Harivansh Puranaawoman was not only working at the lower platform of serving royal families only but was also seen working in courageous professions like spying and downgraded profession like liquor manufacturing. The concept of prostitutes was quite popular and there were artists and dancers who were treated as prostitutes. Following is the list of professions with case studies from Harivansh Puranaa:

(Aaryika) Teaching Jainism to others: Teaching Jainism to others was considered to be the most prestigious professional status of woman. She was bowed down by the men of the society who used to learn Jainism from these 'Aryikas'. This was a non- paying profession and a very special ritual (A unique joining process) 'Diksha' was performed to take them into this profession. Brahmi and Sundari both the sisters were leading a large group of women who opted to lead the life of a sadhwi. These 'Aaryikas' were a special kind of subject expert. The Princess Chandana (Chapter 1/70), joins this profession and denounces her maternal inheritance, She joined as the Head of the Department:

“ सुताचेटकराजस्यकुमारीचंदनातदा

धौतैकाम्बरसंवीताजातार्याणाम्पुरःसरी[[७०“

Gynecologists and Pre/Post-delivery maids: Elite and rich class used to avail services of 'Dikkumaris' and 'Vidyutkumaris' who were skilled gynaecologists. In chapter 5, verse 725-727 state that these two types of devis help the mother at the time of tirthankara's birth:

“एताविद्युत्कुमारीणाम्पुर्महत्तरिकाइमा[

तीर्थकृज्जातकर्माणि कुर्वन्त्यष्टाविहागता[[७२७“

In chapter 8, verse 117 restates the same fact that these eight devis are present and serve the mother at the time of the Lord's birth:

“जातकर्मजिनस्यैताश्चक्रुरश्रैयथाविधि[

जातकर्मणिनिष्णातः सर्वत्रजिनजन्मनि[[११७“

Chapter 37, verse 4 and 25 explain that these gynecologists used to serve the mother before the birth of child and they could predict the qualities of the would be child:

“दिशांमुखेभ्यः समितास्तदाश्रितादिशांकुमार्यः परिचर्ययाशिवाम्[

दिशांचक्रुरस्यजयंजगत्त्रयेदिशंत्पत्येनजिनेनजिष्णुना[[४“

“सुदिककुमार्योभवतीमुपासतेयदर्थमास्थात्वयिसोऽद्यतीर्थकृत[ः२५“

These maids were child care takers and pre/post-delivery maids. Same way chapter eight, verses 106 to 116, explain the birth of Lord rishabh Deva's birth and states how the 99 vidyutkumaris and dikkumaris served the would be mother. These verses explain that these (Disha and Vidyut) kumaris were a blend of many arts and skills like music, singing, dancing and massaging etc., who used to please the queen.

House hold work manager: (19/41-42) KubjaDasi was responsible for taking care of house hold work of the queen Shivadevi:

“एकदातुशिवादेव्यैसमालाम्मनमेकयाकुब्जयानीयमानंतांखलीकृत्यजहारस[ः”

Beauticians: Chapter 8, verse 46-49 and 90 reflect the services of a beautician of that era:

“हस्तसंवाहनेकाश्चित्तिसंवाहनेपरा[ः

अंगसंवाहनेकाश्चिद्व्यावृत्तामृदुपाणय[[ः४६“

”अंगाभ्यंगविधौकाश्चिद्व्यावृत्तामृदुदुर्तनेपरा[ः

कश्चिन्मज्जनकेकाश्चित्सानवस्त्रनिपीलने[[४७“

“श्रीविद्युत्दिककुमारीभिः प्रत्यग्रकृतभूषण[ः९०“

Amazingly all these services like massage, beautifying with makeup, hairdo etc. are provided by professional woman of today also who is called a beautician, hence we can see the origin of oldest service industry lead by women in Harivansh Purana.

Beautician of small kids (8/195): Shree, Shachee, Keerti and Lakshmi were the trained care takers of children. They were not maids but beauticians of small kids as shown in the following verse:

“श्रीशचीकीर्तिलक्ष्मीभिः स्वहस्तैः कृतमंडन[ः

सतथाअखंडलादीनादेवानामहरन्मन[[ः११५“

Meaning they beautified the child by good clothes and ornaments.

