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Agraharas in Dharwad District

History

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ABSTRACT

Ancient India had the tradition of 'Gurukulas'. Under this system students have to live at the 'Ashram' (abode) of the teacher and get the education. This form of the education is known as 'Guru-Shishya Pramapara'. This was developed in the Agraharas. At that time, education was treated as a matter of personal concern and it was not at all emphasized on mass production like modern education industry. Ancient Education System in India is also to be understood as being ultimately the outcome of the Indian theory of knowledge as part of the corresponding scheme of life and values.

From the ancient times Dharwad district played a very important role in imparting different branches of knowledge. There were many educational institutions enjoyed royal patronage. In this paper an attempt has made to trace out the history of Agraharas in Dharwad district.

Introduction:

Education in India has a very long history and had a deep impact in the upliftment and advancement of the early society and all round development. Ancient India had the tradition of 'Gurukulas'. Under this system students have to live at the 'Ashram' (abode) of the teacher and get the education. This form of the education is known as 'Guru-Shishya Pramapara'. This was developed in the *Agraharas*. At that time, education was treated as a matter of personal concern and it was not at all emphasized on mass production like modern education industry. The making of man was regarded as an artistic and not the mechanical process. According to the ancient Indian education, the training of the mind and the thinking process were essential for the acquisition of knowledge.

Agrahara is a familiar term in South India and as well as in Karnataka. It is generally taken to mean a separate locality of *Brahmanas* in a village or town. But the nature and function of this institution were far wider in the field of Study. In the early and medieval periods this institution played a very vital role in the educational, religious and social life of the people. An agrahara was formed mainly for providing food, shelter to the learned scholars, to facilitate them to pursue their educational and religious activities. A large number of inscriptions refer the Agraharas in the different parts of Dharwad district.

Agraharas- Meaning

Agrahara is a composite word consisting of two terms *agra* and *hara* or *ahara*. Regarding the origin and interpretation of the term *Agrahara*, the first part of two words, *agra* means first, foremost, chief and the like, it is held by scholars that this term was applied in the present context to the *Brahmanas* who were the first among the four conventional *varnas* or classes of society. The second part *hara* as some scholars would take it is said to have come from Sanskrit word hri, meaning to take away. Others have taken second part to be *ahara*. D. L. Narasimhachar takes the term ahara to mean a territorial division. A study of inscriptions shows that these *Agraharas* were generally donated to the Brahmanas, who, by their learning, scholarship and austerity had acquired a place of honour and stood at the top of the social hierarchy. The word *Ahara* or *hara* as seen above means a division or a unit of land. It may also be taken in an extended sense to mean a village or town. Altekar is of the opinion that the *Agraharas* were "a settlement of *Brahmana* colonies in villages, exclusively assigned to them for their maintenance". Fleet thought that the *Agrahara* was like an *Inam* Village of later periods. K. V. Ramesh says "that the more popular form of *Agrahara* is but a later variation and that the word originally built from *agra* and *ahara* to indicate lands donated for the livelihood of the Brahmanas", a more plausible explanation of the term *Agrahara* would be that it was a village granted to a group of Brahmanas settled there for the purpose of conducting religious educational activities.

Agraharas in Dharwad District:

As we see *Agraharas* in other parts or places of Karnataka so we find the reference of more than 200 *Agraharas* in Dharwad district, during the period of the Badami Chalukyas, Rastrakutas, Kalyana Chalukyas in ancient Karnataka. In the reign of the Badami Chalukyas, Lakshmeshwar was the most prominent *Agrahara*. During the period of Rashtrakutas, Kalasa, Chinchali, Shishuvinahalli, Kimule, Naragunda, Shiggavi, were the important *Agraharas* and during the reign of Kalyana Chalukyas, Lakkundi, Haveri, Kotavumachige, Kukanur, Tilivalli, Soraturu, Kurahatti, Dandapur, Hattimattur, Betadur, Kuritakoti, Devihosur, Piriya Naragunda and Hattimattur were important *Agraharas*.

