

Position of Women

عورتوں کا رتبہ

In a society which is economically and socially stratified, it would be rash to make a generalisation about the position of women. As is true of male population, the position of women also varied from class to class and group to group. Like their male counterparts, the upper class women enjoyed almost all privileges but the same was not true of lower class women.

The woman spent her early life in her father's house when liberal education was imparted to her. Bilhana extols the women of Kashmir for their learning which allowed them to speak fluently both Sanskrit and Prakit. Ladies of the royal family were perhaps given administrative training. Women in early Kashmir played a leading role in the political activities of the state of which we have many examples in the pages of Kalhana. Regarding the proper age of a marriage of women, we have no definite evidences. Generally pre-puberty marriage was not in vogue and girls were married at a mature age. The family life of the king and nobility was polygamous. Polyandry was quite

unknown except perhaps among some aboriginal hill-tribes. The widow was expected to live a pure life, devoid of all luxury. The use of ornaments or gorgeous dress was forbidden. The custom of Sati was prevalent in ancient Kashmir. We have a no. of instances in RT which show the practice of Sati. After the death of Sampravarman, his queens cremated themselves along with him. When Yasastaka died, his wife Trailokyadevi followed her husband into the funeral pyre. The system of Sati was not confined to the royal family alone. Kalhana testifies that the wife of Damara Koshaka entered fire at the news of her husband's imprisonment & thus became a Sati.

Literary evidences amply testify to the gross immorality and laxity of character prevailing among certain classes of women of ancient Kashmir. Ashemendra's Samayamatika & Desapada point out that prostitution was popular in the society. The low standard of morality prevailing among certain classes gave rise to & fostered certain evil practices in the society. The institution of Devadasi was present and girls were dedicated to the temples for dancing and singing. The RT makes it quite clear that these girls could be taken away for personal enjoyment by the king. The bad immoral practices vouching the system of devadasi must have

received some opposition from the honest and
pure-minded section of the people. Alberuni
refers to such an opposition in north west parts
of India during his time but then says
that this was of no avail since the
kings and nobles supported the custom.

The women enjoyed equal
rights with men is amply proved by the
appointment of queens along with their husban-
ds at the time of coronation. The use of
the veil was non-existent. Women also
owned private property & is proved by RT.
Women had thus emerged
from the domestic into the political stage,
were free, owned immovable property, manag-
ed their own estates and even fought at
the head of their troops.