Dancers: Dancing was a respectable profession in Harivansh Puranaera.

These dancers used to perform in royal families on important occasions as depicted in chapter 43, verse 60 :

“नृत्यत्विद्याधरीवृन्दसिंजत्सिंजीरबंधुरम्”

The states were promoting arts and artists and we have the example of, Neelanjasa dancer (9/47). Sometimes these dancers used to work with the family and husband (20/55), (38/28), We also see singers and dancers providing their services at the time of tirthnakar's birth celebrations. They were called 'Apsara'. Other kind of dancers was called 'Vidyadharee' (43/59-60) who used to dance and sing at the time of a prince's birth. It seems that the levels of professional women were segregated according to the class of the society they used to serve. But later, perhaps due to royal family influences and the society needs, this respectable artists were converted into sex workers. Not only this, but they were also used as a weapon against the enemy. Army of dancers (8/133):

”गजाश्वरथसंघट्टपदातिवृषभैस्तदा[

गन्धर्वनर्तकीमिश्रैःसप्तानीकैश्चिंतनमः[[१३३ “

The verse from chapter 8, explains that the kings of Harivansh Purana had seven types of armies, just like today we have four types - Navy, Army and Air force. Out of these seven types, one was the army of dancers who were used to misguide the enemy. The usage of the term 'sena' mean that this was a large number of professionals who were trained with sophisticated dancing skills blended with spying skills to misguide the enemy.

Messenger: These professional women were called 'दूती' (14/77) and 'प्रतिहारी (23 /50-51)'. Their job was to take messages of royal family members from one place to the other or from one person to another. The author has quoted two case studies where one minister sends a 'दूती' with a message in chapter 14.

“बेलायांतत्रसमन्त्र्यमंत्रीडूतीमजीगमत[

आत्रेयीम्बनमालाया :समीपंसुमुखाज्ञया[[७७“

In another case study in Chapter 23 (50-51) “सगरस्यप्रतीहारीनाम्नामंदोदरी “name of the messenger Mandodari is also mentioned. This indicates the importance of these messengers in royal families.

Governess (धाय); These women used to help the women of royal family in bringing up of their children. Those who used to take care of female child were also gifted in dowry as shown in the following verse (21/170)

“धाव्यादिपरिवाराड्याकन्येयमंसमर्पिता “

A very popular professional woman of this service industry of that era is quoted by a king during his conversation by her name 'Nipunmati Dhaay' (27/21)

”धात्रीनिपुणमत्याख्यानिपुणानिपुणेष्वपि“

This was considered to be a highly skilled profession as the verse 21 of chapter 27 explains “Most skilled amongst the skilled maids” was Nipunmati and so was she named 'Highly skilled'. Another case of Revati also depicts that women from this profession were in high demand.

Educationist/Teacher: Harivansh Purana woman is the teacher of various subjects and topics (19/11-113) The maid 'Shyamalchhaya' teaches the prince 'Angaaraka' the art of 'Parnalaghvi' which enables the practitioner to convert into small leaf:

“समर्थतस्वविद्ययाजगामस्वगृहंप्रति, विद्ययापर्णलघ्वायंगंशिनैःपर्णवल्लुः”

(22/54-55) If we analyse the above excerpt in the light of lady teachers in Ancient India, we see that men and women both were equally active in the profession of imparting education to students. When Dharanendra is called by the father of two spoiled sons Nami and Vinami of a royal family, men (Dharana) and women (Devee) take the responsibility together. Aditi teaches 8 subjects named

१.मनुर २.मानव ३.कौशिक ४.गौरिक ५.गांधार ६.भूमितुंड ७.मूलवीर्यक ८.शंकुक

And Diti teaches eight subjects named

१.मातंगर २.पांडुक ३.काल ४.स्वपाक ५.पर्वत ६.वन्शालय ७.पान्शुमूल ८.वृक्षमूल.

It indicates that the education industry used to absorb educated men and women both as its workforce. Female workforce was also given important tasks like teaching royal kids etc.

