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Dāna-śraddhā (Charitable attitude) reflected in inscriptions

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Abstract

The study of inscriptions provides the details about contemporary events. Most of them record the act of donation done by king's or ministers or the people. The historical significance of such documents plays pivotal role in drawing conclusions about then social life. Therefore, an attempt is made in this paper to analyze the information of different donations reflected in the inscriptions made by the Śilāhāra kings.

Keyword: Śilāhāra, donation, *Dāna-śraddhā*, *ghāṇaka*, *Pañcalāngala* vrata

Introduction

Dāna is the practice of cultivating generosity. It is associated with social responsibility and spiritual upliftment. Donation has been considered a moral duty in many religions. It can take the form of giving to an individual or group of people in distress or need. Sometimes this practice exists in philanthropic public projects that empower and help many. Therefore, *Dāna* is indicated by Manu as the principal aspect of religious life in *Kaliyuga* ^[1]. It is eulogized as one of the duties of an individual.

Devala discusses six aspects of donation as follows:

*dātā ca pratigrahītā ca śraddhā deyam ca dharmayuk ॥
deśakalau ca dānānāmṛyētāni ṣaḍ viduḥ ॥* ^[2]

The donor (one who donates), the donee (one who receives), *śraddhā* (charitable attitude), the gift, a proper time and a proper place ^[3]. Further he provides detail explanation on each aspect.

Dāna in inscriptions

Yājñavalkya prescribes that king should seek to acquire wealth by lawful means; he should donate objects of enjoyment and riches of various kinds to brahman-s learned in the Veda. It is the inexhaustible treasure. When a king donates or issues any grant there are certain rules about its documentation mentioned in Yājñavalkya-Smṛti ^[4]. These details are also reflected in copper-plate grants and stone inscriptions. This type of study may help in drawing conclusions about contemporary society. Thus, in this paper, an attempt is made to analyse the information recorded in the grants made by the Śilāhāra kings. This analysis will be based upon one of the aspects of donation i.e. *śraddhā* a charitable attitude of donor. According to Devala,

*Saumukhādyaabhisamprītirarthinām darśane sadā ॥
satkṛtiścānasūyā ca sadā śraddheti kīrtyate ॥* ^[5]

The Inscriptional records

The Chinchanī plate records donation made by Cāmuṇḍārāja, a feudatory prince of the king Chittarāja ^[6]. He donated a *ghāṇaka* (i.e. oil-mill) in favour of the temple *Kautuka-maṭhikā* of the Goddess Bhagavati. The oil of the mill was to be used for burning a lamp and also for the smearing of the feet of the scholars and of the Brāhmaṇa-s that may visit the temple.

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Bhādrapadabahula-amāvasyāyāyām ... suīrthe snātvā devatāpūjākṛtādanantaram kautukamṭhikārtham śrībhagavtyāḥ agre dīpaprajvalanārtham svādhyāyika-āgatāvra(brā)mh(hma)ṇapādābhyaṅganārthm svādhyāyikavīhaḍahaste kṛtodakādisarggeṇa namasyavrṭtyā [bha]ktyā ... śrīcāmuṇḍārājena ghāṇakaḥ pradattaḥ

Here, the purpose of donating oil-mill is not only constrained to burn the lamp in front of goddess Bhagavatī but also informs the act of smearing of visitors. The visitors are *svādhyāyika-āgatāvra(brā)mh(hma)ṇa* scholars or Brāhmaṇas or Brāhmaṇa-scholars. Thus, an angle of the attitude of charity i.e. donor's kind treatment (i.e. *satkṛti*) towards society is highlighted. The words *namasyavrṭtyā* and *bhaktiyā* also denote humbleness of donor.

The Kolhapur plates provide the information about donation made by Gaṇḍarāditya [7]. The king donated two *nivartana*-s of land in the village of Kōnnijavāḍa comprised in Mīrinjadesā to twelve *Brāhmaṇa*-s for their residence and maintenance as requested by the *Amātya* Maillapaiyya. The grant also records the details about the food given to those *Brāhmaṇa*-s as daily meal which is quite noticeable.

Brahmapūryām śrīkheḍādityadevasannidhau dvādaśānām vrā(brā)hmaṇānām śvetavṛihyodanena āḍhkyādisūpena ghṛtena takreṇa caturbhiḥ śakaiśca bhojanāya tāmbulāya ca tenaiva daṇḍena mānyam nivartanadvayam ... 1

Gaṇḍarāditya agreed gift of two more *nivartana*-s for the food consisting of cooked white rice, soup made of *āḍhakī* etc., ghee and butter-milk, and *tāmbula*. Record of these detailed information again directs towards the attitude of complete satisfaction (i.e. *abhisamprīti*) of donee. It also indicates the depth of thoughts of donor.

Tāle plates give information about several grants made by Gaṇḍarāditya [8]. The donation is as follows

1. Sixteen *vṛtti*-s of three *nivartana*-s each with a residential house to sixteen Brahmana-s.
2. One *vṛtti* for the manager who arranged for the feeding of a lakh Brahmana-s
3. Three *nivartana*-s one to each of the three gods Īśvara, Buddha and Arhat.
4. Four *nivartana*-s to the headman of the village of Guḍālaya.
5. Two *vṛtti*-s as *dakṣiṇā* of the *pāraṇā* of *pañcalāṅgala* vrata
6. One *vṛtti* for maintaining perpetual lamp in the temple of Guḍāleśvara for the performance of *agniṣṭikā*, for the maintainance of a *prapā* and for the supply of *tāmbula*.

The record provides the information about *Pañcalāṅgala* vrata performed by the king. The information about its performance is available in the literature such as Matsya Purāṇa, Agni Purāṇa, Caturvargacintāmaṇi, Aparārka etc. This religious act consists donation of land, five wooden ploughs, five golden ploughs and ten bulls. Generally, such practices are meant for personal upliftment but the king is promoting farming and social well-being as well by performing this *vrata*. Kane mentions this inscription as an example of the performing *Pañcalāṅgala* vrata in the list of Vrata-s [9]. It seems that probably king Gaṇḍarāditya was the only one king who performed *Pañcalāṅgala* vrata.

Another remarkable point from the same record is the donation for the performance of *agniṣṭikā*, for the maintainance of a *prapā*. This act gives prominence to need

of devotees or visitors of the temple during winter and summer seasons accordingly.

The inscription [10] of Vijayāditya records that trading corporation donated certain dues on commodities as arec-nuts, oil, clarified butter etc. sold in the market evidently at Seḍambāḷ in favor of the god Mādhaveśvara. The grant also records the gifts made by the people of the town, the guilds, potters, goldsmiths, shoemakers and cobblers for the festival of Chaitra and Dīpāvalī. The people of the town should give one hāga coin on each marriage, The guild of the town should give one hāga coin per house for oil required for the lamps lighted in the festival of Dīpāvalī, And the other people should donate their products such as one aḍḍā of gold, one pot, pair of slippers etc. every six months. The grant indicates the shades of charitable attitude that are *saumukya* and *anasūyā*.

The celebration of festivals is made here as the collective responsibility of the society. Thus, the grant itself is an example of the mature and developed civilization.

Concluding Note

Thus, the reflection of the charitable attitude of donor can be observed through inscriptions. Though some of the examples show king's kind and humble approach towards the people, it is doubtful that whether this approach is restricted with the certain group of people or not. Contribution of the society at the time of the celebration is recognizable. By contemplating these incidences, the message can be taken into consideration that 'donations to be made by perceiving the exact need of the receiver'.

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