Subjects of Learning:

In Dharwad District most of the *Agraharas* provided both primary and higher education. Kotavumachige in Gadag *taluk* of Dharwad district was an important *Agrahara*, it provided both primary and higher education, and there a teacher named Nagadesiga teaching *Ganitam* (*Arithmetic*) *Jotisyam* (*Astrology*) and *Chandas* (*Prosody*), *Alamkaram* also taught reading and writing. The Kalasa in Shigaon *taluk* of Dharwad district was an *Agrahara* in Rashtrakuta period was maintaining a Sankrit College, in this *Agrahara Puranas*, *Nyaya*, Literature and Polity were taught. In Kukanuru *Agrahara*, *Tarka*, *Vyakarana*, *Purana*, *Kavya*, *Nataka*, *Bharata*, *Vatsayana* were taught. In Lakkundi in Gadag *taluk* of Dharwad district in this *Agrahara Vedas*, *Purana* and *Dharmashastra* were taught, it is also be noted that the educational institution here seems to have specialized in *Prabhakara*. In *Agrahara* Piriya Naragunda of Dharwad district *Kavya, Nataka*, *Nyasa* and *Prabhakara* were taught. In Tilivalli *Agrahara Khandika* was taught. Depending upon the teachers who had specialized in a particular subject some of institutions had become higher centers of learning for teaching in particular subjects only. For instance, in Lakkundi the principal subject was taught *Prabhakara*. *Prabhakara* and *Nyasa* which is supposed to be works on *Grammer* taught in Kotavumachige *Agrahara*.

The importance was given not only to the religious education but also to the co curriculum activities. The crown prince and his brethren, who also ruled as governors of different provinces of the kingdom, received rigorous and multi-disciplined training for ten to fifteen years. Ancient classics and inscriptions of Karnataka do provide glimpses of the training the princes received in martial arts such as hunting, art of war, diplomacy, the arts, crafts and sciences and especially in the science of polity or politics. According to the poet Pampa, his patron Arikesari studied

the following:astronomy, astrology, grammar, figurative speech, the epics, *dharmashāstras*, *darshanas* (systems of philosophy), *nātyashāstra* (dramatics) elephant- and horse-lore, painting, archery, the science of jewels, architecture, antidotes against poison (*vishāpaharana* or toxicology), erotica, technical education (*yantra*), and the science of warfare. Thus, in ancient India, the great importance was given to the secular and religious education.

During the ancient times there was a great impetus on female education. Women from royal families were educated and some of them produced literary works of high standard. Inscriptions and literary speak us their important role in education.

Teachers:

Generally the teachers have been referred to as *Upadhyaya, Oja, Akkariga, Bhatta, Bhattopadyaya, Shastri, Pandita, Acharya* and the like. A record dated 1012 A.D. from Kotavumachige refers to *Akkariga*, he is well versed in *grammer*. The same record mentions a *Bhatta* who was teaching *Nyaya* and *Prabhakara*. In Kotavumachige *Agrahara* Nagadesiga was mention was a teacher he teaching *Ganitam, Jotishyam* and *Alamkaram*. Erimayya Dikshita who was versed in *Lakulisa Siddhanta* is referred to in a record dated 980 A.D. from Kurahatti Agrahara in Navalgund taluk of Dharwad district. A record from Lakshmeshwar mentions Agastya Panditadeva was well versed in the *Samaveda*. A record from Lakshmeshwar mentions Vasudeva Bhatta master in all arts.Druvadevacharya, Indrakeshi Pandita, Hemadevacharya are mentioned in the inscriptions. In appreciation of their learning and also for their maintenance the teachers were given liberal grants, such grants were generally in the form of payment endowments created by giving lands and their income. They were usually called *vritti* or *bhatta vritti*, a grant in the form of land or money to a learned scholar. The Kalasa inscription of Govinda-IV dated 929 AD mentions the grant of 12 *Gadyanas* reserved for *bhatta vritti*.