“धरणेशरण्येननिर्गत्यधरनैःसह[

दित्यदित्याभिधानाभ्यादेवीभ्यामागतेनतौ[[५४

आश्वस्यजिनभक्तेनविद्याकोशोजिनान्तिके[

ताभ्यांप्रदापितस्तेनस्वदेवीभ्यामहात्मना[[५५

विद्यानामदितिस्त्वष्टौनिकायात्पददौतदा[

गान्धर्वसेनकाश्वसौविद्याकोशःप्रकाशित[[५६

Meaning “The king of Dharana came with his Dharanas and Devees

“दित्याचाष्टौनिकायास्तेवितीर्णाःपन्नगाभिधा[

मातंगपांडुकःकालःस्वपाकःपर्वतोपिच[[५९”

Kanakmala was another highly educated woman who (47/63-64) teaches Pradyumna two great arts of 'गौरी (Gauri)' and 'प्रज्ञप्ति (Pragyapti)

“गौरीप्रज्ञप्तिविद्यांचत्वमृहाणयदीच्छसि[[६३

”ददौविधियुतेविद्येविद्याधरदुरासदे[[६४“

Pilots: HarivanshPuranaa women were also absorbed in aviation industry of that era. One case of female pilot Prabhavati is available in the following verse (30/18-19) :

“साप्राप्तानुमतिः प्रीताख्मुत्क्षिप्यप्रभावती
विद्याप्रभावसंपन्नाययौविद्युदिवोदिता[]:१८

अन्योयांगसमासंगात्संगतांगरूहौचतौ[]

ख्मुलंध्यलघुप्राप्तौस्वर्णनाभपुरंवरं[]”

This is the case study of woman pilot who works according to Vasudeva's instructions. In that ancient era people were aware of flying technology and women were also acting and working as pilots of the planes of that era.

Manufacturer of aeroplanes: These professional women did not only provide services to the aviation industry but also contributed in manufacturing of aero planes, as depicted in the following verses (32/19) :

“ताभ्यांजिगमिषोस्तस्यशीघ्रशौर्यपुरंपुरम्[]

चक्रेवनवतीदेवीविमानंरत्नभास्वरम्[]:१९

कामगेनविमानेनसोअनेनवनितासख[]:

अरिंजयपुंगत्वाविद्युत्वेगंनिरैक्षत्[]:२१”

‘Wanwatee’ manufactured an aeroplane which had lights on it, Moreover the plane was automated. Such was the level of technology used by woman professionals in that era. Apart from above said prestigious and respectable professions, we see HarivanshPuranaa woman earning her bread and butter through some low grade professions like killing, kidnapping, spying and offering her body to men etc.

Sex workers: In HarivanshPurana era the concept of prostitutes was openly accepted and the profession was popular as it used to attract high rewards from elite youth of the society. These sex workers used to be a part of the staff of influential people like Indra. The following verse depicts the status of Neelanjasa- the dancer (9/47, 52-53).

“सोऽथनीलान्जसां दृष्ट्वानृत्यंतीमिन्द्रनर्तकीम्”

”सद्भावंदर्शयंतीयुमतिनृत्यतिनर्तकी[]

हावभावसंप्रायंविचित्रभिनायांगिका[]:५२

तोषितेमयिनृत्येनशक्रः स्यात्किलतोषितः[]:

ततस्तुसुखितामेषासंमोहादतिमन्यते[]:५३”

Lord Rishabh Deva's thought process is shown in above two verses while he is watching the dance of Neelanjasa. This thought process gives us a hint how a dancer is converted into sex worker, as she is trying to please the honourable royal guest of Indra, so that Indra is pleased and makes her happy with gifts or promotions etc. This also may be a hint to pitiable situation of sex workers who did not only have to please their

bosses but also their guests and friends. As per chapter 21, verse 176, Vasantsena seduces Charuduttand he marries the prostitute. He stays with her for 12 years (21/59):

“वसतातत्रवर्षाणिमयाद्वादशविस्मृतौ[]

पितरोमित्रवत्यामाकार्येष्वन्येषुका[]:५९”

In chapter 28 also there is a case of a prostitute to whom Vichitramati goes and dies there. In chapter 29 verse 26 there is a story of Rangsena prostitute who used to attract men with her dance and sexy actions Not only rich youth of the society but professors of philosophy were also attracted by them. Kaushik Rishi demands Rangsena from the king but the prince marries her after the dance. The rushi gets angry and the story goes on. Kalingsena and vasantsena (21/44-49,54-55) Buddhisena (27/101).

