

Role of Women During the Chola Period

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Abstract-Women have traditionally had a more passive role to play in Indian society. They have contributed more to the social uplift of the Tamil society. They have played an important role and certainly are held in high esteem. Women is personified as the guardian of family traditions. This paper discusses the Social life of women in the Chola period. Women were given high status and freedom in the Chola society During the Chola period Sati was commonly practiced. Women were also appointed as officers in the Chola Government. This paper explores the performance of Women in the art, dance and music. The research explains briefly contributions of common women, queens, palace women, temple women and Brahmin women were contributed the lands and donations to the temple.

Key Words: Inscriptions, Copper plates, Temples, Monuments, Polygamy, Sridhanam

INTRODUCTION

The position of women in the medieval South India was generally subordinate to that of men. Women have traditionally had a more passive role to play in Indian society than men. Women showed keen interest in various activities of the society other than their family. They enjoyed a high status in the society. There were not placed under any restraint in their social life and activities. Woman as mother, woman as wife and woman as daughter has different roles to play as well as different duties to perform. The lithics records of the Chola period testify to their varied activities. Women in the Chola period made enduring and positive contributions.

In general, ranging from the royal women to the women of the lower strata, they had contributed to the socio-economic, political and cultural of the Chola country. From renovating a temple, from running a ferry service, for the public good to feeding of devotees, from serving in the temple, to nursing the sick people in the hospital, and from being body guards, to being officials, women had many roles to

play in the Chola period. Women had some basic education, special endowments were made for such lectures. Different kinds of marriages, polygamy system, sati and slavery systems were important practices in the Chola country. They had the right to property. Women who were employed in the palaces and in the houses of the wealthy people as maids. Women bodyguards were called Padimagalir. They were protected and attended the work to the kings and queens. Dancing girls were dedicated their lives to the service of God, they were called *Devaradiyars* and *Talicheri Pendukal*.

The chief queen was designated as Pen Chakravarthi and she lived in the harem known by the name Andhapuram. The queens showed keen interest in the propagation of religion by building stone temples throughout the Chola empire. Many inscriptions gives many examples of women of the upper classes owning property in their own right and disposing of it as they chose. Women have held a position much different from the Sangam age. Women in general were referred to as *Arivaiyar*, *Magalir*, *Pen*, *Pavai*, *Taiyalar*, *Pendugal Nangaiyar*, *Pedaiyar*, and *Pendir*.

The Chola age prefixes or suffixes were used to one woman from another. The usual practice to indicate whether a lady was the wife of someone or daughter of someone or sister or mother or daughter in law of someone. *Madeviyar* *Deviyar*, *Embirattiyar*, *Nambirattiyar*, were prefixed of women of royal families. Wife of the official known as *Marayans*. Similarly *Kilath* was used to denote the wives of the *Kilan* a respectable person.

Bariyai, *Brahmani* were terms used to denote the wife of a Brahmin. *San* was another suffix used to indicate a Brahmin lady. In the inscriptions the terms like *Manavatti*, *Illam Udaiyal*, *Minatti*, *Ahamudaiyal*, denote the wife. In literature the terms *Urimai*, *Thunaivi*, were used. A *Vellala* woman was known as *Vellatti*. The name *Nakkan* was assumed as a kind of surname by almost all the Devaradiyars during the

early Chola period. The name *nakkan* was taken to refer to Lord Shiva.

In domestic life women in general seem to have been treated with affection and regarded many endowments were seen in honour of the ladies made either by the husband or son or daughter or close relatives. The women also on their part

Marriage

Marriage is an important relationship based upon religious, social and economic value. The earliest form of 'marriage' among the Tamils seems to have exhibited such affection towards the members of the family. The kind of marriage which involves no rituals seems to be known as '*kalavu*' to the Tamils, because it is performed by the consent of man and woman without the knowledge of parents, and it involves the element of '*Kalavu* or *theft*'. The celebration of marriage was considered by Tamils as a matter of primary importance. There are eight kinds of marriages which could be found in literature. They are, *Brahma Vivaha*, *Daiva Vivaha*, *Arsha Vivaha*, *Prajapatya Vivaha*, *Gandhara Vivaha*, *Asura Vivaha*, *Rakshasa Vivaha* and *Paishacha Vivaha*. Marriage was usually arranged by the elders or parents. *Vaduvai*, *Kadi*, *Manral*, *Pudumanam* were terms used for marriage. The marriages were conducted on auspicious days with much pomp and show. The Marriage was usually arranged by the elders or parents. In general bridegroom's family approached the parent of the girl to have the girl married to their son. The bridegroom's party arrived first and it was customary for the girl's party to give them betel leaves and areca nut. It was customary to perform the marriage in bride groom's house or palace. The practice of tying *thali* to the bride might have appeared during Chola period. But in the Brahmin community the marriage seems to have taken place in the bride's house. At the time of Rajaraja I, there is an inscriptional evidence of *thali* being tied to the images of goddesses in the temple. Girls seem to have been married only when they had attained maturity. The performance of marriage involved much expenditure. For an inscription from Thirumayyam temple records, the sale of land has been made for meeting marriage expenses. At the time of marriage they donated something to the temple on this occasion.

