

A Perspective On The Educational System In Medieval Thagadur Nadu, Tamilnadu, India

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Abstract

This paper provides a glimpse into the educational system that existed in Medieval Thagadur Nadu in Tamil Nadu, India, and sheds light on its structure, curriculum, and societal significance. In medieval Thagadur Nadu, education was primarily reserved for the privileged few, namely the nobility, religious leaders, and scholars. The system revolved around the transmission of knowledge through traditional methods, focusing on subjects such as theology, philosophy, literature, and mathematics. Education was predominantly imparted in religious institutions, including monasteries, temples, and mosques, which served as centers of learning. While the educational system in Thagadur Nadu was predominantly limited to the elite, it also provided avenues for social mobility. Exceptionally talented individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds could gain access to education through patronage from wealthy patrons or by joining the service of a noble household. The study of the educational system in medieval Thagadur Nadu offers valuable insights into the cultural, intellectual, and social fabric of the region. By understanding the practices and institutions that facilitated knowledge transmission, we gain a deeper appreciation of the historical and intellectual achievements of

this era. Furthermore, this perspective helps to contextualize the evolution of education systems and their impact on shaping societies throughout history.

Index Terms: social cultural, intellectual, education, medieval, Thagadur Nadu.

INTRODUCTION

Education is a broad term that refers to the process of acquiring knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes through various formal and informal means. It is a lifelong process that begins at birth and continues throughout one's life. Education plays a vital role in individual and societal development by promoting personal growth, fostering critical thinking, and preparing individuals to participate effectively in their communities. Education systems can vary significantly across countries and regions, influenced by cultural, political, and socioeconomic factors. They typically involve a combination of formal and informal education, with a range of educational approaches, methods, and philosophies. The aim is to provide individuals with a well-rounded education that prepares them for the challenges and opportunities of life.

Education has been defined as an instrument for the future. It can yield rich dividends only if the whole system is directed to meet the demands of the society. A country's human resources constitute its greatest asset. Attitudes and skills make a nation. Education provides the key to both and it is the manifestation of human perfection which is already inherent in man. Education is the fundamental right of every citizen in India. Mainly, education forms the significance of inclusive growth of the country. The system and source of education in ancient India was very interesting. The education gave equal importance for overall development both in terms and physical, mental and total development as a person. The gurus and the pupil worked together consistently as a team to bring proficiency in all aspects of learning. This paper provides a glimpse into the educational system that existed in Medieval Thagadur Nadu in Tamil Nadu, India by shedding light on its structure, curriculum, and societal significance.

The medieval period in India refers to the period between the 6th and 18th centuries CE, characterized by

significant political, social, and cultural changes. This era saw the rise and fall of several dynasties, the spread of Islam, the establishment of regional kingdoms, and the arrival of European powers. The Medieval period can be broadly divided into three major phases:

Early Medieval Period (6th to 12th century): This phase witnessed the decline of the Gupta Empire, which led to the fragmentation of political power. The most significant development during this period was the spread of Islam, beginning with the Arab invasions in the 7th and 8th centuries. The Arab conquests of Sindh and Multan brought Islamic influence to the Indian subcontinent. However, it was during the Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) that Islam became a major political and cultural force in northern India.

Sultanate Period (1206-1526): The Delhi Sultanate was a series of Muslim dynasties that ruled over Delhi and large parts of northern India. The Sultanate was established by Qutub-ud-din Aibak, a Turkic slave general, and it witnessed the reign of several prominent dynasties such as the Slave dynasty, Khilji dynasty, Tughlaq dynasty, and the Sayyid dynasty. The Sultanate period saw the introduction of Persianate culture, the construction of magnificent buildings like the Qutub Minar and the establishment of a centralized administration. "Education and learning continued to receive generous support from the Rayas of Vijayanagar and their numerous feudatories. The Bahmani kingdom and its successors naturally devoted more attention to Muslim education and Islamic studies, in such large and well-equipped colleges as the one at Bidar, established by the celebrated minister Mahmud Gawan." (Sastri 1975: 293)

Mughal Empire (1526-1857): The Mughal Empire was founded by Babur in 1526 when he defeated Ibrahim Lodi, the last ruler of the Delhi Sultanate, in the Battle of Panipat. The Mughals were of Central Asian Turkic origin and initially established their rule in northern India. Under the reign of Akbar the Great, the empire reached its zenith, expanding to encompass most of the Indian subcontinent. The Mughal Empire is known for its impressive architecture, such as the Taj Mahal, Red Fort, and Fatehpur Sikri. However, the decline of the empire began in the late 17th century, with subsequent weak rulers, regional revolts, and invasions by the Marathas,

British, and other regional powers. Education during the Mughal Empire in India witnessed significant developments and advancements, with the rulers of the empire playing a crucial role in promoting and patronizing education. The Mughal emperors recognized the importance of education in fostering a well-governed and cultured society, and thus, they took measures to establish educational institutions and encourage learning.

During the medieval period, India witnessed the blending of Islamic and indigenous cultures, resulting in the development of a unique Indo-Islamic architectural style, literature, music, and cuisine. It was also a time of significant intellectual and artistic contributions, with scholars like Al-Biruni, Amir Khusrow, and poets like Kabir and Guru Nanak leaving a lasting impact on Indian society. It's important to note that the division of Indian history into medieval and modern periods is a Eurocentric construct and may not adequately capture the complexity and diversity of the subcontinent's history. The medieval period in India was a dynamic and transformative era that shaped the socio-cultural fabric of the region.

