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GANIKA OF KAUTILYA

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Abstract: Kautilya has dedicated a full chapter to Ganikas. He has appointed a state officer Ganikadhyaksha to extend state control over the activities and earnings of Ganikas. Ganikas has been mentioned in almost texts belonging to different ideologies. The writers doesn't hold equal attitude towards Ganikas. Buddhist and Jaina texts distinguish them as highly respected and free woman. Brahmin and Sanskrit texts doesn't pay such respect and don't make any much difference between she and others. Brahmin texts look at them with hatred and often place them along other prostitutes. Ganikas like Ambapali, Vasantsena were highly dignified ladies even respected by the king and royal family members. Ganikas are seen as the free women, in all aspects of life by Buddhist texts. Kautilya is found to place them under the command of his king. Kautilya's Ganika appeared more enslaved sex worker than a free woman. The work tries to reveal some facts about Kautilya's Ganika and other women engaged in the profession of prostitution.

Keywords: Kautilya, Ganika, Vaisika, Rupajeeva, Jatakas.

Ganika of Kautilya

Prostitution is considered as the oldest profession of the world. There is no consensus about the cause of its origin. It can't be denied that male and female would have started to live together from very earlier times. They may have started living together even before the advent of modern man. Both would have been arranging food independently for themselves. But their children would have prepared the platform, which brought them to live together for longer time. But it can't be stated with confidence that woman was bound to stay with his male partner, without her own will. The evolution of society led to the formation of social laws. The institution of marriage would have also taken shape. During the earlier stages of marriages, women were not bounded by legal enforcement to stay with their male counterparts. The only bond that would have existed, would be of love and affection. Man evolved from animal, and even today we find that most of them, females used to arrange and feed their children, compare to male partners. We can assume similar conditions with pre-evolved man. Then we can also assume that none women would have been legally bonded to their male partners. They were free in all aspects including fulfillment of their carnal desires.

The growth of Patriarchal families affected the progress of institution of marriage. It was also affected by the human tendency of acquiring, viz. acquiring things for ever which ultimately led to the evolution of kingships. It may also be termed as the desire to acquire property. Not all, but most of the societies started to transform a women in to chattel, and started to keep them in the form of private property. Some societies behaved in more liberal and generous way. Women

are comparatively free in some societies whereas some societies are known to have imprisoned her by social or religious laws and traditional values. The freedom of a woman can be judged by the extent of freedom enjoyed by a woman to decide his male partner and reject, if not found suitable. To the extent she was free to have sexual intercourse with the desired man. That was women's right. She could be free to use her body by her own desire. The same freedom has been denied at some stage of human progress. Those societies which don't allow a woman to enjoy such freedom, not only imprison her desires but also her sexuality. The men of these societies extend their right, not only over her body but also over her thoughts. Their concern has been the sexuality of particular woman, as they never made any use of rest of her body and mind. The inclusion of women as the property of men resulted several kind of crimes against a woman. With the advent of the theory of private property the incidents of snatching others' also started. The women being a private property started to become victim. The rapes are the byproduct of the same circumstances. It may be assumed that the men's intentions to enslave women's sexuality, made the status of women, secondary.

Now a day, if a woman dares to enjoy freedom to fulfill her carnal desires, is often figured as a loose character. Society looks at such women with extreme hatred. Our laws do not allow her to do so. On the contrary the males are allowed comparatively more freedom in this regard. It has been a result of the intrigue which was planned and enforced by the man. There are many factors which played their respective roles. But our aim is search it out in Indian perspectives and in the perspective of the women independence. There are several societies who acknowledge the freedom of the women of their society. Freedom means, freedom in all aspects. It also includes the freedom of her sexuality. They don't arrest her desires, and thus allow her to enjoy everything. There are societies where women are free to even sell their sexuality. From our aspects we call it as they don't illegalize prostitution but in their view it is her freedom to do what she likes or what she need. Some society's females exercise prostitution to live. Not because they don't have any alternative, but because don't find it illegal. Illegal, in social sense, that has been declared in some of the Patriarchal societies. We find most of such societies also matriarchal in nature.

We come across with the profession of prostitution in various Indian texts. There are several names concerned with the prostitution are found, which are often studied and analyzed by our scholars. Some of them, especially 'Ganika' doesn't fit to the definition of a prostitute. Ganikas were highly respected and dignified figures presented in some texts. The word got origin from 'Gana' and was considered to be the proud of the particular 'Gana', she belonged. Ladies with high honor like Ambapali, Vasantsena may be remembered. The 'Ganikas' are older than 'Rupajeeva', 'Devdasi' or 'Veshya' as has been mentioned in Indian texts. Words like 'Varangana' or 'Varastri' are the words which resembled 'Ganika', more than 'Rupajeeva', 'Devdasi' or 'Veshya'. 'Ganikas' were the most beautiful women of the 'Gana'. They were versed in 64 or 72 kind of arts, and were proficient in the art of love making¹. They learned it

from very childhood in special colleges known as ‘Gandharvashalas’. They were also expert in music and dance. They were very rich and their love was also very expensive. They were honored by the kings and had a number of servants. We find a ‘Ganika’ as a true independent lady in our ancient past. We should be proud of it.

