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## THE GHATIKAS AS INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN MEDIEVALHYDERABAD KARNATAKA

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### Abstract:

*The history of education in Karnataka is very interesting. One can trace its footsteps, starting from the third century B.C. E. Initially education was imparted only orally, but after the development of letters and literature, it took the form of writing. Palm leaves and wooden tools were used for education, which helped spread of the written word. It is important to note that ancient Indians did not consider literacy as the only form of education; self-sufficiency, social service, and spiritual knowledge were the actual goals of developing reading and writing skills. Temples and community centers took the role of schools; on numerous occasions, one's education started in one's own home. We see that in early education as well as in vocational education, the father of the student played a very important role.*

### THE MEANING AND EMERGENCE GHATIKAS

The meaning of ghatikā as a time measure of twenty-four minutes is well known throughout India. But the fact that it also denoted an educational institution in ancient and medieval Karnataka is not that known. Ghatikāsthānās were institutions of higher learning that flourished in South India, and were supported by individuals as well as public bodies, that gave liberal grants for their development.

The word ghatikā is derived from the Sanskrit original root, ghat, which means, "to take place" or "form". Another term derived from this root is ghatā, which is used by Vatsyayana in the sense of a religious assembly. The term ghatikā, according to Kielhorn, stood for an establishment of holy and learned men and Barnett interpreted it as a meeting place or hall of learned and godly men, and thus connected it with ghatige or ghalige which meant an 'assembly'. The word may also be translated as 'religious center' or as an 'institution of knowledge' as well. But we have positive evidence, in a few inscriptions, of ghatikās being institutions of advanced learning in medieval Karnataka.

The earliest mention of a ghatikā in this context can be found in Kakusthavarman's Talagunda inscription dating to the early 4th century C.E. This document mentions a ghatikā at Kanchi, which in those days was a big cultural center. Mayurasharman, the founder of the royal family of the Kadambas, went to this ghatikā with his guru, eager to study "the whole sacred lore"<sup>1</sup>. It is likely that no such institution existed in Karnataka in those days, but we find numerous ghatikās flourishing in later centuries.

The earliest example of a ghatikā in Karnataka can be found in the Dharwad district at Kalas, then known as Kadiyuru. An inscription from 929-930 C.E. describes students who studied grammar, polity, literature, history, logic, and politics and also wrote commentaries on them.

Almost all the ghatikās found so far belong to the time of the Western Chalukyas of Kalyana. These were at Morigere, Nagai, Sudi, Hotturu, Tumbula, Rayabag, Puligere, Henjeru, Kadlewada, Henjeru and Rayabag<sup>2</sup>. These were mahāghatikāsthānās or big ghatikās. Pottiyuru (present day Hotturu in Dharwad district) was akhilaghatikāsthana, or a universal ghatikā<sup>3</sup>. Others are simply mentioned as ghatikāsthāna,

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galige, or ghatyashāle. The only inscriptions that give a clear picture about the workings of a ghatikā are those in the village of Nagai in Chitapur taluk of Gulbarga district, which contained three big institutions of higher education<sup>4</sup>. One of the three inscriptions was connected with the Traipurushadeva temple and mentions a ghatikā and a shāle (school) as well. The second is associated with the Madhusudana temple and refers to a matha. Since it mentions two members of its establishment as ghatiyāras or officers of a ghatikā, there is likely to have been a link between the two. The third inscription associated with the Rameshvara temple is incomplete, but mentions four hundred students. There were remains of a big building which had an outer courtyard with rooms on both side and a big doorway which led into a spacious hall that contained a number of stone benches serving as seats, as per Hyderabad Archaeological survey reports. (Vol. VII). According to C. R. Krishnamacharlu who edited these inscriptions, these were ruins of an 11th century educational institution. It is not clear whether these were remains of a fourth institution or one of the three mentioned above. It is possible that all the three schools were part of one big institution, having about a thousand students living in three different campuses, resembling bigger universities like that of Nalanda in north India. Details of the organization of the three campuses or schools from the records give an inkling of the establishment known as the ghatikā.