Education during the medieval period in India was primarily dominated by religious institutions and was largely focused on the transmission of religious knowledge. Some of the key aspects of education during this time are:

1. **Gurukul System:** The Gurukul system was a prevalent form of education during the medieval period. It involved a student living with a teacher (guru) in a hermitage or ashram and receiving instruction in various subjects. The guru imparted knowledge through oral teachings, and the students would assist their teacher in daily chores and gain knowledge through observation and experience.

2. **Sanskrit Learning:** Sanskrit was the primary language of education during this period. Students were taught grammar, literature, philosophy, and religious texts in Sanskrit. Proficiency in Sanskrit was considered essential for higher learning.

3. **Traditional Subjects:** The curriculum mainly consisted of religious texts, including the Vedas, Upanishads,

and epics like the Ramayana and Mahabharata. Subjects like philosophy, astrology, mathematics, and music were also taught. However, the focus was primarily on religious and philosophical studies.

4. Ashramas and Universities: Education was primarily provided in ashramas (hermitages) and monastic centers. Prominent centers of learning during the medieval period included Nalanda, Vikramashila, and Takshashila universities. These institutions attracted scholars and students from various parts of India and beyond.

5. Oral Tradition: Teaching and learning were primarily based on oral tradition. Students memorized texts, and the guru ensured the accurate transmission of knowledge through recitation, repetition, and discussion. Writing materials like palm leaves and manuscripts were used for reference and preservation of texts.

6. Caste-Based Education: Education was largely restricted to the upper castes, primarily the Brahmins. The caste system played a significant role in determining access to education, with education being limited to certain social groups.

7. Lack of Formal Education for Women: Women were generally excluded from formal education during this period. Their education primarily revolved around domestic skills. Religious rituals and moral values. However, exceptions existed, and some women especially from royal families, received education in music, dance, and literature.

It is important to note that education varied across regions, and different rulers and dynasties had their own approaches to education. The information provided here represents a general overview of education during the medieval period in India.

During the medieval period in Tamil Nadu, India, education was primarily imparted through traditional systems rooted in religious and cultural practices. Tamil literature and grammar held a prominent position in medieval Tamil Nadu education. Students were taught the language and its various forms such as classical Tamil (Sangam literature) and medieval Tamil

(devotional literature). Other subjects included Sanskrit, literature, poetry, music, dance, and the Vedas. Education was often associated with temples, which served as centers of learning. Temple schools played a significant role in the education system, particularly in teaching religious scriptures and rituals. Many students learned from temple priests and scholars who were well-versed in the religious texts.

Education in medieval Tamil Nadu was influenced by the caste system. Brahmins, who were at the top of the social hierarchy, had more access to education and occupied important positions as teachers and scholars. However, other castes, such as the Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (merchants), and even some members of the lower castes, also received education, although to a lesser extent. While the medieval period was generally conservative regarding the education of women, there were exceptions. Some women from privileged families received education in subjects like music, dance, and literature. The devadasi (a hereditary female dancer in a Hindu temple) system, associated with temple culture, provided training in dance and music to select women who served as performers and custodians of artistic traditions. It's important to note that the education system during the medieval period in Tamil Nadu varied depending on factors such as socio-economic status, regional customs, and individual patronage.

The state of Tamil Nadu in the Union of India has its own social and cultural identity. One of the biggest challenges that the State of Tamil Nadu faces today is the growing pressure on higher education. Better economic opportunities and upward social mobility are the two reasons which make a greater number of youngsters in Tamil Nadu to enter the institutions of higher education. The principle of reservation by the Government of Tamil Nadu, gives an ample chance for the students, particularly of the lower strata of the society, to swarm the portals of the higher educational institutions in huge number. Studies show that Gurukulams, Patasalas (Hindu run village school) and Ghatikas (learning centres) were the educational institutions which flourished in Tamil Nadu during ancient period (Suresh Chandra Gosh, 1995).

HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL THAGADUR NADU

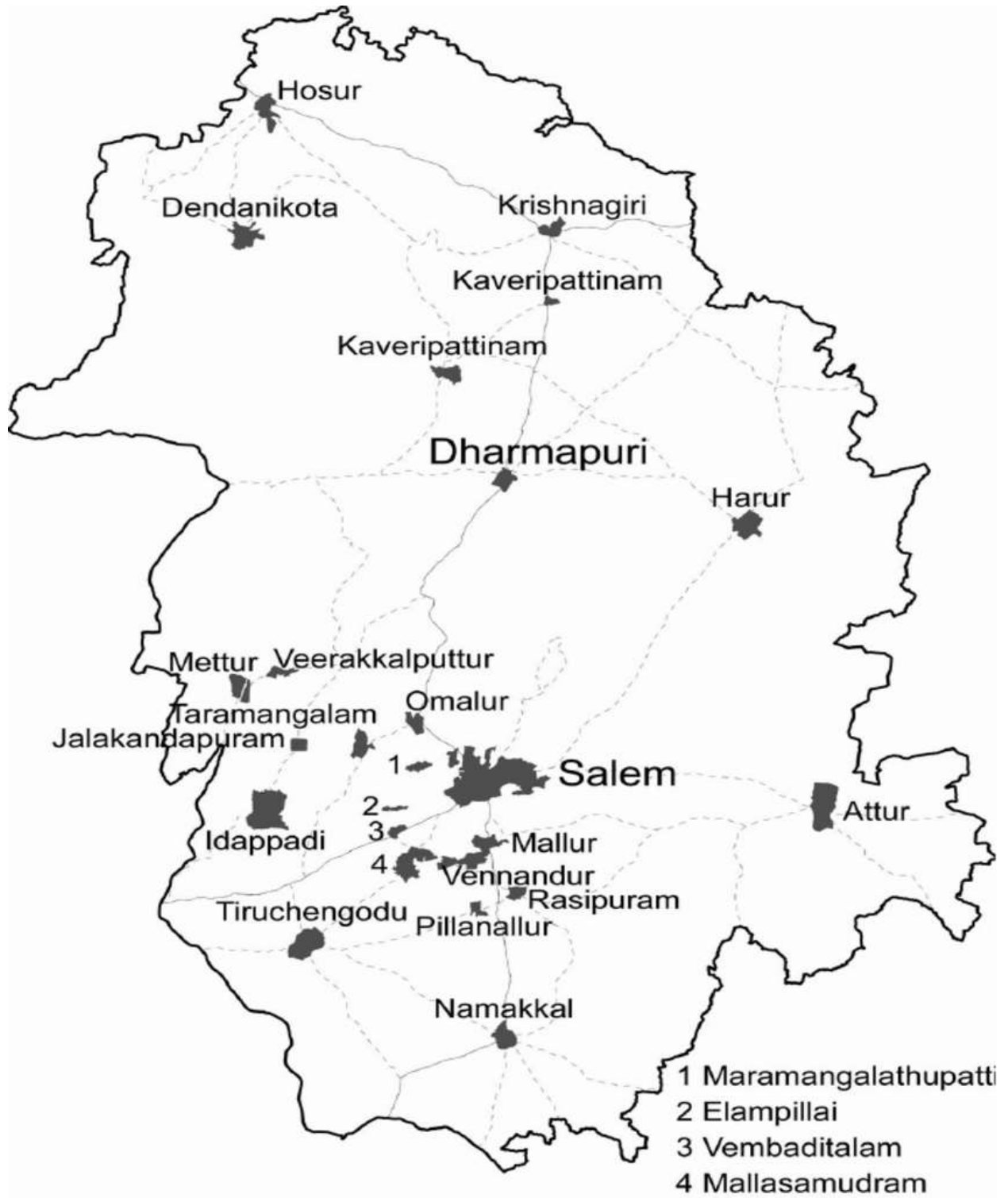
Dharmapuri district, (Thagadur Nadu) located in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, India, has a rich ancient history that dates back thousands of years. The region has been inhabited since prehistoric times, and various archaeological findings suggest the presence of early human settlements in the area. It is a part of the Kongu Nadu in Tamil Nadu and was ruled by the ancient Chera Kingdom. The district has several historical sites and landmarks that shed light on its ancient history. One such site is the Hogenakkal Falls, a popular tourist destination known for its medicinal baths and picturesque surroundings. The falls are believed to have been mentioned in ancient Tamil literature, such as the Silappathikaram, which indicates the presence of human activity in the region during the Sangam period (3rd century BCE to 3rd century CE).

During the medieval period, the region witnessed the rise of the Vijayanagara Empire, which had control over parts of Tamil Nadu. The empire's influence can be seen in the architectural styles of some temples in Dharmapuri district. In more recent history, the district came under the rule of various dynasties and kingdoms, including the Nayakas of Madurai and the Marathas. With the arrival of the British in India, Dharmapuri became part of the Madras Presidency under British colonial rule. The region played a role in the Indian independence movement, with many freedom fighters actively participating in the struggle for independence. The district continues to preserve its ancient heritage through its historical sites, temples, and cultural practices, offering visitors a glimpse into its rich past.

During the Sangam age, Dharmapuri was part of Tagadur country, which was ruled by the famous Athiyar clan. Athiyaman Nedumaan of Anji, a king of this clan, occupies an important place in the history of Tamil Nadu for his charitable character and bravery. What was known as Tagadur during the Sangam age is known today as Dharmapuri. The name consists of two words, viz . , Tagadu + Oor . Stone inscriptions describe Tagadur variously as Tagadai, Tagatta, Tagada and Tagattaapuri. According to one opinion Tagattaapuri may have become Tagadur, Tagadur Yaathirai', which is a book of the Sangam era, mentions Tadangkamalat Tagadai' , means ' a place which resembles the outer petals of the lotus'.

Thagadur Nadu refers to the present Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri districts in Tamilnadu. Its history and culture is unique and very old. The very fact that people lived in this region during the Palaeolithic age refers to the antiquity of the people and that uniqueness of its culture is reflected in the amalgamation of the cultures of the different people namely Gangas, Nolambas, Pallavas, Cheras, Cholas, Banas and Hoysalas who ruled over this region for a long time at different successive periods.

MEDIEVAL THAGADUR NADU (DHARMAPURI), TAMILNADU, INDIA



Source: Wikipedia

SOCIO- ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN MEDIEVAL THAGADUR NADU

Thagadur Nadu, also known as Dharmapuri, is a district located in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, India. During the medieval period, which generally refers to the time between the 5th and 15th centuries, the socio-economic conditions in the region would have been influenced by various factors such as governance, agriculture, trade, social structure, and culture. While specific information about Thagadur Nadu during this period is limited, we can draw some general insights based on the historical context of the region.

Governance and Administration

During the medieval period, the region of Thagadur Nadu was likely to have been under the rule of various dynasties and kingdoms. These ruling powers would have established administrative systems to govern the region. The local administration would have been responsible for maintaining law and order, collecting taxes, and providing justice.