Though the Ganikas charged men for sexual intercourse, but it was not easy for everyone. No one could allure them or force them to have them. Ganikas were highly dignified figures. Their sexuality had no restrictions and they were completely free women. It has been mentioned in texts that Vasantsena was tried to get incited by the king’s relative by sending 10000 gold coins and a number of ornaments². It was impossible to force them but each one to covet them. Some were fortunate enough to impress them. But their independence was never compromised. Ambapali of Vaishali, said to have deserted Ajatsatru, the mighty king of Magadha. Thus we have to keep difference between the terms like Ganika and Veshya. Ganikas are distinct features of the Buddhist and Jaina traditions. They seem to have been nurtured under the conditions displayed in these texts.

But Brahmin texts appear to be inconvenient with the term ‘Ganika’ in compare to the Jatakas. Jatakas are Buddhist. But all texts, Buddhist, Jaina or Brahmin texts has been written in India only. The freedom of sexuality by a woman is more acceptable in Jatakas than Brahmin texts. If we consider the conditions of women presented in Jatakas or other Buddhist literature are of earlier period then one can state that the Brahmin texts have curtailed their freedom to greater extent. Jatakas refer to the independent behavior of women known as ‘Nagarvadhus’, ‘Varastri’ or ‘Ganika’³. These ladies reflected the highest degree of self reliance, self respect and independence from males. Jatakas respected their openness and self reliance. It appears as some later writers started to create public opinion against the freedom of women. Buddhist literature, especially, written under influence of the Buddhist ideology, never show any hatred towards them. When Gerda Lerner mentioned women’s status as chattel, told about donating them to temples or preists. It pointed towards the tradition of prostitution in the temples. It is well known as the Devdasi tradition. Devdasis were kept in temples and earnings were used to put in to the treasury of these temples. Devdasi started to earn excessive profits for the temples? Devdasis were sex workers maintained by the temple authorities. Devdasis are characterstic of the temples of South India, which are known for their enormous wealth. Was it started due to impact of the wealth of Ganikas? No doubt, if it was so, they would have started the task of defaming the prestigious Ganikas and their freedom about sexuality. People started to reach temple, as it was more accessible in compare to Ganikas.

Jaina texts kept difference among them⁴. The Ganikas started to be taken in equal terms of a prostitute afterwards. Kautilya is regarded as a secular writer in Sanskrit world of writers. Kautilya started to put control over the freedom of Ganikas. Kautilya converted Ganikas from their independent personality to a state owned commodity. Even after that some of the texts still sought them as the most respected ladies. Vatsyayan, Sudaka and Damodargupta did not show

any sign of hatred towards the Ganikas. Kautilya sought for the appointment of a state officer 'Ganikadhyaksha'⁵. He was empowered to establish a Ganika centre. Ganikadhyaksha has to purchase the girl for this establishment. He could buy her from a family of a Ganika or a non Ganika family⁶. Kautilya elaborated the qualities of a girl to be appointed as Ganika by a Ganikadhyaksha. He said, she should be beautiful, proficient in arts, music and dance. Kautilya did not discriminate about the Varna of the concerned girl. The girl may belong to the family of any Varna. When he states that she should be from a respected family, we may presume that the girls from Shudra Varna were not preferred. A Shudra family was never considered to be reputed in Varnashrama theory of Brahmanism. People used to sell her daughter to Ganikadhyaksha in 1000 Panas. It is a matter of debate whether Kautilya took it as illegal transaction of selling their daughter. Whether it was acceptable or acceptable mere because their daughter was supposed to be named as a Ganika, which was dignified image till then. Or there was an environment when people still acknowledge the freedom of sexuality by a woman and it was never hated. Moreover women still enjoyed independent status and were not considered as secondary to the male counterparts. Ganika was not a profession, professed for livelihood. These were Rupajeevas⁷, who exercised prostitution for livelihood. Ganikas and Rupajeevas are often mentioned simultaneously but differed. Rupajeevas were settled in the southern part of the city. They were seen in the court of the king also. Rupajeevas were sent to army settlements and posted on highways for travelers. They seem to be different from the Bandhukis referred by Kautilya.

