

IMPERIAL CHOLAS AND THEIR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS IN KARNATAKA – A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Educational endowments in the form of land grants were made for the maintenance of educational institutions and food for the ascetics who underwent religious studies primary education was noticed in the Soladevanahalli record in Kannada dated 1029 AD of the 18th regnal year of RajendraChola-I. Belaturu epigraph dated 1057 AD of RajendraChola-II's reign rendered his writing in a poetic form of high quality, simple, direct and full of pathos. Agrahars, mathas and other centres of learning imparted, instructions in disciplines like vedas, vedangas etc. People of the Cola times in Karnataka were well versed in the study of Vedas. The agraharas of Malavur or Malurpatna in Channapatnataluk of Bangalore district, punganur or Honaganur, Alur etc., were centers of learning in Karnataka during the sway of the Cholas. The earliest reference to the 64 Kadigaittavalamor ghatikasthanas in Karnataka under the Cholas is found in an undated record. This paper highlights the contribution of imperial cholas to education in the Karnataka region.

KEYWORDS: Educational endowments , Agrahars, mathas.

INTRODUCTION:

Though universal education an important feature of the recent centuries is not to be found in medieval southern Karnataka, the Chola rulers who were great scholars themselves took to the promotion of education seriously.

EDUCATIONAL ENDOWMENTS:

Educational endowments in the form of land grants were made for the maintenance of educational institutions and food for the ascetics who underwent religious studies. The earliest reference to such grants is dated 991 AD of .Rajaraja wherein somarasi bhattaraka of Isvara lineage as the head of education and other village activities.¹

PRIMARY EDUCATION:

The most important progress, in primary education was noticed among the engravers who could compose verses and passages and engrave by themselves. The Soladevanahalli record² in Kannada dated 1029 AD of the 18th regnal year of Rajendra Chola-I was written by a *mahamatra* Ajavarmmaya's son who is known as the emperor of Sasana expressions.

Malla described-as a Kavirajabandhava i.e., poet and friend of poets and composer of the famous Belaturu epigraph³ dated 1057 AD of Rajendra Chola-II's reign rendered his writing in a poetic form of high quality, simple, direct and full of pathos. The whole composition is fascinating due to the use of metres like *akkaram* and *lalitavrittam*⁴, one of the best records in Kannada language and literature.

In 1057 AD an inscription⁵ from Hirehadagali, Bellary district praises about its composer Demarasa who was knowing four scripts viz., Tilu (Telugu?), Tivula (Tamil), Kannada and Nagra and likewise several lithic record⁶ help us to know diversified interest of engravers and their multilinguism.

Primary education also covered, learning of languages. Thus a record⁷ dated 1290 AD from Mysore register a grant of 6 *gadyanas* the maintenance of a school teacher who had to teach is boy students, Nagari,

Kannada, Tamil and Grantha scripts (Nagara-Kannada-Tigularya manodisuva balasikseya upadhyayara livitakka)

The sculptors apart from being skilled engravers also had the capacity to construct fine building. E.B. Havel' remarks thus:

"The craftsmen being versed in national epic literature always figured in the history of India as missionaries of civilization, culture and religion."⁸

Learning arts like singing and dancing was considered as an essential part of education for the ladies and even for men. In the pidariyar temple at Kolar remunerations was granted to a dancing master (*nattuvan*), to teach dancing girls. For conducting these performances there was a stage in-charge for conducting songs, dramas and other entertainment⁹ which took huge *mandapams* or halls and palaces referred to in inscriptions¹⁰. The school master (*uvatti*) was exempted from levies and no labour was extracted from his family members¹¹.

HIGHER EDUCATION:

Agrahars, *mathas* and other centres of learning imparted, instructions in disciplines like *vedas*, *vedangas* etc.

Mini colleges were attached to the temple of pidariyar for giving in higher education and arrangements were made for teaching *Vyakarana* (grammar), *purana* (mythology) and *yamala* and a lecturer was appointed for this purpose.¹³

The teachers (*bhatta*) were endowed with lands and money i.e., *bhatta-vritti*¹⁴ for the development and propagation of universal education.

The sacred temples in the Cola period formed a centre of learning adjusting to the needs of the people. It is interesting to quote in this connection C. Sivaramamurti¹⁵ in the following words:

The temple was one of the greatest institutions created by the Indian genius. It was the hub on which revolved the life of the village. The temple provided for the education of the scholar, monument of the public, the cultivation of art and aesthetic sense and for the piety of the worshippers. The temple as can be gathered from the inscriptions a great centre of various activities."

CENTERS OF HIGHER LEARNING:

People of the Cola times in Karnataka were well versed in the study of *vedas*¹⁶ (Rig, Sama and YajurVeda) and institutions were set up in Agara¹⁷ for learning Sastras and various other branches of knowledge. Sugattur or pugattur in Sidlaghatta taluk of Kolar district was a famous educational centre for learning Tamil literature¹⁸.

Philosophical Education: Philosophical education like *Kalagama* and *Sivagama* was known to the religious recluses.¹⁹ Mantras, hymns and other vedic texts were recited: during the worship of deities²⁰, an instance of oral education. Epics and puranic stories inscribed on the temple walls helped as a yearly book and visual education. The heroic instances and murals depicted some aspects of folk-literature. The *acharyas* of temples at times acted as teachers. The Jaina basadis were sufficiently financed by the Chola government who were carrying on classes for the poor.

The *agrarahars* of Malavur or Malurpatna in Channapatna taluk of Bangalore district, punganur or Honaganur, Alur etc., were centers of learning in Karnataka during the sway of the Cholas. The *Agraharas* were mostly inhabited by Brahmin scholars who were the main exponents of education. The position of these settlements in Karnataka culture and society is explained by A. Venkatasubbiah in the following words:

"Instead of the hermitage situated near the town or village we now meet with settlements of Brahmins situated in the village itself. If the Brahmins thus settled were eminent teachers and their number was not small, the village or town inhabited by them would acquire much renown."²¹

The *ghatikasthanas*, an institute of advanced learning in medieval Karnatak was also called by the same name in Tamilnad which is said to have spread from Karnataka²². The earliest reference to the 64 *Kadigaittavalam*²³ or *ghatikasthanas* in Karnataka under the Cholas is found in an undated record palaeographically assigned to the 11th century. The *ghatikasthana* of Herijerapatna²⁴ was a leading educational

institution and the only of its kind noticed in the *Nidugal* country during the rule of the Chola chiefs who were the feudatories of the Imperial Cholas.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the above study that learning, teaching and making provision for advancement of the cause of education was considered a holy act during the period under study. In this connection Prof. K.A.N. Sastri²⁵ has stated thus about the significance of literacy in medieval Karnataka.

"Though the pursuit of higher education was then as now necessarily concentrated in particular centres which commanded the resources in men and material required for it, the results of such a study were evenly spread all over the country; men possessed of the highest learning to which they had access at the time, the most cultured and refined intellectuals, went to live in villages and all over the countryside, where they took an active and constant part in guiding the daily lives of their less enlightened countrymen. Education in all its stages was vitally connected with all social life and institution and was productive of more abiding and tangible benefit to the people than appears in our own days."

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