Agriculture and Economy

Agriculture formed the backbone of the medieval economy in Thagadur Nadu. The fertile land in the region would have been used for cultivation, primarily of crops like paddy, millets, pulses, and cotton. Farmers would have used traditional farming techniques, relying on monsoon rains for irrigation. The surplus agricultural produce would have been traded locally or in nearby regions.

Trade and Commerce

Trade and commerce played a significant role in the socio-economic conditions of medieval Thagadur Nadu. The region's location on trade routes connecting different parts of South India would have facilitated the exchange of goods. Merchants and traders engaged in both inland and maritime trade, transporting goods such as spices, textiles, pottery, and precious metals. Local markets and fairs would have served as centers of commercial activity.

Social Structure and Caste System

The social structure in medieval Thagadur Nadu would have been influenced by the prevailing caste system, which classified society into different hierarchical groups. Brahmins (priests and

scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors and rulers), Vaishyas (merchants and farmers), and Shudras (laborers and artisans) formed the main castes. The caste system defined social roles, occupational choices, and access to resources, creating a hierarchical society.

Cultural and Religious Practices

Religion played a crucial role in the lives of people in medieval Thagadur Nadu. Hinduism was the predominant religion, and temples served as important religious and cultural centers. Festivals, rituals, and religious practices were integral parts of the local culture. The patronage of rulers and wealthy individuals supported the construction and maintenance of temples and the development of art and literature.

Educational and Intellectual Activities

During the medieval period, education and intellectual pursuits were primarily limited to the upper castes and religious institutions. Brahmins and scholars were responsible for the transmission of knowledge, primarily in the fields of religion, philosophy, and literature. Education was often imparted through oral traditions and texts.

It's important to note that the socio-economic conditions in Thagadur Nadu during the medieval period would have varied over time and been influenced by external factors such as invasions, political changes, and regional dynamics. Additionally, specific details and scholarly research about the socio-economic conditions of Thagadur Nadu during this period may not be widely available, making it challenging to provide a comprehensive and detailed account.

During medieval Thagadur Nadu, socio-economic conditions had a significant impact on education in the region. The society was largely agrarian, and the economic system was based on landownership and agriculture. Education during this period was closely linked to the prevailing social and economic structures, and it primarily catered to the needs of the ruling elite, including the kings, nobles, and religious establishments. Education was primarily accessible to the upper strata of society, including the ruling class and the higher castes. Temples played a significant role in medieval Tamil Nadu as centers of learning. The temples served as educational

institutions, where children from the upper castes were taught religious scriptures, ritual practices, music, dance, and other cultural disciplines. In addition to temples, other local institutions, such as mathas (monastic establishments) and agraharams (Brahmin settlements), also played a role in providing education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The researcher conducted an extensive review of existing scholarly literature on medieval Tamil Nadu, focusing on education and analyzed the findings, theories, and methodologies employed by previous researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The archaeologists, epigraphists and historians have been evincing keen interest and probing into the history, culture and on several aspects of the history of Tamil Nadu. Studies had been done on the hero stones, temples, inscriptions and coins of the medieval period and so on. But no systematic attempt has been made so far to document the education and socio-economic aspects of the life of the people of Thagadur Nadu.

S. Santhalingam (2005) in his work *Varalatril Thagadur* (Tamil) has presented an outline of the history of Thagadur Nadu from the Palaeolithic Age to the days of Vijayanagar and Nayak rule over this region. It is noted that he has outlined only the political history of the region and explained how the region was under several successive rulers of different dynasties starting from the Sangam Age.

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri (1935) in *The Colas* provides insights into various aspects of medieval Tamil Nadu, including education. It explores the educational institutions, system of education, and the patronage of education by the Chola dynasty.

History of Education in Medieval India: 1206-1757 by Suresh Chandra Ghosh (2001) covers education in medieval India as a whole; it includes a section dedicated to Tamil Nadu. It discusses the development of education, including traditional educational institutions and systems of teaching and learning.

M.S.S.Pandian (2018) in *Brahmin and Non-Brahmin: Genealogies of the Tamil Political Present* delves into the social and political dynamics of Tamil Nadu, touching upon the historical aspects of education. It explores the influence of the Brahminical system on education and the role of education in shaping caste identities during the medieval period.

Cultural History of Medieval India by Meenakshi Khanna (2007) provides an overview of various aspects of medieval Indian culture, including education. It examines the educational institutions and practices in Tamil Nadu and their socio-cultural significance.

D.Balaji (2017) in his article *A Study on the Development of Economy and Taxation in Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri District Epigraphy (With Special Reference to Imperial Cholas)* highlights the development of economy, economic functions of temples, land revenue, customs and professional taxes in the imperial chola periods in Thagadur Nadu.

S.C. Raychoudhary (2001) in his book *Social, Cultural and Economic History of India* has discussed the social, cultural and economic activities of the masses and the political, dynastic and constitutional aspects of history have been relegated to the background.

Nilakanda Sastri (1975) in the book titled *History of South India* has focused on the Sangam Age, social and economic conditions, literature and the early history of South India. V.D. Mahajan (2016) in *History of Medieval India: Sultanate Period and Mughal Period* provide ample sources of information for medieval India, architecture and India.

Pillay, K.K.(1975) in *A Social History of the Tamils* traces the geographical basis, pre-history, religion, education and culture from the prehistoric times. It comprehensively deals with the historical heritage of the Tamils including the lemurian theory.