#### **The Famous Ghatikas of the region.**

Following were the famous Ghatikas in the region as discussed above;

#### **The Ghatika of Traipurusha Temple**

Madhusudana, an officer of Trailokya malla, Chalukya, constructed this ghatikā. The expression ghatikasthānamenippā shāle (“a school named ghatikasthāna”), shows that the shāle in ancient and medieval times represented an institution of higher learning, in the same way the word “School” is used in “London School of Economics” or “Harvard Business School” today. Traipurusha represented the triune of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara, which symbolized the Hindu Trinity. In such schools, holy books pertaining to all sects were studied, including the Buddhist, Jaina, tantra, Shākta and Chārṅwaka scriptures, exemplifying the egalitarian outlook of true spiritual education. We find Traipurusha deva temples with schools (shāle) attached to them in other parts of Karnataka also. But only in Nagai, a ghatikasthāna was attached to a Traipurusha temple.

In this ghatikā two hundred scholars studied the Vedas and fifty-two studied the shāstras. Three teachers of each group comprised the main teaching staff along with a librarian (saraswatibhandāriga) and an officer (ghatikāprahāri). These shāstra teachers taught Bhatta-darshana, Nyasa and Prabhakara-darshana, which are all well known works on philosophy containing the commentaries of Bhatta (Kumarila Bhatta) and Prabhakara. Boarding and lodging was provided for all staff and students and land was allocated for their maintenance<sup>5</sup>.

#### **The Ghatika of Madhusudana Temple**

This temple school had an imposing collection of buildings with lofty patios, gate halls and compound walls. It had a nātyashālā or theater in its premises. There was a three-storied entrance tower (mūroneleyā bāgiluvādā). A spacious building was also built for the convenience of the inmates pursuing their religious observances. Inmates included ascetics of the order of Ekadandi, Tridaneli, Hamsa and Paramahansa, along with the snātakas. A school existed here for the study of the Rig, Yajur, Sāma and Atharvana Vedas with their several thousand shākhās (branches) and Vedāngas. The local inscriptions mention that the staff at the ghatikā included Bhattopādhyās, Brahmapuribhattas, Puranabhattas, stonecutters, artisans, songstresses, drummers, and kapina ghatiyārs or security officers. Of these, the ghatikā prahari of Traipurushaghatika and kapina ghaliyara (or ghatiyāra) are worth studying further, because they shed light on the functioning of the ghatikā at Nagai<sup>6</sup>.

Since both of these received emoluments equal to that of a teacher, they could not be considered equivalent to just watchmen or timekeepers, as translated by Sri C. R. Krishnamacharlu, who edited and translated the Nagai inscriptions. At the Vikramashila University, which also flourished in the 11th century, there were officers given the unpretentious title of dvarapanditas or gatekeepers, but they were the guardians of scholarship of the university. They were most erudite scholars and admitted only the ablest into the university, after a thorough test. The ghatikā was a seat of high learning and its guardians may have performed functions similar to those of dvārapanditas of Vikramashila University.

This ghatikā prahāri or watchman (or striker of the hour-bell) received emoluments equal to those of the teachers. It is possible that he was given greater responsibilities than the mere striking of a bell every

hour. In Nalanda, we learn that every activity was carried on according to the striking of a gong. In Nagai there were more than a thousand students, and a similar system might have prevailed. With time keeping personnel and a librarian on its staff, Nagai was indeed an important place of higher learning.

#### The Ghatika of Rameshwara Temple

The last inscription of the place mentions a certain Mahadevarasa and his charities in Nagai. He established a school for four hundred students. Of these one hundred studied Kavisunu (Sukraniti), one hundred studied the writings of Vyasa (particularly, the Mahabharata) and one hundred studied the works of Manu (the Dharmashāstra)<sup>7</sup>. The damaged condition of this record does not enable us to determine what the remaining fourth division of hundred students studied.