Vatsyayan has mentioned about 64 kind of arts and Jaina texts mentioned about 72 kind of arts known to a Ganika. Ganikas were well trained and educated from reputed institutions of that time. Kautilya did not pay any attention about those qualities of a Ganika. The intentions and objective of Kautilya is definitely different. He is more determined to substitute the pre-existing notion of Ganika with new one. Ganika used to be a woman free of man's dominance, Kautilya placed his Ganika as servant or slave of the king and his guests⁸. It is notable as the Ganikas were respected even from the king and his royal family. People show great respect to her. The Ganika has been described in similar standing to other prostitutes mentioned in the texts. The causes that led to introduction of the tradition of Devdasis in temples, seem to have effected Kautilya. Kautilya established Ganika centres to fill the royal treasury. We could not state the extent it was successful but it can show the phenomenon which changed the whole notion of women freedom in to opposite sense. It is a big change, Ganika was a self-respected, self-reliance and free woman, whereas a prostitute was hated, low and full of misery and was completely dependent on man. Kautilya has described about Bandhukiposhakas⁹ or brothel-keepers, keeper of sex slaves or Bandhukis. They were beautiful girls kept by brothel-keeper who has to replenish treasury by contributing to ten. It may be assumed that Bandhukiposhaka have to keep more than ten Bandhukis and has to pay tax equivalent to the earning from ten Bandhukis.

Kautilya authorized Ganikadhyaksha to maintain register for the earnings and donations made the Ganika and her subordinates. Ganikadhyaksha has to deposit a fix part in royal treasury at regular intervals. Ganikadhyaksha has to keep record of the all kind of earnings like Bhogadhana (earnings by sexual intercourse), Dayabhaga (money received from mother), Aya (surplus earnings), Ayati (some kind of extra income) and ornaments¹⁰. She was not permitted to give it, other than her mother, Matrika. She was not even allowed to sell her cloths and even the utensils. It was severely punished. Kautilya makes laws to regulate them¹¹. Violation of these laws was liable to punishments. Kautilya tried to bring hereditary content in the profession of Ganika. He established that if a Ganika left the establishment, or died, her daughter has to take charge of the Ganika centre¹². Matrika was responsible for appointment of new Ganika, or will have to lose all her wealth. It is interesting that Kautilya asks to purchase a beautiful girl from a reputed family but once appointed, leaves least chances for that girl to renounce it. A Ganika was required to pay 24000 Panas (Nishkraya) to renounce it¹³. It was not simple amount as the Ganika was left to save nominal or nothing. She was almost dependable on Ganikadhyaksha. It was almost impossible for her to pay such amount. It is an effort to maintain the continuous supply of girls to the profession of Ganika. Kautilya made it hereditary. He also could be blamed for dropping necessary qualities of a Ganika, that has been mentioned earlier. The notion of Ganika was transformed in to prostitute.

If a Ganika center ceases, its' wealth was forfeited by the king. Ganikas' family had no right over the property of her¹⁴. This is the first instance which shows that women were denied from the wealth that was earned by her. Kautilya's law made the position of Ganikas very difficult. The Ganikas were not permitted to leave Ganika centre even if they went old. They were titled as Matrika and since they can not add to the royal treasury by prostitution, they were forced to do other kind of labor¹⁵. It also represent an environment which has yet to see these ladies with hatred. Kautilya was afraid that with the money they have earned from the Ganika centre led a satisfactory life. Moreover the people yet have to start to condemn their profession. It would have been due to their earlier status of being self dependence which was no more with them. The people believed in freedom and have little respect for those who lived in bonded life. The independence of women has been targeted. It was necessary for the family of Ganika to continue the establishment, or lose the wealth associated with it. It was well designed and beautifully formulated. The daughters born of a Ganika had to continue the profession¹⁶. Her sons were kept as slaves. A Ganika's son may renounce from it if he pays 12000 Panas. If he is incapable of paying 12000 Panas he could renounce it after eight years of service to the king. Whole earning of the Ganika centre was under captivity of a Ganikadhyaksha. It was impossible for him to save such amount as was for the Ganikas. No Ganika was free to expend earnings without prior permission of Ganikadhyakasha.