Maintenance of *Agraharas*:

Agraharas are Maintained by the *Mahajanas*, queens and officers. The *Mahajanas* administered the *Agraharas*. In some of the inscriptions a number of *Mahajanas* are also mentioned. For instance, 400 *Mahajanas* of Nidagundi *Agrahara*, 1000 *Mahajanas* of Hirekerur *Agraharas*, they constituted the whole *Agrahara*. The *Mahajanas* had a complete responsibility of the *Agrahara*. Banniyur, the present Bannikoppa, in Shiggaon in Dharwad District is said to have been under the administration of the *Mahajanas* of the place. The *Mahajanas* were expected to be learned persons and scholars of repute, they were also known for their noble character. A record dated 1049 A. D. of Pombulcha modern Hombal, describes them as learned *Vedas, Vedangas, Purana, Nyaya, Meemamsa, Agama* etc. Sometimes they worked as trusties and made grants for the promotion of learning.

Royal Patronage

The members of royal family were also in charge of these institutions. Queens and officers being in-charge of Agraharas. For instance, Suggaladevi the younger sister of Somesvara-II was administering the Agrahara Nidagundi in 1076 A.D. Lakshmidevi the piriyarasi of Vikramaditya-VI, was in-charge of the 18 Agraharas and the city of Dharmapura in 1084 A. D. As regards the officers holding charge of the Agraharas. For instance, Balavarmayya of the Vatsa lineage is described as the Gramesvara of Agrahara Nirggunda. A record dated 1054 A.D. refers that during the time of Chalukya King Somesvara-I an officer named Dasimayya was administering the Agrahara Kisagundi, the present Tamragundi. Patiyamattavura Agrahara, administered by dandanayaka Chavundamayya, an officer under the Chalukya king Tribhuvanamalladeva Jakkali was administered by Mahamandalesvara who was subordinate of Vikramaditya-VI. Sometimes such villages were given to the queens or officers for their own personal enjoyment. The Agrahara Nidagundi which was being administered by Suggaladevi was given to her personal fief. Officials supervised the affairs of the Agraharas.

Scholarships: (Provisions for the Students)

In ancient India, there are a number references on provisions for students. The ancient universities like Nalanda, Taxila, Vikramasila etc, where the students enjoyed with all facilities and pursue their education. Therefore a number of students from different parts of the world rushed towards such centers of learning. In the Agraharas of Dharwad district, the students also provided with necessary facilities so that they could pursue their education without hindrance. Grants were made to meet the essential need of the students, viz., accommodation, food, clothing, oil, medicine etc. Nagadesiga of Kotavumachige was given grant with the condition that he should feed the students once a day. An inscription dated 1029 A.D. records a grant of land and oil mills made by Suggaladevi, the queen of the Chalukya Jagadekmalla Jayasimha-II, the income from this grant was to be utilized for feeding and clothing the ascetics and students and rendering them medical aid. The Mahajanas who were the member of the body which looked after the administration of Agraharas also made liberal grants for educational purposes. The general public also took keen interest in the activities of the educational institutions and the students therein, in whose welfare they were interested.

Conclusion:

India has a rich tradition of learning and education right from the beginning of time. There are *Shastra's* and *Sutra's* which detail the duty of a teacher and student. Ancient Education System in India is based on making of Man and not for just survival. The making of man was regarded as an artistic and true purpose of education. Ancient Education System in India is also to be understood as being ultimately the outcome of the Indian theory of knowledge as part of the corresponding scheme of life and values. The scheme takes full account of the fact that Life includes Death and this form the eternal truth. This gives a particular angle of vision, a sense of perspective and proportion in which the material and the moral, the physical and spiritual, the perishable and permanent interests and values of life are clearly defined and strictly differentiated. Education must aid in this self-fulfillment, and not in the acquisition of mere objective knowledge. According to the ancient Indian theory of education, the training of the mind and the process of thinking, are essential for the acquisition of knowledge. The pupil had mainly to educate himself and achieve his own mental growth.

Dharwad district played a very vital role in the field of learnig. As a result of the royal patronage, a number of centers of learning played an important role in imparting education the people. The Chalukyas and the Rasthrakutas made liberal grants to such centers and they believed in the charitable activities. Some of the *Agraharas* in Dharwad district became higher centers of learning in some particular subjects only. The tradition of learning continued from the days of ancient past and the same is alive in the region.

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