

Holy Places in the Inscriptions of Raichur District

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Introduction

Raichur district popularly known as Do-Aab lies between two important rivers of Karnataka state, Krishna (North side) and Tungabhadra (South side). Raichur was earlier referred to as Rajanoor, Rayara Ooru, Permana Rachuru and Rachur Seeme. Raichur is very rich from the epigraphical point of view. It has already yielded hundreds of inscriptions, ranging right from the Mauryan period up to the end of the Muslim period. Mauryas, Satavahanas, Rashtrakutas, Kalyani Chalukyas, Kalchuris, Vijayanagra Kings, Bahamani Sultans, Moguls, Hyderabad Nizams and the British have ruled this region. Besides this, famous feudatories such as Salagunde Sindhas, Ayyanawadi Haihayas, Karadikallu Kadambas, Guragunti Nayakas, Guntagola Nayakas, Morata Haihayas and Devadurga Nayakas have also ruled this region¹.

This paper titled Holy Places in the Inscriptions of Raichur District focuses on the holy places as mentioned in the inscriptions yielded in this district. Taking a dip in the river and offering donations on the auspicious occasions has been the tradition of this land from time immemorial. The inscriptions yielded in Raichur district speak of famous kings embarking upon pilgrimage either intentionally or by accident. It was a common practice among the kings and rulers to go on pilgrimage seeking redemption and beseech the blessings of the divine powers. It was popular belief those days that embarking upon a pilgrimage would result in warding off misfortunes.

There is an inherent curiosity and desire among men to visit holy places. As a matter of fact, holy or religious places play a significant role in taking up pilgrimage. This practice can be witnessed across the world as people visit spiritual, cultural, historical and religious places. Saints, sages, mystics, martyrs and holy beings used to stay at significant places which later turned out holy sites². These places are called holy or sacred or pilgrim places³.

Concept of Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a journey undertaken for a religious motive. Although some pilgrims have wandered continuously with no fixed destination, pilgrims more commonly seek a specific place that has been sanctified by association with a divinity or other holy personage. The institution of pilgrimage is evident in all world religions and was also important features of kingdoms and dynasties. Given its presence in so many different cultural and historical contexts, no single meaning can be attributed to the act of pilgrimage. Structural similarities are discernible, however, across disparate traditions of sacred travel. Pilgrimage usually entails some separation from the everyday world of home, and pilgrims may mark their new identity by wearing special clothes or abstaining from physical comforts. Frequently, pilgrimages link sacred place with sacred time. Apart from involving movement across physical and cultural landscapes toward a sacred goal, pilgrimages frequently involves ritual movements at the site itself. A further common feature of pilgrimages is the availability of small souvenirs relics, containers of holy water, icons, and so on that allow the sacredness of a shrine to be transported back to the pilgrim's home. Finally, pilgrimage sites tend to have a material focus, even though the nature of that focus varies according to the assumptions of the religion. Religion and spirituality, a pilgrimage is a long journey or search of great moral

significance. Sometimes, it is a journey to a sacred place or shrine of importance to a person's beliefs and faith. Members of every major religion participate in pilgrimages⁴.

Ancient holy places

Pilgrimage places are as old as history and it is imperative to understand how holy places evolved and what are importance holy places. India is a vast country, with diverse cultures and ancient civilization. There are a number of religious groups residing in India. In India we find the oldest pilgrimage tradition in the whole world. The practice of pilgrimage in India is so deeply embedded in the cultural psyche and the number of pilgrimage sites is so large that the entire subcontinent may actually be regarded as one grand and continuous sacred place. The famous holy places of India are Ayodhya, Mathura, haridwar, Kashi, Kanchi, Ujjayini and Dwarakapuri. These places are popularly known as cities of Redemption (Moksha)⁵.

Raichur district has rich cultural traditions and has been playing an important role in the field of literary activities since early times. The temples and mathas were centers of cultural, literary and social activities. A galaxy of eminent personalities, who shone in the cultural field, hailed from this district. A total of eight inscriptions speak of holy places situated in Raichur district. four inscriptions yielded in Lingasugur, two in Manvi and Sindhanur each give a detailed account of holy places.