The financial control of a Ganika centre was under Ganikadhyaksha, not Ganika. Ganikadhyaksha was royal officer, who possessed the power of a magistrate. He could exercise

those powers to punish Ganikas, female slaves of Ganikas and even her customer¹⁷. A Ganikadasi or slave of the Ganika has to live by prostitution, was under control of Ganikadhyaksha. Ganikas were bound to serve the guests of the king. They were exposed to severe punishment if failed to do so¹⁸. They are categorically differentiated as 1st Ganika or Uttama, 2nd Ganika or Madhyama and the 3rd Ganika or Kanishtha. The first has to accompany the king, second has to remain standing near the king and third has to do whatever ordered by the king¹⁹. The status of the Ganika of Kautilya is of much below standard to the Ganikas of Buddhist and Jaina texts. Smritis and Sutras also condemn them and don't have any respect for women²⁰. It is a big question, why they did so? Kautilya has been mentioned as a secular writer by a number of historians, but it could also be made clear why he was following Smritis or Sutras over women issues. Kautilya is desperately making them bereft.

Kautilya also enforces a code of conduct for Ganikas and her customers as well. Kautilya presents a Ganika as the property of the king. He proposes punishment for a man who kills a Ganika. But the punishment is highest only if the killed Ganika was in the service of the king. His laws couldn't prove that he had any sympathy with these poor women. He did not support violence against them²¹, but supports all kind of wildness shown by a man towards her during intercourse. A Ganika was not expected to oppose her customer during the intercourse²². She was forced to attend a customer if ordered by the king. She was punished harshly if violated the king's orders. Kautilya established law that no one should be allowed to disfigure a Ganika. But it was more because of loss to the treasury than the pain of the woman. Kautilya also seems very harsh towards women of the groups of dancers, actors, singers, musicians, story-tellers, bards, rope-dancers, showmen and wandering minstrels²³. He extends the laws made for the Ganikas to these women also. It is an example of one's attitude towards a human group which allowed larger extent of freedom to their women. Moreover he recommends these women to be employed as spies. It was a dangerous work which resulted ultimately in death.

Kautilya specifies rule for Rupajeevas²⁴. It reveals that Kautilya differentiates between Rupajeeva and Ganika but it also signifies that he is degrading the status of Ganikas. Kautilya did not acknowledge same respect and honor for Ganikas, as been acknowledged by the Buddhist and the Jaina literature. Ganikas were regarded as the proud of the Gana and being respected by their kings by Buddhist texts. Kautilya presents them as sex slave of the king who orders her to earn and deposit in the treasury by means of prostitution. Kautilya's Ganika is socially regarded as of low status. Kautilya's Ganika is not independent lady and is a means of enjoyment for males. It does not appear to be at par with the contemporary social environment as he kept them imprisoned. He never allowed them to leave. Kautilya himself hints about these Ganikas running away which supports the fact that society still favored the freedom of women. He did not allow them to leave even after they become old. He forces them to stay at Ganika centre, work and earn to survive.

The favor shown in Buddhist texts, completely lacked in Sanskrit texts. Sutras, Smritis and Puranas did not recognize the freedom of women. It can be derived that women's freedom was curtailed and they were converted in to chattel. Women lost her social status and became socially, secondary to men. There may be other causes which fit to this theory, but in India it was largely due to attitude of Brahmin ideology. It is a matter of research, why the writers of these texts were so irritated towards women. It couldn't be justified by the economic, social or religious causes. It fact lies somewhere in the freedom enjoyed by the women. Freedom of sexuality, self-respect, self-reliance, high esteem and power of saying 'No' to a man got them annoyed. Tulsidas wrote the famous verse when was rebuked by his wife. It could be possible for one person but how it was possible when a number of writers went on to degrade them socially and economically.

Notes and References:

- [1] See 'Vaisika' of Kamasutra; Abhinandanjendra, Vol. III.
- [2] Mrichchhakatika, Act VI.
- [3] Vattaka Jataka, Vol. I, No. 118; Atthana Jataka, Vol. III, No.425.
- [4] Chanan D.: Notes on some Ancient Indian Works, *Journal of the Oriental Institute*, 1958, p:309.
- [5] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.
- [6] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.1.
- [7] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.27; 1.20.20; 2.4.11; 10.1.10.
- [8] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.19.
- [9] Kautilya Arthasastra, 5.2.21 and 28.
- [10] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.10.
- [11] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.11-12.
- [12] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.2.
- [13] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.3.
- [14] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.6.
- [15] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.5. They were required to spun of other works to live. State was not responsible for feeding them in their old age.
- [16] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.7. The daughters of Ganikas were thrown in the service of king from the immature age of 8.
- [17] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.9.
- [18] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.19. The which disobeyed the order of the king has to be whipped 1000 times.
- [19] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.4.
- [20] Jolly J.: The Minor Law Books: Fragments of Brihaspati, 1989, pp: 360-61; G. Buhler: The Laws of Manu, S.B.E.-25, Delhi, p:387-88; Matsya Purana, 70.92-93.
- [21] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.13.
- [22] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.12.
- [23] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.25.
- [24] Kautilya Arthasastra, 2.27.27.



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