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विद्येविना मति गेली, मतीविना नीति गेली  
नीतिविना गति गेली, गतिविना वित्त गेले  
वित्तविना शूद्र स्वचले, इतके अनर्थ एका अविद्येने केले

-महात्मा ज्योतीराव फुले

❖ विद्यावार्ता या आंतरविद्याशाखीय बहुभाषिक त्रैमासिकात व्यक्त झालेल्या मतांशी मालक,  
प्रकाशक, मुद्रक, संपादक सहमत असतीलच असे नाही. न्यायक्षेत्र:बीड



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## Society and Education and Language and Literature under Rashtrakutas

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**ABSTRACT:** Information regarding social life, the caste system, life style and recreational activities during the Rashtrakuta times comes from inscriptions and from the notes of Greek and Arab travellers to India at the time. These sources provide evidence that the Hindu caste system was widespread. Chronicles mention more castes than the four basic castes in the Hindu social system known today, some as many as seven castes. A traveller's account mentions sixteen castes including the four basic castes of Brahmins, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Chandalas.

With the ending of the Gupta Dynasty in northern India in the early 6th century, major changes began taking place in the Deccan south of the Vindhyas and in the southern regions of India. These changes were not only political but also linguistic and cultural. The royal courts of peninsular India (outside of Tamilakam) interfaced between the increasing use of the local Kannada language and the expanding Sanskrit culture. Inscriptions, including those that were bilingual, demonstrate the use of Kannada as the primary administrative language in conjunction with Sanskrit. Government archives used Kannada for recording pragmatic information relating to grants of land.

**KEYWORDS:** Society and Education, Language

and Literature, caste system, writings.

### INTRODUCTION

**Society and Education under Rashtrakutas:-** One caste known as Zakaya or Lahud consisted of people belonging to communities specialising in dance and acrobatics. Intercaste marriages were uncommon except between highly placed Kshatriya girls and Brahmin boys. People belonging to such professions as sailing, hunting, weaving, cobblery, basket making and fishing were all accommodated into castes or subcastes. The Antyajyas belonged to a caste that provided many menial services to the wealthy. Among people of upper castes only those Kshatriyas belonging to the Sat-Kshatriya sub-caste (noble Kshatriyas) were considered higher in status than the Brahmins who otherwise enjoyed the highest status in Rashtrakuta society. A subcaste among Brahmins was the istin who were solely specialised in the teaching the profession.

Brahmins were mostly involved in careers related to teaching, judiciary, astrology, mathematics, poetry and philosophy. However it was common for Brahmins to occupy hereditary administrative posts as well. In addition, such professions normally considered non-Brahminical – agriculture, trade in Betel nuts and martial posts – were increasingly occupied by Brahmins. People of the medical profession were treated with regard and inscriptions mention some Brahmin doctors. Capital punishment though commonly practiced was not given to Brahmins who were found guilty of heinous crimes and in this respect they enjoyed the same privileges as royal Kshatriya sub-castes. Instead, as an alternate punishment their right hand and left foot were severed leaving them disabled. The killing of a Brahmin in medieval Hindu India was considered as a heinous crime and this alternate punishment served the purpose of enforcement of the law. The only caste of people considered above the Brahmins were the Kshatriyas belonging to royal and noble fami-

lies. Not all Kshatriyas were considered upper caste and not all upper caste people were Kshatriyas.

By the 9th century, kings from all the four castes had at one time or another occupied the highest seat in the monarchical system in Hindu India. admitting Kshatriyas to Vedic schools along with Brahmins was common, although children of the Vaishya and Shudra castes were not allowed in these schools. Jains took up martial careers and landownership by people of all castes is recorded in inscriptions. The Shudras had land rights in that any plot of land taken from one by fraud was restored back to them by the King himself. Brahmins, unlike the Vaishya and Shudra, were free to relocate from one province to another and even from one kingdom to another, where they were welcomed with gifts of land and housing. Special places of learning called Brahmadeya were constructed for them. The caste system was flexible to the extent that there are records of intercaste marriages although this was not common. However, toward the end of the Rashtrakuta rule, these intercaste marriages, especially those involving a Brahmin bride or groom, were becoming very rare while the practice remained relatively frequent among other castes. Brahmins were pure vegetarians and abstained from consuming alcohol of any kind while Kshatriyas indulged in both. Jains had become popular among traders and agriculturists who popularized vegetarianism. Intercaste functions were rare as dining together between people of various castes was avoided.