1. The inscription yielded in Navile village in Lingasugur taluk mentions the date as Ananda Vaishaka Monday which can be equated to the date 05-04-1014. This inscription states the rule of Vikramaditya V and also makes a mention of one Jogashivacharya of Karadikallu for having donated land in Navile village during the reign of Jayasimha of Chalukya dynasty. The inscription states that the land was donated in Navile village on 10-11-1112 in order to worship the holy feet of Rajaguru Bhattaraka⁶ (Sha.Sam-11 page 144). It can be known from the inscription that the Jadeshankara temple in Navile village belonged to Shaiva sect and the Paduka (footwear) of Rajaguru Bhattaraka were offered special prayers at this temple. It is said that Rajaguru Bhattaraka found redemption in this temple. Over a period of time, deity of Jadeshankar was placed in this temple and prayers are offered to this deity. The author of paper believes that the turn of these events need thorough research investigation.
2. A rock edict is yielded near a well in Gowduru village in Lingasugur taluk. The date of this edict mentions the date as 947, Phalguna, Adityavara. This date can be equated to 20-02-1026. This edict states that a total of 30 cent of land was donated by Chalukya Jayasimha. However, there is no mention regarding the purpose of the land donation⁷ (Sha.Sam-20, page 153). This donated land is divided as arid land and black soil. The arid land is very fertile and it can be understood that it was a belief those days that one who donates the best of the land would be remembered for his virtuous conduct.
3. The inscription yielded at Jadeshankara temple in Navile village in dilapidated condition. The date of this inscription is mentioned as 989, Parabhava, Ashadha Amavasya, Sunday. This date can be summed up as 25-06-1066. The inscription reveals that Nagavermarasa, the feudatory of Trilokyamalla of Kalyani Chalukya dynasty, donated a land to Jadeshankara temple in Navile. This donation was made on Dakshinayana Sankranti⁸ (Sha.Sam-9, page 142). This inscription makes a mention of leap year which occurs once in three years. a leap year shall have 366 days and usually leap years are considered auspicious. It is to noted here that the donation was made on Amavasye, which happened to be on Sunday that year. This inscription drives home the point that donations during leap year were a common practice then.

4. The inscription at Jadeshankara temple in Navile village is dilapidated condition. This inscription belongs to the period of Tribhuvanamalla, a Chalukya king. The date of this inscription can be taken as 18-10-1119. The inscription states that Bhutarasa of Kadamba clan donated a land near Krishna river bed in the fond service of God⁹. The inscription lauds the service of Bhutarasa and praises him with many titles. The inscription also makes a mention of donation made by Bhulokamalla in the year 21-3-1135. It says that land was donated to Shanangi and Baladeva Shanangi, Nachkana hattopadhyaya and Devaka Nayak. The other details are not known as the inscription is in the decayed condition.
5. The inscription yielded at the field of one Sharanappa in Ballatagi village in Manvi taluk dates to 980, Vilambi, Vaishaka. This date can be taken as 30-3-1058. This inscription belongs to the period of Trilokyamalla Someshwra of Chalukya dynasty. It says that Chamaladevi, the queen of Trilokyamalla, donated land in the fond memory of having taken a holy bath in Tungabhadra and Krishna rivers. The inscription states that donation was made through Bhaskar Setty¹⁰ who was called Pankaja Bramara.
6. The inscriptions yielded on the outskirts of Chekalaparvi village in Manvi taluk dates to 1443, Vrisha Samvatsara, Monday. The date can be taken as 15-07-1521. The inscription makes a detail statement that Vijayanagara king Krishnadevayara conquered Rachuru, Alampuru, Manave, hanagallu, and Magae Durga and came straight to Kadaluru Sangama where Krishna and Bhima conjoin. His wives Chinnadevi offered a donation of cow and Tirumaladevi offered donation of gold. After this, the king donated land at Chikalaparavi in the service of God¹¹. It is said that Ratnadana, (donation of gems) was considered most sacred and this was done by Chinnadevi.
7. The inscription yielded at Somalingeshwara temple in Mukkundi village in Sindhanur taluk dates to Uttarayana Sankranti. The date can be taken as 25-12-1088. As per the inscription, Tribhuvanamalla of Chalukya dynasty donated land to this village after offering puja at Kanteshwara Teertha¹². It says that Bacharasa was the administrative head of Mukkunde village when Tribhuvanamalla was the king of Chalukya dynasty. It is also revealed that Bacharasa was born to a couple named Nagendra and Nagini. Kannarasa was the son of Bacharasa and Kavabbarasi was the wife of Kannarasa. Gona was the son of Kannarasa. Bacharasa built Vishnu temple and Bacheshwara temple. The inscription gives a detail account of the family tree of Bacharasa. It is known from the inscription that the rulers were the followers of Shiava and Vaishnava faith and this fact is further acknowledged by the fact they also built Vishnu and Shiava temples¹².
8. The inscription at Ishwara temple in Jalihalu village in Sindhanur taluk dates to the period of Chalukya Vikrama. The date mentioned is Parthiva, Pushya, Uttarayana Sankranti. It can be taken as 25-12-1105. This inscription makes a mention that Hermadideva was the Mandalika of Ponnurumadada during the reign of Tribhuvanamalla. His wife Jakkanambe gave birth to children named Nemana, Bhuchana, Kusuvana and Mahadeva Bichchana. Bichchana was later made the head of the village of Edapalli. His wife Bachikabbe gave birth to Malligavunda, Rajayya and Bachiya. Bichchana built a temple Bicheshwara temple after his name. The inscription says that whoever makes a donation at the banks of Tunga Bhadra River, they shall attain good things in life¹³.