Justin Wilson (1998) in his article “Education in Medieval Tamil Nadu: An Epigraphical peep into its nature” has examined the education in Medieval Tamil Nadu from Sangam Age.

METHODS

For the present study, the researchers employed a combination of qualitative research methodology and exploratory research techniques. Delved into historical archives, such as ancient manuscripts, inscriptions, and official records, to gather primary source materials related to education in Thagadur Nadu. These sources can provide insights into educational institutions, curriculum, and the patronage of education during that time. Further the study analyzed sculptures, paintings, and other visual representations from the medieval period to identify educational scenes, symbols, and motifs. This approach can shed light on the visual culture and educational practices of Thagadur Nadu. Socio-cultural approach was undertaken to understand the social, religious, and economic factors that influenced education in Thagadur Nadu and studied the caste system, patronage networks, and socio-political context to explore their impact on access to education and the content of the curriculum.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

During the medieval era, education held a sacred position in society, making it a revered profession. The responsibility of education was predominantly bestowed upon the upper castes, as it symbolized their social standing, religious authority, and intellectual achievements. Consequently, education had a strong association with temples and maths, institutions controlled by the brahmans (highest Hindu caste) and rulers. These brahmadeyas served as hubs of both material and spiritual learning and, on occasion, encompassed marital and moral education as well. Inscriptions from the South, extending until the decline of the Vijayanagara Empire in 1665 A.D., document the practice of offering gifts to brahmans of brahmadeyas, recognizing them as patrons and custodians of education.

In the medieval days education was given to young brahman boys, who later became great experts in their area of specialization. "Specific rules were prescribed for admission to the educational centres. One of the pre-requisites for admission was that one must be a brahman by birth"(K.V. Eapen, 1986; 244). Thus, admission was confined exclusively to a particular segment of society.

Education in Early Medieval Period

During the early medieval period in Tamil Nadu, from the 6th to the 12th century, education was primarily centered on religious institutions and temples. The education system was largely influenced by the prevailing socio-religious norms of the time. Education during this period followed the traditional Gurukula system, where students lived with their gurus (teachers) and received instruction in various subjects. The gurus imparted knowledge through oral transmission, and the students were expected to serve their teachers and perform various tasks as part of their education.

Temples played a significant role in education during this period. They served as centers of learning and housed educational institutions known as “Tirumurai Koodam” (Ceremony Hall) or “Tirukkural Isaiyal” (Thirukkural Music). These institutions taught subjects such as religion, philosophy, literature, music, dance, and other arts. Since Tamil Nadu had a rich literary tradition, the study of Tamil language and literature was highly valued. Students were taught to read and write in Tamil and the study of classical Tamil texts and literature was an essential part of education.

Religion and spirituality were integral to education during this period. Students were taught religious scriptures, including the Vedas, Agamas, and the Tamil Sangam literature, which included works such as the Tirukkural and the works of the Nayanars and Alvars. Apart from religious and literary education, students also received training in various arts and sciences. Music, dance, drama, sculpture, and painting were taught as part of the curriculum. Mathematics, astronomy, medicine, and astrology were also studied. Teachers (gurus) held a position of high respect and were responsible for shaping the students' character and intellectual development. They imparted not only knowledge but also moral and ethical values. The relationship between the teacher and student was considered sacred.

Education during this period was primarily accessible to the upper classes, particularly the Brahmins and the ruling elite. Education was often seen as a means to maintain social order and reinforce the existing hierarchical structure. Education in Tamil Nadu during this period played a crucial role in preserving and transmitting knowledge from one generation to another.

Scholars and students contributed to the development and preservation of literature, art, and cultural practices.

Education in Sultante Period

The arrival of Muslim rulers (Sultans) in India brought about significant changes to the educational system, resulting in a transformation and restructuring of existing practices. While some aspects of Hindu education faced setbacks during this period, Muslim rulers introduced new educational institutions such as Madrasas (college for Islamic instruction) and Maktabas (elementary religious schools). These institutions played a crucial role in shaping the educational landscape. In contrast to the traditional Hindu educational system, Madrasas and Maktabas offered a more integrated approach to education, where religious and secular teachings were not distinctively separated. Students received instruction in a wide range of subjects, encompassing both religious studies and secular disciplines. "Both Hindu and Muslim children normally received their primary education at home. The Muslim aristocracy engaged male and female tutors for their boys and girls. These tutors lived in the aristocrats' houses and supervised their offspring. The children belonging to other members of the family or family friends were also allowed to attend the lessons. Higher education was available at the madrasas. These institutions were established by the sultans, their noblemen, and their more influential ladies" (Rizvi 1987:216-217).

Prof. A.L. Srivastava (1976 : 526-527) has pointed out that the education in medieval India "was so much dominated by theological considerations that secular subjects, upon which depended the economic, social and political well-being of the people, were practically ignored. There was hardly any arrangement for teaching of the subjects of Indian interest such as Indian History, philosophy. Sanskrit, language and literature"

Regarding the method of teaching during that time, our knowledge is limited, but it is likely that the traditional approach of using books and requiring students to memorize important works was prevalent. Since there were no printing presses available, books were painstakingly written by hand, often by specialized individuals hired for this purpose. While it is plausible that libraries were affiliated with these institutions,

historical records do not provide specific information on this matter. The primary medium of instruction was Persian, and for Muslim students, the study of Arabic was compulsory. It is worth noting that corporal punishment was inflicted upon students as a means of discipline. Admission to Madrasas, educational institutions of that era, was typically restricted to a select few, with non-Muslims frequently being denied entry.

