

**SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS OF WOMEN IN GUPTA PERIOD**

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**Abstract:** Since ancient times, women were being respected and honored in Hindu society. Women are the cornerstone of society. She could achieve self-development and upliftment as per her wish. The germination of a man's personality lies in his mother's number. That is his primary and first Shiva temple. The contribution made by them in the family and community as daughters, wives, brides and mothers has a very important and proud place. In religious scriptures, women are considered omnipotent and are considered a symbol of love, fame and wealth. Gradually its importance increased in the society that without it a single man was considered incomplete and incomplete. If mother is the nurturing ground of a man's character then wife is the pillar of his development.

**Introduction**

In the form of a wife, she provides constant companionship to the man and woman in the conflicts of happiness-sorrow, hope-disappointment, rise-fall etc., and remains a constant companion of his blessings and curses, moving with him on the even and odd paths of life. Is. The entire society is affected by his social condition. It has often been seen that the history of its progress and decline becomes the history of the progress and decline of the entire society. From this point of view, woman is the measuring stick of society. The entire society can be evaluated from its social value. This is the reason why the history of women's society has its own special importance. This topic in Indian history is a long story of women's development-decline, prestige, struggle-struggle and rise-merge, which has various sweet and bitter truths in our social history.

Forgetting the glorious and advanced ancient Indian culture, today's man boasts of being modern. As soon as one hears the word ancient, a feeling of conservatism, ostentation, poverty, tightness of social bonds and suffocation starts appearing in the mind. But if we look at the available evidence of ancient culture, there is a detailed description of the advanced status of women, their scholarship, higher education and corrupt activities in Indian literature.

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There was no discrimination between men and women in ancient India. Her status was adequate, advanced, women, like men, contributed in studies, havan-worship, literature and service to the upliftment of the society. The names of hundreds of women are mentioned in Brahmin, Buddhist-Jain literature etc. who were great scholars in the subjects of Vedas, philosophy, logic, Mimamsa, dialogue literature, fine arts (dance, music, painting) and practical education etc.

In the Gupta period, there was already existing Varna system, there was division of work of all the Varnas, there were not as many castes as there are today, but due to the change in the economic system at that time, some changes are also seen in the social system, like till now. Brahmins could only do yagya, teaching, taking alms, giving alms, but now Smritikars had also allowed them to adopt any other occupation in times of crisis.

Smriti writer named Brihaspati has said that in times of crisis, even a Brahmin or Shudra could accept food. That is, by this time the financial condition of the Brahmins had weakened, the rituals of Yagya had reduced.

Although the practice of land donation started again in the Gupta period, due to which they got land as donation, at this time some Brahmins had also adopted other professions apart from teaching, performing Yagya, dynasties like Vakataka and Kadamba dynasty which were from Brahmin clan. And there were powerful dynasties.

### Main part

The Guptas were likely non-Kshatriyas, so steps were taken to revive the Brahmanical system to enable the Gupta rulers to rise up in the social structure. There were some changes in this system, now the Gupta kings gave priority to devotion instead of Yagya, with the concept of incarnation, the principle of worshipping gods along with idol worship came into vogue in the temples for the first time, now worship of non-Aryan gods along with Aryan gods like Snake worship and worship of Mother Goddess also started.

In this way, if we look at the situation of Kshatriyas, then their main work was to earn their living by fighting in war, but at this time due to feudal system, there was no organized military force directly under the king, due to this, Kshatriyas also adopted the professions of Brahmins and Vaishyas. Like Vaishyas, some also did agricultural work. When we go further into the post-Gupta period, we will see that there were two parts in the Kshatriya class, one who adopted military career and an ordinary Kshatriya who seems to be engaged in trade or agricultural work. In the Gupta period, from the copper

plate found in Indore during the time of King Skandagupta, we get information that sometimes Kshatriyas also took up the work of Vaishyas.

During the Gupta period, the condition of Shudras had improved a bit, Shudras also started doing agricultural work, new castes were born due to inter-varna marriages, like the caste born from the marriage of a Brahmin man and a Vaishya woman was Ambastha, similarly other inter-varna marriages Hybrid castes were formed, in the post-Gupta period you will see that hundreds of mixed castes had emerged, similarly with the beginning of land grants, the class that handled their accounts created a new caste for themselves, Kayastha.

During this period, untouchable castes other than the Shudra varna were formed, like a foreign traveler named Fa-hien has described a caste called Chandal who was untouchable and used to do menial jobs outside the settlements like funeral processions, incineration of dead persons, Probably this was a caste born from the contact of a Shudra man and a Brahmin woman.

#### **Condition of women during Gupta Period**

During the Gupta period, there was a decline in the condition of women, women were mostly imprisoned within the walls, they had to live under the protection of the male class from birth till death, and some upper class women were allowed to take part in the profession of artist, teacher, and administration. Taking into consideration, we find that in Abhijnanashakuntalam, Anasuya has been described as knowledgeable in history, in Malatimadhava, Malati has been described as proficient in painting, Prabhavati Gupta served as the guardian of her son in the Vakataka kingdom for 20 years, Dhruva Swamini is capable like There were women in this period, apart from this, Smritis writer Yajnavalkya was also there in this period, he also gave rights to women in property, yet the social condition of women declined because the early evidence of Devdasi system, purdah system and Sati system was found in Gupta period. Have met in. During this period, child marriage and polygamy were also becoming prevalent, the Eran inscription of 510 AD gives authentic information about Gopraj Senapati committing Sati.

Although the women of the Gupta period lived an independent life, still they had some activities, women were bound, women could move around without veil but they did not have the right to have meaningless conversations with strangers. She could go anywhere with her husband. There were few social restrictions on unmarried widows. Such women did not go out alone.