An auspicious day and auspicious hour was fixed for marriage. The marriage day was known as *kadinal* or

vaduvainal. Marriage rituals sometimes continued even up to the early 20th century in some communities. *Nonbu* involves fasting and acts of worship. There were several types of *nonbu*, each associated with a particular goddess, certain of the ritual elements suggested a recelebration of the marriage. *Savitri nonbu* was an important nonbu.

Marriage may also be of political nature, the records show that some of the marriages were due to the diplomatic policies of the rulers of the day. Virarajendra Chola gave his daughter, Rajasundari in marriage to the Ganga ruler Rajaraja Devendravarman. Aditya was a careful diplomat and he tried to assuage Pallava feeling by marrying a princess from that family. Aditya's senior queen was Ilangopichchi, a Rashtrakuta princess. This was also a diplomatic marriage intended to bring about peaceful relations between them. Sometimes marriage among the ruling classes were arranged by parents on political ground. When Rajaraja Chola was ruling over the southern kingdom, there was a confusion in Vengi Mandala, so he brought that territory under his control and setup Sakthivarman, the Chalukyan King as the head of the Vengi Mandala. In order to strengthen the relations between the two kingdoms he gave his daughter Kundavai in marriage to Vimaladitya, the crown prince of the Eastern Chalukya who bore the title '*Ariyanka Bhima*'. Bhima had two wives of whom one was Ankidevi who was a Kalinga princess whose marriage was also probably on political grounds.

Sridhanam

Sridhanam was assigned to women at the time of marriage. It was a customary practice among the people to give *sridhanam* to the bridegroom as bride price at the time of marriage. It must be remembered that during the Chola period *sridhanam* given to bride was called as Mahakodai.

During the Chola period, women belonging to royal and rich families had a share as *Sridhana* in their ancestral property. A married woman enjoyed absolute rights over her *Sridhana* as is evident from the way they freely endowed. This dowry was not sold by husband or wife but had right to sell jointly. In respect of girls belonging to the rich and middle classes, the lands were given as dowries on the occasion of marriage. At the time of marriage father was paying for his daughter in the form of land and jewels. The

practice of *Sridhana* was encouraged by the chiefs, viceroys and wealthy classes of medieval Tamil society. But it was not practiced among the poor.

An inscription from Agnipurisvara temple at Kumaravayalur in the Thiruchirappalli district dated in the 15th year of Uttamachola speaks of a pious lady by name Sendankari who acquired some land as *Sridhan* from her two brothers. An inscription of Rajaraja I dated in the 3rd year record registers a gift of village Ila-daippadi Kodungalur as a *Sridhana* by the father Kini-Nangai on the occasion of her marriage with a Bana chief named Vankovaraiyan Tongal Maravan alias Mummidi Sonakoraraiyan. Even the rights of controlling some villages were transferred to the groom as means of dowry. An inscription of 15th regnal year of Kulottunga I refers to such a deal. The record states that one Vadugan Devan gave a *sridhana* to his son-in-law, two third of his rights in several villages which had been assigned to him towards the cost of constructing a stone temple. An inscription states that in the time of Vikrama Chola, one Aganangarayan of Mangainallur had to give his wife some of his own property for having spent away the proceeds of the dowry which he had received. Besides gold, money, land, clothes and other related items, dowry was also given in the form of woman servants.