In this regard Prof N. N. Law says, "The education of the majority of the population was not regarded as a responsibility of the State, and it was on towards the end of the period during Sikandar Lodi's that the Hindus connected with the courts of Muslim rulers, commenced to study Persian literature." (qtd.in Purnima . <https://www.historydiscussion.net/history-of-india/medieval-age/education-under-the-sultans-of-india-medieval-age/6210>) . The Hindus could not derive any benefit from this system of education.

Education in Mughal Period

The Mughal government did not perceive education as its inherent responsibility. It lacked a dedicated education department and did not allocate a specific portion of public revenue for promoting literacy. However, Akbar took a notable step to foster education by establishing numerous primary and secondary schools, and even colleges. Under his leadership, the curriculum underwent reforms, incorporating significant subjects such as ethics, social behavior, arithmetic, agriculture, geometry, astronomy, physiognomy, divination, household management, public administration, medicine, logic, and history. Persian was predominantly used as the medium of instruction, except in Sanskrit and Tamil schools. This educational policy initiated by Akbar was continued by his successors.

Atulananda Sen says, "The medieval system of education, especially in the later Mughal period failed to impart the qualities of leadership, and thus ensure the supply of outstanding personalities in the different walks of life, which the later Mughals needed so badly"(qtd in Ray Chaoudhary 2001:122). The general public took the responsibility of arranging education for their children, and considering the prevailing age and circumstances, these arrangements were reasonably adequate. With the exception of economically

disadvantaged individuals engaged in agricultural or menial occupations, Hindu children from various social backgrounds were commonly sent to school to acquire essential skills in reading, writing, and arithmetic.

During the Mughal period, access to education for females was largely limited to princesses and women from the upper class. Formal schools exclusively for girls were non-existent, but affluent families would employ tutors to provide education for their daughters. These educational pursuits focused on literature, basic arithmetic, and religious scriptures. Educated women held esteemed positions in society and wielded significant influence within their households.

The Tamil society, untouched by Aryan casteism that imposed educational restrictions on lower castes, held education in high regard as an essential aspect of life for all individuals. While there is a lack of direct evidence concerning the specific system, methods, and curriculum employed in education during that era, it is reasonable to assume that education was widely sought after and enjoyed popularity due to its universal significance. Tamil people, who were “...the finest fruit of the life and history of the Dravidians, the first people as we pointed out, of Indian history” (Rathnaswamy, 1947; 17) considered “education as the pivotal to their achievement, and regarded education as the greatest wealth” (Thirukkural, 400)

A look into history provides us a glimpse of the glorious past in the field of learning which prevailed in the medieval Thagadur Nadu which was part and parcel of Salem district then. Adiyaman Neduman Anji of Tagadur (the present. Dharmapuri) patronized Avvaiyar who was affiliated to the Tamil Sangam. Adiyaman’s cousin, Nagayar who subsequently married Adiyaman was also said to be an eminent poetess. So, at the rulers level it cannot be denied that they were all scholars. In many verses of Agananuru and Purananuru we see mention has been made by their authors of their association with Thagadur and Adiyamans. There is also an ancient Tamil work “Tagadur Yathirai” sung by a number of poets about Dharmapuri. The period of Adiyamans can be correlated to the first three centuries of the Christian era since the Tamil Sangam was said to have flourished at that time. After that nothing is

practically known up to 495 A.D. about the culture and learning that prevailed in the district.

Subsequently during 495 A.D. to 870 A.D., Thagadur was under the rule of the Gangas, who were acknowledged as distinguished scholars. Of which, Madhava - I, specialized in law, Tiruvikrama has been described as the abode of fourteen branches of learning and Durvinita wrote a commentary on the XV chapter of Kritarjuniya and Sanskritised Brikathkatha.

It is also said that during the 7th and 8th centuries celebrated works like Akalanka's, Astasakti, Gunabhadra's Uttarapurana and Ugradidya's Kalyanakaraka came to be written under the aegis of these kings. Further it is said that renowned poets like Bharavi, Pambar, Ponnar, Asaga and Gunabhadra adorned the courts of the kings at that time. We also come across stray references in inscriptions in various places that Brahmins were intent on educating people in the Vedas and the connected branches of religion.

Making assessment of the education system of the medieval India, Prof. Yusuf Husain (1957) says, "The system of education in vogue in medieval India lacked resilience and had become much too rigid and non-creative. The modifications made in it from time to time did not go far enough to meet the challenge of the times it was called upon to face. After all, one of the main functions of knowledge is to cultivate the faculty to apprehend relations found in social and natural phenomena, so that one may be able to orient oneself in time and place which is a sign of intellectual development. Without this faculty no group can survive. The chief failing of the medieval system of education was that it was not found adequate to enable its adherents to form habits of accurate observation and practical judgment. It was much too rigid, sterile and bookish. The chief factor in assessing all educational activity should be whether it calls forth the best of the potentialities for moral and spiritual growth. It would be historically true to assert that the medieval system of education, especially in the later Mughal period, failed to impart the qualities of leadership and thus ensure the supply of outstanding personalities in the different walks of life," (81-82).