After understanding the details of the working of a ghatikā (as explained above) we may draw certain inferences as follows

The ghatikā was invariably attached to a temple. Other ghatikās mentioned in different places were also attached to temples. A matha, also an educational institution with dormitory facilities invariably existed in the same premises. For instance, the Madhusudana temple in Nagai had a matha. In Sudi a matha and ghatikā flourished together.

Agrahara and brahmapuri, which were other residential, educational institutions, also co-existed with ghatikāsthānās. Since the inscriptions at Nagai speak of provisions made for teachers, namely-Brahmapuribhatta and Puranabhatta and other employees of the temple, we may surmise that students and staff lived in the temple premises and studied in the ghatikā of the Traipurushadeva temple.

An agrahāra and shāle were also interconnected at times, irrespective of whether or not the shāle was called a ghatikāsthānā. The institution of Salotgi of the time of Rashtrakuta Krishna (950 CE) was an agrahāra and shāle. It was very big, with twenty-seven well-furnished dormitories, where students from different lands lived and studied. Thus it is clear that the shāle was an institution of higher learning and at times was identical with the ghatikā, although what made a shāle into a ghatikā is not exactly known.

Students in the ghatikā were referred to as mānis in a number of inscriptions at Morigere, Sudi, Nagai, Tumbula, etc. All these inscriptions contain references to grants of land made by benevolent patrons to cover the needs of students. Since the ghatikā was a place where only merited students were admitted, a student fortunate enough to enter and excel himself at a ghatikā appears to have been known as a ghatikasāhasa. It is interesting to note that "ghatikāsāhasā" is also identified with the word "ghaisāsa". Today "Ghaisas" is a familiar surname among Maharashtrian Brahmins as also "Ghalisasa" and "Ghalisa". His Holiness, the late Jagadguru Shri Sankaracharya of Kamakoti Pitham in a learned article had brought out the importance of ghatikāsthānās, which to him were the Taxilas of south India. He quoted the commentary of Bhatta Someshwara on Kumarilabhatta's Tantravartika to the Purvamimamsa to explain the very high standard of learning maintained in ghatikāsthānās.

Slips of paper containing extracts from each of the four vedas were placed inside a pot (ghaṭa). To test the proficiency of a student in the veda studied by him, a piece of paper from the pot was taken out at random, and the student was directed to recite fully the extract mentioned on it. In this way, students were tested in the ghatikā<sup>8</sup>.

From this explanation, it is clear that a very high standard in vedic knowledge was maintained in a ghatikā where, with the help of the system of pieces of paper in a pot, a student was tested on several occasions, often without prior warning. Naturally this mode of testing helped the student establish a complete mastery of a vedā or vedānga. The Jagadguru has also listed the subjects taught in ghatikāsthānās, which besides veda and vedānga, included purāna, mimāmsā, nyāya, dharmashāstras, the grammars, epics such as the Mahabharata and Ramayana etc.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Thus it can be summarized that a ghatikā in medieval times was an institution of higher learning which had the following characteristics, some of which may be easily identified in any modern university, namely a large number of students, liberal endowments, a high standard of scholarship, a fully stocked library and a detailed timetable that governed all activity.

The institution of the ghatikā existed in medieval Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat as well. Although now extinct, some terms obviously connected with the ghatikā are still in vogue in Kannada, spoken today in Karnataka. For instance, the terms "ghatānughati" and "ghattiga" are used to denote an intellectual giant, and the commencement ceremony (or convocation) of a university is known as ghatikōtsava. The survival of these words attests to the influence the institution exerted, long after the actual institution went out of existence. This influence was not merely academic; it was also spiritual and social. An inscription specifies

that the ghatikā was both a supporter of dharma and an abode of worldly enjoyment.

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