Polygamy

In the medieval period the system of Polygamy was very common among the wealthy men and royal members. The reason for marrying many women was that they did not have child, did not have male child and had misunderstanding with wife. But high status people and kings marry many women, because of their wealthiness. Parantaka I had many wives and Chera princess Kokkilanadigal was his Chief queen. He had married the daughter of Paluvettaraiyar of Paluvur, Arulmoli Nangai, Villavan Madevi, Tribhuvana Madev, Valavan Madevi, Cholasigamani, Cholamadevi and Tennavan Madevi. Sundara Chola alias Parantaka II too adopted the same diplomatic matrimonial policy. He also had two wives called Parantaka Devi Amman, the daughter of a Chera King and Vanavan Madevi, the daughter of a Chieftain of Thirukkoyalur.

An inscription belonging to Sembiyan Madevi, mentions that the king Uttama Chola had many wives. The inscriptions mentioned the names of his wives such as, Pattan Talatunki, Malapadi Tennavan

Madevi, Vanavan Madevi, daughter of Irukkuvelar, Kilanadigal, the daughter of Viluppariyar. Rajaraja I had a number of wives. Lokhamadevi appears to have occupied the most prominent place among them. She had the other name like Tanti Sakti Vitanki. Besides, his other wives were Chola Madevi, Trailokya Madevi, Panchavan Madevi, Abhimanavalli, Lada Madevi, Prithivi Madevi, Minavan Madevi, Vira Narayani, Villavan Madevi, Vanavan Madevi alias Tribhuvana Madevi. Place of special importance was normally assigned to the chief queen. The chief queen had the honour of sharing the throne with the king. Rajendra Chola I's wives were Mukkokilanadigal, Arinthavan Madevi, Vanavan Madevi, Viramadevi and Panchavan Madevi. Rajadhi Raja I had two wives, Trailokkiyamudayal and Ulagudaya Piratty. When the chief queen died her honourable position was taken over by another wife of the king. Kulottunga I, the first chola Chalukya ruler had many wives like Solakula Valli, Tiyagavalli, Bhuvanamuludaiyal and Dina Chinthamani. Bhuvanamuludaiyal, was the chief queen of Kulottunga I. After her death, her place was occupied by Tiyagavalli. Similarly Thiagapadagai, and Mukkokilanadigal were queens of Vikrama Chola in 1127 A.D. Kulothunga II had two queens called Thiagavalli and Mukkokilanadigal.

Sati

The practice of sati was prevalent in the Tamil country from the Sangam period. Sati or the self-immolation of a woman on the funeral pyre of her husband is occasionally mentioned in the inscriptions, but the references are so few that it can hardly be regarded as a common practice in the Tamil country under the Cholas. K.A. Nilakanda Sastri says that sati was not unknown especially among the upper classes, but by no means common. The Tiruvalangadu plates record that the queen of Sundara Chola named Vanavanmadevi who was like Arundati in her devotion to her husband committed sati. The mother of Rajaraja I committed sati and her image was set up in the temple at Thanjavur. Viramadevi, the wife of Rajendra I committed sati on her husband's death. Gangama devi, the wife of Virasola Ilangovelar, Kodumbalur chieftain, endowed Lord Mahadeva at the Nakkal temple in Allur at Thiruchirappalli on her husband's death and then entered the fire. Another reference which belongs to 5th year of Virarajendra, in the district of Sennainadu in Vikkirasolamandal

records the self-immolation of a lady who entered the fire on the death of her husband. The performance of sati by woman has a great political significance. Sati is found to be mostly related to the royal families. In the 13th century Marco Polo visited South India and his records prove the fact that sati was practiced in Chola country.

Sati Monuments

A memorial stone used to be raised for famous sati and this was called a sati stone. Such women were honoured and worshipped by erection of memorial stones popularly known as Maha sati stones. Since adoration leads to deification, the hero worship was not exclusively for heroes who died in wars, but also for the self immolating sati. Both were enshrined in their respective nadukals and worshipped. One for Gangamadevi was erected by Virachola Ilango Velar at Kodumbalur. An idol of kali in Rajappanagar, near Thanjavur is mentioned as Senkamalayi Amman in an inscription of the 15th century.

Widowhood

Kaimai is the Tamil word for widowhood. It denotes the state of reduction or bereavement, since life to a woman was regarded as full and worthwhile only if her husband was alive. So, the woman bereaved of her husband is a *Kaimpen*(widow). The life of a widow was to be that of an ascetic. It was called the life of *nonbu* (penance). Some of the Sanskrit epigraphs refer to the custom of wives removing their ornaments on the death of their husbands. Among the Brahmins and a few other high castes it is customary for widows to tonsure their heads and had to wear only white saris over their tonsured heads and not to marry a second time. They were forbidden from wearing any ornaments and had very severe restrictions to food also. A stray reference in Vikkiramacholan Ula states that the wives of the enemy kings were killed in the battles removed their ear rings. The Thiruvalangadu plates mention that when Rajendra I defeated and killed Jayasimha, the Chalukyan ruler, his wives stood bereft of all ornaments.