School and Higher Education in Medieval Thagadur Nadu

Education is often regarded as a powerful tool for shaping the future. Its true value can be realized when the entire system is geared towards fulfilling the needs of society. The people of a nation represent its most valuable asset, and their attitudes and skills are what define a nation. Education serves as the key to unlocking both, as it enables individuals to tap into their inherent potential and strive for personal and collective excellence.

However, information regarding the number of schools in each village or the number of pupils who attended each school is lacking. It is not likely that either in the Sangam age or in the epoch immediately succeeding it schools existed in all the different physiographic regions of Tamilagam. The Kurinchi, the hilly region, the Palai, the desert, and the Neydal, the coastal tract could not have had many schools, if there were any at all. If deductions may be made from the indirect references found in the literature of the age, one may have to conclude that the higher classes like the Brahmins, kings and members of the royal family, Vaigyas and Vellalas generally received education. Some members of the artisan classes like goldsmiths and carpenters also presumably took to learning. Perhaps many of the people in the Marudam and a lesser number in the Mullai sent their children to the pial schools. In cities like Kavirippumpattinam and Madurai there must have existed several schools.

Coming to schools or the educational institutions which are necessary for imparting education there is no evidence testifying to the existence of schools. This would be seen from the fact that the higher rules of knowledge were not scaled then by anyone who wished to learn since it was not opened to all to learn higher philosophy, theology, logic or grammar, which were restricted only to a few. A sort of intellectual caste existed by the side of the social castes. Still for common practical purposes of life, many were educationally fit. However, with passing of years, it is seen that the first known schools which took about the task of imparting education to the common public were pial schools (a raised platform). The origin and the growth of these schools may be traced between the 18th and 19th centuries (as seen from the Report of the Education Committee of 1882).

In the report of the Education Committee of 1882, the Deputy Inspector of Schools of Hosur Circle has described about the then pial schools then existed in the area. In these schools, pupils were trained to read fast (without understanding the meaning). The Syllabus was ancient puranas (sacred writings on Hindu Mythology) and epics and arithmetic as would be enough to carry on the agricultural transaction of the villages. Their writing materials were Cadjan leaves (coconut palm leaves) and styles. The post of teacher was hereditary. He shared all the functions and the common interests of the village.

The teacher was honored on all auspicious days. The total tuition fee of a teacher ranged from Rs. 7 to Rs. 10 per month. There might be fluctuations in his income depending upon the size of the village. The school time was 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. busy time of the school in which the teacher took active part in teaching was 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. In rest of the times seniors taught the juniors under the supervision of the monitors. Punctuality in attendance in school was maintained by inflicting severe punishments on the late comers. There was neither class nor division nor standard in these types of schools. A student finished his study after seven years of such learning.

During the medieval period, higher education, particularly in the realm of religion, was monopolized by the Brahmin caste. The Brahmins were privileged to receive teachings on Vedic lore, Satras, Upanishads, Epics, and Dharma Sastras from knowledgeable instructors. On the other hand, the curriculum for individuals from other social classes was more generalized in nature. Those pursuing technical arts, such as warfare or mechanical skills, might have received specialized training relevant to their respective occupations.

Unfortunately, education, especially of the higher form, was heavily influenced by the prevailing social hierarchies. This trend persisted throughout the ages, even until recent times, resulting in an imbalanced development across the entire population. Additionally, it cannot be assumed that all women had access to even basic education. The presence of a few poetesses during the Sangam age does not represent the educational opportunities available to the entire female population of Tamilagam. Similarly, some artisans might have showcased poetic skills during the Sangam era, but that

does not imply that all members of these groups benefited from education. Judging from the known circumstances of later periods, it becomes evident that education was a privilege enjoyed only by specific classes of people.

Beginning of the Western Education in Medieval Thagadur Nadu

During the medieval period, specifically in the Thagadur Nadu, Dharmapuri, India, Western education was not prevalent. The region was predominantly under the influence of traditional Indian educational systems, including the gurukula system. The gurukula system was a traditional form of education in ancient and medieval India. In this system, students lived with their guru (teacher) in a hermitage or ashram, where they received education on various subjects including scriptures, philosophy, arts, sciences, and warfare. The emphasis was on practical knowledge and holistic development.

However, the influence of Western education in Thagadur Nadu would have been minimal during the medieval period. It was only with the arrival of Christian missionaries in the 19th century that formal Western education started to gain traction in various parts of India, including Dharmapuri district. Missionaries established schools and educational institutions to impart Western-style education and propagate their religious beliefs.

Over time, these educational institutions grew in number and importance, and they played a significant role in spreading Western education in the district. The curriculum included subjects such as English language and literature, mathematics, science, and history, along with religious teachings. However, it's important to note that the transition from traditional Indian education to Western education was gradual and varied across different regions and communities. The acceptance and adoption of Western education in Thagadur Nadu would have taken place over several decades, and its impact would have been more prominent in urban areas and among certain sections of society. So, Western education in the medieval period was not prevalent in Thagadur Nadu. It was introduced later during the colonial era with the establishment of Christian missionary schools and educational institutions.

The Charter Act of 1813 passed by the British Parliament which provided for educational reforms in India was the first step taken by the British to introduce Western Education. The Charter Act provided for an expenditure of rupees one lakh, every year for each Presidency towards the promotion of education. But it did not prove well and the amount remained unspent due to lack of a system in the field of education.