Joint families were the norm but legal separations between brothers and even father and son have been recorded in inscriptions. Women and daughters had rights over property and land, and there are inscriptions recording the sale of land by women. Moneys inheritable by women were called Sthridhana. The arranged marriage system ensured a strict policy of early marriage for women. Among Brahmins, boys married at or below 16 years of age and they

chose brides of 12 or younger. This age policy was not as strictly followed by other castes. Inscriptions refer to numerous instances of the marriage of a man to his maternal cousin (daughter of a maternal uncle), prince Jagattunga, son of Krishna II being an example of this. Women had the right to attend and the right to be in attendance in the court when it was occupied by the King. Sati was practiced but was voluntary. Very few examples of sati are noted in inscriptions and those that did occur were mostly in the royal families. The system of shaving the heads of widows was rarely practiced as epigraphs note that widows were allowed to grow their hair but decorating their hair was discouraged. The sentence "the cause of the cessation of the parting of the hairs of the damsels of enemies" (ripuvilasiriisimantoddharanahetuh) is repeated in many inscriptions. The remarriage of a widow was rare among the upper castes and common among the lower castes. Women who were dishonoured were admitted back into their families and caste.

Loans were granted in the presence of witnesses unless the receiver of the loan was of high social standing, in which case this requirement was waived. In the general population men wore two simple pieces of cloth, a loose garment on top and a garment worn like a dhoti for the lower part of the body. Only kings could wear turbans, a practice that spread to the masses much later. Women's clothes were well stitched, and some wore petticoats. Names of Brahmin men consisted of the given name, the fathers name and the family gotra (lineage). The surnames popular today such as Dvivedi, Upadhyaya, Dikshita came into vogue only later. Dancing was a popular recreational activity and inscriptions speak of royal women being charmed by dancers, both male and female, in the king's palace. Devadasis were often present in temples. Other recreational activities included attending animal fights of the same or different species. There has been found an Atkur

hero stone (virgal) made for the favourite hound of feudatory Western Ganga King Butuga II that died fighting a wild boar in a sport. Game preserves for hunting by royalty are recorded in the inscriptions of Govinda III. Astronomy was well developed and so was astrology. Even Jains showed interest in astrological predictions and metaphysical beliefs. Superstitions were plentiful and catching a snake alive proved a woman's chastity. Old persons suffering from incurable diseases preferred to end their lives by drowning in the sacred waters of pilgrim site or by burning themselves.

#### Language and Literature under Rashtrakutas:- Language:-

The local language formed the desi (popular) literature while literature in Sanskrit was more marga (formal). Educational institutions and places of higher learning (ghatikas) taught in Sanskrit, the language of the learned Brahmins, while Kannada increasingly became the speech of personal expression of devotional closeness of a worshipper to a private deity. The patronage Kannada received from rich and literate Jains eventually led to its use in the devotional movements of later centuries.