The widow was not to decorate herself with flowers. But she was allowed to worship with flowers. They should forgo the use of all types of cosmetics, especially the turmeric and sandal. She should also dispense with fragrances and unguents. The *pundra* or the sacred mark worn on the forehead is necessary for

the performance of religious rituals. The widow had to lead a life of misery or accept death, either by suicide or by austerity. Widowhood imposed not merely emotional hardships but signs were applied to those women who ended their lives in flames along with the bodies of their dead husbands. Women are said to have given up eating betel leaves and bathing in cold water when their husbands fell in the battle.

The most renowned and highly esteemed among the royal widows known to Tamil history is Sembian Madevi. She was the wife of Gandaraditya, the Chola king. She did not commit sati when her husband died in 957 A.D instead she had a long, pious, philanthropic and respected widowed life.

Right to Property

Right to property is an important because the evolution unfolds before the economic independence and prosperity that women enjoyed in the Chola period. The inscriptions give many examples of women of the upper classes owning property in their own right and disposing of it as they chose. The couples were joined owners of the household as well as the property. At the time of marriage the husband declared that he would not violate the rights and interest of his partner in the economic matters. The joint possession secured her numerous rights and privileges. It gives absolute right of maintenance against the husband.

Women had rights of landed property. During marriage, the father gifted land to his daughter and that was called *Sridhanam*. In some places the women had presence in the land dealings. Women of the royal families involved actively in the construction and maintenance of temples. The extent of their endowments precluded the facile assumption that they were only utilizing some kind of a personal 'allowance' made to them. The inscriptions refer to several kinds of property transactions, gifts to temples, sales and assignment of property and land revenues to the Devaradiyars for their services. These transactions also indicate that the ownership rights of women with regard to their property extended to the power of alienation through gifts and sales. Women also bought property in addition to acquiring property through inheritance or by being employed, so that virtually all the forms of women's property rights were found to operate among the Tamil people. The legality required the donars themselves to sign the documents, or in the event of the donor being illiterate, through

their guardians or witnesses. This fact, whether the document was signed by the donor, or a guardian or witness, is specifically mentioned at the end of the inscription, which are great value to historians. In several instances, women donors are seen affixing their own signatures.

The rights of women and minor sons were safe guarded while selling family properties. Queens participated in public auctions and possessed property in their own names. They purchased and gifted such properties and issued orders to their own secretariat staff to supervise their endowments and even signed documents themselves. In the reign of Parantaka Chola I, a woman Aditta Pitari gifted ten pon for a perpetual lamp, and signed the document herself. The widows had the right to claim their husband's property.

Women's Education

The value of education was realized in India from very early times. Education in Chola country was religious in nature and was based primarily on the study of the theological and philosophical works written in Sanskrit and Tamil. The temple played a role in providing education to women. From the citations given by the Tamil grammarians and classical literature such as Silappatikaram and Manimekalai it is understood that treatises on the art of dancing and musical arts were followed during the Chola period and there were canonical works on kuttu or natya. An inscription of 1067 CE belonging to the reign of Virarajendra from the Siva temple at Tirumukkudal records mentioned the provision made for the maintenance of a Vedic college and a hostel attached to it and also for the upkeep of a hospital.

In the monastery at Vedal, there were about 500 students studying under the lady teacher Kanakavira Kurattiyar, who was a student of Gunakiribhatara. Along with these students, there were also about 400 nuns living in the nunnery. The monastery at Vedal functioned as an important Jain centre of learning consisting of large number of students and nuns during the period of Nandivarma Pallava and the Chola ruler Aditya I.

Dress and Ornaments

Normally dress of a woman consisted of a sari and a bodice. The length of an ordinary or silk sari varies from 6 to 7 yards. Brahmin ladies use to tie their sari

in such a way as the border was turned on the head and was brought on the other shoulder thus looking like a veil. Women elite group used fine and costlier cotton and silk sarees. Bodice were plain or printed and it was with and without stripes. Their garments contain raised pattern of gold and silver thread. The dress patterns for the royal women were designed separately. Special care was taken to select perfect clothes for them. The garments of women belonging to the lower strata of the society were comparatively cheap and coarse variety. Widows were supposed to keep themselves away from colourful and fine quality sarees. They were supposed to wear old garment.