With all the thinking and the education reforms, etc., brought out by the British Parliament in 1813 and by Sir Thomas Munro in 1822 the reactions of the people to the reforms were not welcome. The custom of patronizing pial schools was very deep rooted in the minds of the people that they were not prepared to get themselves accustomed to the latest form of education introduced by the British. They found the education pattern brought about were not religious oriented and that they had to spend on books and stationery towards the education of their children. Moreover, they were contended in the standard of education imparted in the pial schools which according to them was enough to carry on the day - to - day transactions in the village. Therefore, it can be said that the frame of mind of the people was more responsible for the slow progress of education, even though scope was provided by the then was more Government. The numbers of such schools in the present Dharmapuri district were not many since they were confined to certain pockets only.

Taluk schools were established in 1858 at Hosur, Dharmapuri and Krishnagiri . There was also a normal school at Krishnagiri maintained by the Local Fund Board to train teachers for the elementary schools. The Zilla School was established at Salem. In the taluk schools, the language of English, Tamil, Telugu and subjects like arithmetic, algebra, geometry, geography and history were taught. The core subjects were instructed through the vernaculars. In 1871, these public schools were brought under the control of local bodies (district and taluk boards). High school and middle school education and Female education were maintained or aided from provincial funds whereas the primary schools were maintained or aided from Local Funds.

During medieval times in Thagadur Nadu, school education followed certain patterns and practices. Education was primarily provided by religious institutions, such as temples and maths, which served as centers of learning. The emphasis was placed on religious and spiritual teachings, with the brahmans playing a significant role as educators. School education in Thagadur Nadu was predominantly accessible to the upper castes, as it was considered a privilege and a symbol of social status. This restricted access limited educational opportunities for individuals from lower castes and marginalized communities. The curriculum primarily focused on subjects such as Sanskrit grammar, literature, philosophy, and religious scriptures. Students were taught through oral instruction, recitation, and memorization, with an emphasis on mastering sacred texts. In terms of organization, the educational institutions in Thagadur Nadu were usually small in scale, catering to a limited number of students. Teaching methods were often personalized, with individual attention given to each student's progress and understanding.

It was a period of great literary activity and classical poems reflect this great civilization. Life was secular, humanistic and optimistic and this was in turn the basis of their educational philosophy (Francis S. Muthu, 2020).

It is important to note that during this period, female education was limited and largely confined to specific groups within the upper castes. Women were generally educated in domestic skills and religious practices, rather than receiving a formal education. Overall, school education in medieval Thagadur Nadu was characterized by its association with religious institutions, limited accessibility based on caste, and a curriculum centered on religious teachings and scriptures.

CONCLUSION

Education is a key measure of human growth and plays a significant role in socio-economic success. In mediaeval India, the educational system was organized along the lines of tradition. The changes that have occurred in the educational system from ancient times mirror changes and alterations in social situations. The study of the educational system in medieval Thagadur Nadu offers valuable insights into the

cultural, intellectual, and social fabric of the region. This perspective allows us to appreciate the profound impact of education on society during that time and highlights the importance placed on knowledge acquisition and dissemination. Gaining a deeper appreciation of the historical and intellectual achievements of this era involves delving into the practices and institutions that facilitated the transmission of knowledge. Furthermore, this perspective helps contextualize the evolution of education systems and their impact on shaping societies throughout history. Despite the limitations and challenges of the era, Thagadur Nadu demonstrated a remarkable commitment to education, fostering a culture of learning that empowered individuals and contributed to the overall development of the society. By studying and reflecting upon the educational practices of the past, we can gain a deeper understanding of the foundations upon which our modern educational systems are built, as well as inspire us to continuously improve and innovate in the field of education for the betterment of future generations.

In conclusion, examining the educational system in medieval Thagadur Nadu, Tamil Nadu, India, provides valuable insights into the historical development of education in the region. The medieval period in India was marked by significant cultural and educational advancements, including the establishment of educational institutions and the growth of intellectual pursuits. During this time, Thagadur Nadu witnessed the presence of several educational institutions that played a vital role in disseminating knowledge. These institutions, known as gurukuls, were typically located in temples or under the patronage of wealthy individuals. They served as centers of learning, where students received instruction in various subjects, including literature, philosophy, mathematics, and the sciences.

The educational system in medieval Thagadur Nadu was primarily focused on providing a comprehensive education to students. The curriculum encompassed not only academic subjects but also moral and ethical teachings. Students were expected to develop a well-rounded personality and cultivate virtues such as discipline, humility, and respect for elders. The mode of instruction in these gurukuls was predominantly oral, with teachers imparting knowledge through lectures,

discussions, and debates. Students had the opportunity to engage in dialogue with their teachers, enabling a dynamic exchange of ideas and fostering critical thinking skills. Education in medieval Thagadur Nadu was not limited to a specific social class. While there were distinctions based on social standing, students from different backgrounds were allowed access to education. This inclusivity contributed to a more egalitarian approach to learning, where knowledge was not restricted to a privileged few.

Moreover, the educational system in Thagadur Nadu fostered a strong connection between education and spirituality. The gurukuls emphasized the importance of spiritual and moral development alongside academic pursuits, aiming to produce well-rounded individuals who would contribute positively to society. It is important to note that the educational system in medieval Thagadur Nadu was influenced by the prevalent social and cultural norms of the time. While it provided a solid foundation for learning, it was limited in terms of accessibility and scope compared to modern educational systems. Thus, the educational system in medieval Thagadur Nadu, Tamil Nadu, India, was characterized by the presence of gurukuls, inclusive education, oral instruction, and an emphasis on moral and spiritual development. This system played a significant role in shaping the intellectual and cultural landscape of the region during that time, paving the way for future educational advancements.

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