Contemporaneous literature and inscriptions show that Kannada was not only popular in the modern Karnataka region but the linguistic change had spread further north into present day southern Maharashtra and to the northern Deccan by the 8th century. Kavirajamarga, the work on poetics, refers to the entire region between the Kaveri River and the Godavari River as "Kannada country". Higher education in Sanskrit included the subjects of Veda, Vyakarana (grammar), Jyotisha (astronomy and astrology), Sahitya (literature), Mimansa (Exegesis), Dharmashastra (law), Puranas (ritual), and Nyaya (logic). An examination of inscriptions from this period shows that the Kavya (classical) style of writing was popular. The awareness of the merits and defects in inscriptions by the archivists indicates that even they, though me-

diocre poets, had studied standard classical literature in Sanskrit. An inscription in Kannada by King Krishna III, written in a poetic Kanda metre, has been found as far away as Jabalpur in modern Madhya Pradesh. Kavirajamarga, a work on poetics in Kannada by Amoghavarsha I, shows that the study of poetry was popular in the Deccan during this time. Trivikrama's Sanskrit writing, Nalachampu, is perhaps the earliest in the champu style from the Deccan.

#### Literature:-

**Rashtrakuta literature** is the body of work created during the rule of the Rastrakutas of Manyakheta, a dynasty that ruled the southern and central parts of the Deccan, India between the 8th and 10th centuries. The period of their rule was an important time in the history of South Indian literature in general and Kannada literature in particular. This era was practically the end of classical Prakrit and Sanskrit writings and a whole wealth of topics were available to be written in Kannada. Some of Kannada's most famous poets graced the courts of the Rashtrakuta kings. Court poets and royalty created eminent works in Kannada and Sanskrit that spanned such literary forms as prose, poetry, rhetoric, Hindu epics and Jain tirthankaras. Famous scholars wrote on secular subjects such as mathematics.

#### Kannada writings:-

Kannada poets and writers in Rashtrakuta Empire (753-973 CE)	
Amoghavarsha I	850
Srivijaya	850
Asaga	850
Shivakotiacharya	900
Ravinagabhatta	930
Adikavi Pampa	941
Jainachandra	950
Sri Ponna	950
Rudrabhatta	9th-10th c.
Kavi Rajaraja	9th-10th c.
Gajanakusha	10th century

Kavirajamarga (850CE) by King Amoghavarsha I and his court poet Srivijaya is the earliest extant book on rhetoric and poetics but it is evident from this book that several

styles of Kannada literature and poetry had already existed in previous centuries. Kavirajamarga is a guide to poets (Kavishiksha) that aims to standardize these various styles. The book references early Kannada writers such as the 6th century Western Ganga Dynasty King Durvinita, an early writer of Kannada prose.

Adikavi Pampa, widely regarded as one of the greatest Kannada writers, became famous for *adipurana* (941CE). Written in *champu* style, it is the life history of the first Jain thirtankara Rishabhadeva. In this unique work of spiritual heroism, the soul moves through a series of births before attaining emancipation. The quest in this spiritual saga, as in many others, is the liberation of the soul from the cycle of life and death. Pampa's other classic *Vikramarjuna Vijaya* (or *Pampa Bharata*, 941CE), is the author's version of the Hindu epic the *Mahabharata*. The story differs from other earlier versions of the epic in that Arjuna alone is the hero, not the other Pandava brothers, and Draupadi is solely Arjuna's wife. The author underplays the role of the Hindu god Krishna and favourably compares his patron king Chalukya Arikesari (a Rashtrakuta feudatory) to Arjuna, while casting a lofty and noble image of Karna and the Kaurava prince Duryodhana. Pampa demonstrates such a command of classical Kannada that scholars over the centuries have written many interpretations of his work.

Another great writer in Kannada Sri Ponna was patronised by King Krishna III and famed for his description of the life of the 16th Jain tirthankara Shantinatha entitled *Santipurana*. He earned the title *Ubhaya Kavichakravathi* (supreme poet in two languages) for his command over both Kannada and Sanskrit. His other writings in Kannada were *Bhuvanaika-karamabhyudaya*, *Jinaksaramale* and *Gatapratigata*. Adikavi Pampa, Sri Ponna and Ranna (court poet of Western Chalukya King Tailapa II) are called the "three gems" of Kannada literature.