During the reign of Kulothunga Chola I the *surrupudavai*, *niravadi pudavai* were known. The *niravadi pudavai* could refer to a yard piece. An inscription of Rajaraja III also refers to *pudavai*. Tailors are stated to have been attached to the Brihadiswarar temple at Thanjavur. They were skilled in the art of embellishing with many pieces of cloth decorative blouses. Nagapatnam, Cholapatnam and Tondaimandalam were known to produce excellent varieties of textiles. The sarees of these places had lines of different colours, circular patterns with lines and squares and also sarees with dots on them. *Pumpattu*, *Pachchilai pattu*, *konkala pattu* and *venpattu* were different types of silk of this period.

Apart from sarees there were stitched or tailored garments such as the blouse or waistcoat and were worn by the people of the lower strata. Attendants appear to have worn frock like coats with full sleeves during the reign of Rajaraja Chola I. Two beautiful life size Chola paintings discovered in the inner Chamber of the main Vimana in the Rajarajeswaram temple portray two royal women wearing transparent red and white sarees and jewellery complete with the hair-do in the form of a *dhammilla*. According to *Periyapuranam* women wore costly and attractive dress. Cotton and silk cloth were worn by them. *Tugil aruvai*, *tuni*, *tundu* were the names of the cotton cloth, whereas silk cloth was called as *Pattadai*, *Ponnaram Uttariyam Portugil* and *Manikilaradai*.

The sculpture of women in the temple of Koranganatha at Srinivasanallur indicate the mode of wearing of lower garment was prevalent among the Chola times. The lower garment appears to have been held by a waist ornament which women usually wore. The sculpture of Nageswara Swami temple in Kumbakonam indicate the waist ornament worn at the

hip to hold the garments. Dancing girls usually wore a short lower garment. Sculptures of dancers in the temples of Thanjavur and Chidambaram indicate dancing women were too wearing both short and long lower garments. The paintings at Thanjavur also showed the dancing girls wearing a thin upper cloth.

An inscription from Thanjavur temples enables to understand that the jewellers had reached its high water mark under the Cholas. Women knew well of the potentially of an ornament like the arm-ring or bangle as ornaments of both beauty and attraction. It is particularly the aspect of 'attraction' of the arm ring and the bangle worn by young maidens both before and after wedlock. The *Kolagai* was an intricate ornament made of ivory and worn on the head to enrich the hair-do was known as '*Talaikkolam*'.

The women of Cholas wore rich ornaments from head to foot. The Cholas wore many types of jewels. However the number is less and the metal used are brass, bronze, lead, glass, beads, ivory, conch shells, false corals and bamboo pearls.

A variety of ornaments and jewels find mention in the inscription from the temples of Chola domains. Rajarajesvara temple gives many interesting and informative details of the ornaments. They were Valayal, Soodagam-bangles of gold and pearl. *Tirukarai*, *Kavalan*, *Kantha-Tudan*, *Kantha-Nan*, *Kandhika*, *padakkam* were different types of necklace used during the Chola period.

The queen wore jewels, like nose rings, ear rings, anklets, bangles of gold and finger rings. They used gold and precious stones, especially rubies and emeralds. Mudi or crown was the chief ornament worn by the queen. Goldsmiths were employed permanently in temples by grant of lands to make the jewels for the deities. In Thiruvaiyaru, Queen Danti Sakti Vitanki alias Lokhamadevi employed a goldsmith in the temple. *Chuttu* was a head ornament. This head ornament has several names such as *Tiru*, *Talaikkolam*, *Utti*, *Vilukkamalaikkolam* and *Sidevi*. Another head ornament mentioned in Ulas is *Parumuttak kovai*. *Makarakkulai* was an ear ornament shaped like fish. This ornament was popular among the Chola queens. It resembled a fish (makara) with twisted terminals probably for threading. *Muthumala*, *Natchathira Manimalai*, *Valampuri muthu vadam*, *Nirai Thali and Thali Manivadam* were the neck ornaments. *Tali* is a pendent worn by the married women as a symbol to indicate their marriage status. Neck ornaments were

worn loosely and freely around the neck. They were made of different materials and in different forms. Beads, gems and gold were used in them. A variety of necklace was called *ekevalli*. Kundavai gifted this to adorn the image of her mother. *Ekavalior Ekavadam* is also mentioned in literary works.