In the Gupta period, the form of purdah was unknown, although the living place of women in the house was different from that of men. In the princely states, the part of the palace where they lived was called Antapur, Abhrad or Shaddansh. When women went out in front of elders, especially with their husbands, they were expected to cover their faces out of shame. Avagunthan was mentioned in many texts of Kalidas and from the play Shakuntalam, it is known that when Shakuntala goes to Dushyant's royal court, she keeps wearing avagunthan on her face, and when there is a need to be recognized then she removes the avagunthan. In 'Mrichchakatika', as soon as Vasantha Sena (prostitute) attains the position of bride, she covers her face. In fact, it has been said above that purdah was only a cure for shyness, how could it be possible for women who used to beat the water while bathing in the Karna river and sang to produce sweet fragrance, or who sang freely on occasions like marriage etc., to have purdah? In the art works of the Gupta period, is there no veil covering the female statues? In fact, due to their upper part being completely open, some people have also interpreted it to mean that women did not wear anything above the waist at that time. This is also wrong because Gupta period poet Kalidas has used their choli, kanchku, breast-hook etc. In 'Harshacharita' written by Vanbhata, there is a description of untying and there is an indication of Rajya Shri covering herself in front of her husband.

Abhisarikas or dancing women existed during the Gupta period. They were used for singing and dancing on occasions like birth etc. and in temples. The great poet Kalidas has clearly described the dance of Chanwar Dharini dancers in the Mahakal temple of Ujjiyini. Although they were prostitutes, they worshiped God with devotion through playing music, singing and dancing. Beautiful girls were bought for the temple. It is mentioned in Bhavishya Purana that the only way to conquer Surya Lok is that many prostitutes were asked to be dedicated to the Sun Temple. The Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang also mentions dancers employed in a Sun temple in Sindh in his travelogue. Regarding courtesans, it was said in 'Kama Sutra' that they had a special place in the society because of their beauty and various qualities. The stories of courtesans reveal their humanity, kindness and tenderness as well as their cruelty, cunningness, nobility, greed for money and betrayal. Later, many of their names became popular in literature like Nartaki, Rupajiva, Veshya, Varangana, Devdasi etc. In these, Devadasis used to serve the temple. There is a literary tradition that Kalidas himself had to die due to the intrigues of a prostitute.

### Economic system in Gupta era

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During the Gupta period, the economic system was based on agriculture. In agriculture, farmers used to cultivate various grains, pulses, oilseeds, fruits, vegetables, cotton cultivation and spices. In Amarkosh, 12 types of land have been described according to the yield and characteristics of the land. The king had the accounts of all the land, farmers could buy and sell only with the permission of the state government, due to increase in land grant, farmers got land in pieces, mostly small farmers were there, farmers mostly used rain water for irrigation. We waited, very few measures were taken for artificial irrigation. Along with agricultural work, farmers also earned money from animal husbandry. The king had authority over the forest. The king used to get various medicines, herbs, honey, ivory, precious animal skins from the forest.

#### **Various occupations during the Gupta period-**

In the Gupta period, the business of pottery in which clay idols were made, the business of making stone idols was also developed, the business of weaving and sewing was developed, similarly the business of wood, the business of perfume, the business of making flowers for gardeners, the business of washing clothes. Business, the business of dyers who dyed clothes were developed, the industry of gold, silver and copper utensils was developed, we see an excellent example of metal extraction of that period in the iron pillar of the Gupta period, which even after so many years is still visible in the form of iron pillar of Mehrauli in Delhi. As you can see, all these businesses were divided into categories to run their business. Every business had a category, a corporation, which made rules for its organization. This category was called religion. All the members associated with that business had to follow those rules. These categories also used to run their own seal and currency. Details of donating money to the temples of many categories are available from various copper plates and inscriptions, such as the Mandsaur copper plate inscription mentions the construction of a grand sun temple by a category of silk weavers.

During this period, a decline in trade is seen, the foreign trade from various ports which was abundant during the time of Kushan had now weakened, although trade with China and Sri Lanka and the countries of South East Asia was done through a port named Tamralipta. .

During the Gupta period, there was a decline in trade and commerce due to which the condition of farmers and craftsmen in the country declined. During this period, many trading cities declined. Fa Hien found many cities like Pataliputra, Mathura, Takshashila in a ruined state, Fa Hien found this Cowries have been described as the medium of transactions at that time. During this period, due to

the system of land grant, agricultural production declined due to feudalism, bonded laborers increased in agriculture.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the status of dancers was high and respected during the Gupta period. Their importance was not only from the luxury point of view but also from the religious and social point of view. Their political importance was also no less due to the use of courtesans as spies.

During the Gupta period, the social condition of women declined compared to before, yet in many cases the society's attitude was positive. During this period, women's social rights were curtailed, but according to Fa Hien and Hiuen Tsang, the practice of purdah was not in vogue at this time. If a woman was kidnapped, she would not get social respect again. But after the penance ritual, she was accepted by her husband and family.

During the Gupta period, women had the right to own immovable property. Katyayan considered woman as the owner of immovable property. According to Yajnavalkya Smriti, in the absence of a son, a man's wife had the first right on his property. Yajnavalkya, Brihaspati and Vishnu also considered the widowed wife as her successor after the death of her childless husband. During the Gupta period, queens were given equal place in the coins of that time. Chandra Gupta married Kumaradevi, the princess of Lichchhavi dynasty. In the coins of Chandra Gupta period, both Kumaradevi and Chandra Gupta have been given equal place.

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