The earliest extant prose work in Kannada is *Vaddaradhane* (900 CE) by Shivakotiacharya. The title means "worship of elders". The writing contains 19 stories mostly borrowed from the Sanskrit book *Brihatkathakosha* and is about Jain tenets. The writing describes issues such as rebirth, Karma, plight of humans on earth, social issues of the time such as education, trade and commerce, magic, superstitions and condition of women in society. Other well-known writers from this era were Rudrabhatta of Banahatti, Ravinagabhatta who was patronised by King Govinda IV, Kavi Rajaraja who wrote the *Kalasa* record, Gajanakusha (also known as Gajaga or Narayana) who wrote on erotics and was a minister in the court of King Krishna III. Sri Vijaya, court poet of Amoghavarsha I wrote *Chandraprabha-purana* in early 9th century. Jinachandra, referred to by Sri Ponna as the author of *Pujyapada Charita* earned the honorific "modern Samanthaladhara", though his works have not been found. A contemporary of Amoghavarsha I Asaga (or Asoka) was the Digambara Jain poet, who wrote the *Karnatakumarasambhava Kavya*, *Varadhamana Purana* and other writings which have been praised by later day poets such as Jayakirthi, but none of which are available today.

#### Sanskrit writings:-

Many enduring works on religion and secular subjects were written in Sanskrit. In mathematics, ground breaking theories on Algebra, Arithmetic and Geometry were postulated by Mahaviracharya, a native of Gulbarga who belonged to the Karnataka mathematical tradition. He was patronised by King Amoghavarsha I. His greatest contribution was *Ganitasarasangraha*, in 9 chapters that defined important axioms. These axioms state that a proper fraction is a sum of improper fractions, a negative number is not a square number and hence does not have a square root. He also defined formulae to calculate the sum of complex

progressions and a measurement unit for the size of an atom.

Trivikrama Bhatta was a noted scholar in the court of King Indra III. His classics were Nalachampu (915), the earliest in champu style in Sanskrit, Damayanti Katha, Madalasangama and Begumra plates. Legend has it that Goddess Saraswati helped him in his effort to compete with a rival in the king's court. Jinasena was the spiritual preceptor and guru of Amoghavarsha I. A theologian, his contributions are Dhavala and Jayadhavala (written with another theologian Virasena). These writings are named after their patron king who was also called Athishayadhavala. Other contributions from Jinasena were Adipurana (later completed by his disciple Gunabhadracharya who also wrote Atmanushasana), Harivamsha and Parshvabhyudaya. Halayudha patronised by King Krishna III wrote Kavirahasya, a list of verbs with their meanings written in verse and a work on prosody called Mritasanjivini.

Somadevasuri of 950 CE wrote in the court of Arikesari II, a feudatory of Rashtrakuta Krishna III in Vemulavada. He was the author of Yasastilaka champu, Nitivakyamrita and other writings. The main aim of the champu writing was to propagate Jain tenets and ethics. The second writing reviews the subject matter of Arthashastra from the standpoint of Jain morals in a clear and pithy manner. Well known advaita philosophers from present day Karnataka region were Padmapada and Sureshvara (also known as Visvarupa) who wrote commentaries such as Balakrida upholding the advaita beliefs. Pushpadanta who was patronised by a minister of King Krishna III wrote Mahapurana, Nagakumara charita and Yashodhara charita. King Amoghavarsha I himself a noted poet wrote Prashnottara Ratnamalika, a book of high value on religion, later translated into Tibetan language. Other well-known scholars were logicians such as Manikyanandin, Mallavadin and Prabhachandra. Sakatayana patronised by Amoghavarsha I wrote Sabdanusasana and Amoghavritti and Chavundaraya wrote Charitrasara. Akalanka Bhatta wrote Rajavarthika, Nyayavinishchaya, Ashtashati and the Laghiyastraya, Lakshmidhara compiled

Vyavahara Kalpataru, Khandana Khanda Khadya and others.

The Sanskrit writing on medicine Kalyanakaraka by a court poet, Ugraditya, relates that the king requested the poet give the court a discourse on the evils of a non-vegetarian diet and the need to avoid such a diet to treat illnesses.

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