The ornament *Kannacharamran* from ears to forehead and in between the two ornaments that decorate the forehead is called *Ilampakam*. To day they are popularly called *Netti Chudi*. An ornament mostly resembling the present *Valayal* (bangle) was made of gold, which was called *Katakam*. Usually they were embellished with varieties of gems. *Modiram* was the ring worn on the fingers and the ring worn on the toe was called *Tirukkal modiram*. Women decorate their hair with flowers on different occasions like marriage, festivals of attending fairs.

Royal Women

The chief queen claimed equal status with the king. Royal women played a prominent role in society. The queens were believed to have occupied a position of great dignity, honour and power. The queen inherited all the royal prerogatives of her husband as a matter of right called the rights of abhisheka. They had their own officials both male and female. Some of the Chola records mention separate secretariat staff for the queens. Royal ladies exhibited great philanthropic attitude in establishing mutts, rest houses, hospitals and schools. The queens sat on the throne along with the king and had the right to issue royal orders. They also took part in Vedic yagnas and yogas performed by men. The queens were granted the money to celebrate the 'tulabhara' ceremonies performed by the Chola rulers. She was recognized as Pen Chakravarthi and Andhappurapperumal, the empress. The queen inherited all the royal prerogatives of her husband as a matter of right called the rights of abhisheka. Queens participated in public auctions, possessed property in their own names, purchased and gifted such properties, issued orders to their own secretariat staff to supervise their endowments and even signed the documents themselves.

The queens were generally known as '*Madeviyar*', '*Deviyar*', '*Madevadigal*', '*Kokkilanadigal*' etc., the chief queen was known as '*Agramahadevi*', '*Thirubhuvanamidevi*' and '*Logamidevi*' in the early period and later more distinctly as '*Bhuvanamulududeviyar*', '*Ulagamulududaiyal*'

or 'Avanimulududaiyal'. In Vedic yagnas and yagas performed by kings. The queens were the rightful partners and were called *Velvikilati* (Yagnapatnis). The gold used such sacrifices was gifted to the temples for performing worship or making other provisions. In the region of Paluvur in the hilly tracts of the Trichirappalli district to the south of the territory of the Malaiyamans there are inscriptions recording gifts by Suttamalla Uttamasolan alias Ilangesvaran and his daughter Vicedari alvar.

Women Officers (Adikarichchi)

The term Adhikari means one who wields adikaram or authority. The officer is referred to as, one who wields the authority on behalf of the king. Inscriptions also show that women held posts of senior officers in the administrative set up of the government and are seen supervising and issuing orders to male officers under them. Nilakanta Sastri stated that there were obvious instances of the women in the female establishments of the queens bearing the title in their own right. Women officers were called *Adhirarichchi*. Anepigraphy of Uttama Chola (976A.D) states that the administrative body meeting of the temple was attended by an accountant on behalf of the Chola queen. It is obvious that she might have had some hold on the administrative affairs of the temple. Actually, they would not come under the category of temple servants and it was only an honorary position for them. Besides, we find women officers to be appointed as administrators in the Thiruvaiyaru temple built by

Lokhamadevi the chief queen of Rajaraja I. Another lady officer (Adhikarichi) Somayan Amitharavalli was also appointed to take over the administration of the Thiruvaiyaru temple. This is mentioned in an inscription of Rajadhiraja. Kundavai Prattiyar seems to have had some personal lady assistants for her help. They were referred to as '*adikarichi*' in the inscriptions. One such adikarichchi Ayyaran Devi by name has endowed 90 sheep with the temple authorities of Ravikulamanickesvaram for lighting a perpetual lamp. Two women servants were appointed to look in to the menial service of the school in the temple at Thirumukkudal in Kancheepuram district.

CONCLUSION

Women were given high status and freedom in the Chola society. Chastity and modesty were considered important. The women of upper classes enjoyed the right to property. Some queens were associated with the administration of the kingdom. Common women, Brahmins, Devaradiyars and Queens were contributed liberal donations to the temples. Queen Sembiyan Madevi and Kundavai were patrons of temples. Women were appointed as officers in the Chola Government. Devaradiyars were performed music and dance programs during the festival times. Women were played important roles in the society and religious sphere by building shrines and making endowments to the temples.

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