Hired kidnappers and killers: Need of this type of female workforce aroused due to socially strong female members of the society like queens, wives of Shreshthas etc.. The woman in that era was physically strong because we have a case of a woman kidnapping a man. In another case a woman saves life of a man. (55/21-26) Aniruddh is kidnapped by Chitralkha for Usha .19/99-105 when angarak kidnaps Krishna, Shyama fights with Angarak to save her husband. At a few places they are named as ‘vetaalknaya’ (22/125- 126) Chapter 22 explains how a kidnapper Vetaal Kanya kidnaps the hero of the chapter ‘V Asudeva’.

“भीमदर्शनयाकृष्टकरोवेतालकन्यया[]

विवुद्धोताड्यन्तमुधोभुजेनदृढमुष्टिना[]:१२५”

नीतश्चनिशिक्षिंशनराकारभरितातया[]

रथ्यामार्गेणदुर्गाहंमहापितृवतंयदु[]”

These verses explain how these kidnapper women used to perform, they were physically very strong and trained to fight with brave men like Yadu people.

Liquor manufacturer (33/13 - 14): 33/13- kansa's mother manjodari as liquor manufacturer

”पृष्टः कंसो नृपेणाख्यस्त्वजातिमितिभूपते[]

मममंजोदरीमाताकौशाम्ब्यामसीधुकारिणी[]:१३”

The term ‘सीधुकारिणी’ or ‘सीधुकरी’ stands for a woman who manufactures liquor and sells. We can see that in Kaushambi there was a woman called Manjodari who was in this profession to earn her bread and butter. She was kansa's mother who found him in a box in the water.

“कंसवाक्यमितिश्रुत्वाततोरज्येत्यचिन्त्यत्[]

आकृतिः कथयत्यस्यनायंसीधुकरीसूत[]:१४”

Next verse explains how the king doubts kansa's identity and says he doesn't look like a liquor manufacturer's son. The

statement gives enough hint that liquor manufacturing was a socially accepted profession for women also. We just have one case in the history available to us but there must have been many women because a distinct perception of children of those women is reflected in the verse 14 where the king realises that the child does not look like a seedhukari's son.

Spies & Killers (35/40-48,69): In the thirty fifth chapter we can read a verse in which Kansa orders hired killers to spy first and find out an active enemy in the country and then kill him.

“जगावसौकोपिममास्तिवैरीप्रवर्धमानः क्वचिदप्यलक्ष्यः

तमाशुयुं परिमृग्यमृत्योर्मुखे कुरुध्वं करुणानपेक्षा[[:40“

We can see the clear set of instructions given by Kansa to this hired set of 'Siddha Devis' to find the enemy first and then send him to death. These hired killers used seven types of weapons : 1. Sharp knife like beek 2. Poisonous feeding 3. Dangerous animals, 4-5. High trees or man eating trees, 6. A giant ox, 7. By throwing stones. These women can be compared with today's James Bond who does exactly the same for his country. First he finds out the enemy and then kills or depowers the enemy. In another chapter, there are details of a female spy who is expert in disguising, She misguides King Jarasandha with here witty talks about death of all the Yadavas.

Conclusion

We can conclude that ancient woman of Harivansh Purana was highly educated and was involved in intellectual, courageous and heinous professions also. Harivansh Purana consists of several cases which have helped the author in preparing a list of professions in which women were involved. A comparison between professions chosen by men and women in that era can be a further scope of study. An effort has been made to visualize the professional status of Harivansh Puranawoman in the economy but the urgent need is to compare it with today's professional woman and bring in all the positive points in practice to make this world more prosperous, intellectual and peaceful.

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