A total of 9 inscriptions have been yielded in Raichur which focus on pilgrim places across Raichur district. The inscriptions obliquely refer to the fact that kings had a common practice to go on pilgrimage to appease Gods and beseech good fortune not only for them but to the entire society and common masses.

Conclusion:

The inscriptions yielded in Raichur bring home the point that Raichur was popularly known as the Land of pilgrimages; meaning that the land, where taking every step on, one feels an increase in energy, devotion & love towards God, the thought process gets purified with the sight of God & Saints. Additionally, our Scriptures have sung infinite glory of pilgrimages. Also, equally true is the fact, that, one who takes holy bath in the pilgrimage of truth, wisdom, forgiveness, meditation & spirituality and the one who while observing celibacy bathes in the pilgrimage of self control, it is said, that natural pilgrimage is built, where such person resides. That's why a place, where Saints reside, becomes a pilgrimage. That part of soil, which they step on, becomes holy and worth applying on our forehead which enriches our fortune. Just like we need to take bath to clean our body and soap to clean dirty clothes, similarly, to cleanse our old bad habits & our inner self, we need to serve the saints, listen to their spiritual discourses, observe fasts and do remembering God's name. One, who is truly blessed with the company of such enlightened Saints, gets the merits of bathing in such holy pilgrimages.

Foot Notes :

1. P B Desai, Karnatakada Itihasa, Page-8-9
2. Virupakshi Poojarahally, Sri Krishnadevarayana teertha Yatregalu, Kannada University, Hampi, Page 21
3. Yuga yatre, Bharatiya Samskruti, 4th Vol, page 380.
4. Kannada Nighantu (4th eddition) Kannada Sahitya Parishat, page 3522
5. M V Krishna Murthy and K Keshava Bhatt, Karnatakada Itihasa Darshana, Page 837.
6. Devarakondareddi and others(edi), Kannada University, Shasana Samputa-7 Raichur District (Lingasuguru)
7. Ibid, Inscription No 20 (Lingasuguru)
8. Ibid, Inscription No 09 (Lingasuguru)
9. Ibid, Inscription No 08 (Lingasuguru)
10. Ibid, Inscription No 95 (Manvi)
11. Ibid, Inscription No 19 (Manvi)
12. Ibid, Inscription No 8 (Sindhanur)
13. Ibid, Inscription No 23 (Sindhanur)