
Bharat as a Civilisational State - Commemorating Rajendra Chola & Civilisational Reach

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ABSTRACT:

To commemorate Rajendra Chola's celebrated northern campaign to the Ganges, He assumed the title of Gangaikonda Chola and had the shiva temple Gangakkandacholeswaram built. It assumed that he established the city of Gangaikondacholapuram before his 17th year. The extent of the empire grew to its widest, while military and naval prestige reached its highest. The Chola Kingdom grew under him into an extensive and well-knit empire, efficiently organized and administered and possessing a powerful standing army and navy. The King was the head of the administration of the Chola's and all powers were concentrated in his hands. The form of the chola government was hereditary monarchy. The rule of primogeniture generally prevailed. The king generally appointed his yuvaraj during his reign. The climax in Chola power was achieved under the successor of Parantaka 2nd, Arumolivaraman. The Chola Empire continued in a flourishing condition during the 12th century but declined by the end of the 13th century.

Key word: worship tradition, civilisational footprints, aesthetic heights, existence, vibrant.

INTRODUCTION:

2014 marks the 1000th anniversary of the mighty Hindu monarch Rajendra chola I's ascension to the throne. The occasion calls for greater National and International commemoration and is an opportunity to recreate a narrative and recount Bharat's civilisation reach across the ancient world and its perception among leading civilisational in that era as a great civilization state.

In his "The Beginning of Hindu culture as world-Power" (Shanghai, 1916) nationalist historian and social philosopher Benoy Kumer Sarkar (1887-1949) made an interesting reference to the Hindus' "world sense". "The Hindus of the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries", wrote Sarkar¹, "were not living in splendid isolation, as it has been the fashion to suppose that the Asiatic have ever done. As in previous ages, so under the Guptas they kept up cultivating the world sense." Referring to the world reach and influence of the Hindu civilisation, Sarkar argued that: The internationalism of the Hindus was extra- Indian..... It is well- known that the world of Kalidasa's² poetry includes the whole of (Bharat) and also the (Bharatiya) borderland and Persia. The fact that with the fifth century is augmented the stream of traffic between (Bharat) and China both by land sea in itself an indication of the "Asia sense (that) they (Hindus) had been developing.

In his, once widely real," Letters from Java³ ", (Visva Bharat 2010) written during his 1927 visit to the Archipelago Rabindra Nath Tagore, pointed at this vast and deep reach of

Bharatiya civilisation and regions of the world. In an early letter, Tagore movingly wrote describing this civilisation reach which was at one wide and unique:

The quest for recovering Bharat's⁴ civilisational footprints across continents led Swami Vivekananda to meticulously examine and record the expression of Bharat's cultural and thought influence on other countries and people.

In his short treatise “ The East and the West, Vivekananda, referring to this reach and impact wrote old Shiva, riding on fits bull and laboring on his Damaru travelled from (Bharat), on the one side to Sumatra, Barnes, Celebes, Australia, as far as the shores of America and on the other side, this old Shiva batted. His full in Tibet, China, Japan and as far up as Siberia, and is still doing the same. The mother Kali⁵ is still exacting. Her worship even in China and Japan.....

Interestingly, in a paper on “Hindu Deities in central Asia”, in the anthology on “(Bharat's) contribution to world History and Culture” (Vivekananda Kendra 1970) scholar P. Banerjee observes that details of Sri Krishna's story and worship has been recorded to have travelled outside Bharat during the 2nd century BCE. Itself a vibrant Krishna worship tradition existed in the Armenian region around that period. The popularity of Shiva worship in Afghanistan for example, came to light when a collection of “ Shaiva⁶ antiquities attributable to the seventh-eighth century (CE) came to light in the regions of Tagab and Gardey about four decades back. “ The head of Siva with a lunar symbol in the crown was a popular sacred motif of worship in that area.

As far back as 1960s excavation in Tajikistan yielded fragments of wall painting depicting Siva Nataraja. In the famous murals of Penjikent, Siva is portrayed as “ clad in tiger skin.....endowed with two eyes having a terrific look.....provided with various ornaments, such as necklace, bracelets, anklets, a scarf with fluttering ends is shown round the forearms (and) behind the left arm and left leg is shown Siva's familiar weapon, the trident.”

Bharat's wide civilisational sweep had fascinated some of the most profound western minds who, sometimes, dedicated a lifetime to interpreting and narrating it. Iconic western scholar of Eastern civilisation, Sylvain Levi (1863-1935), in his “L'Inde et le monde (1928) (Bharat and the world) referred to Bharat's reach, “ l'étude des monuments et des inscriptions a montre dans l'Inde et dans l'Inde”

Insulinde des colonies hindous fideles aux arts, aux religions, aux oeuvres litteraires de l'Inde (study of moments and inscriptions in indo- China and Maritime South East Asia reveal the existence of Hindu colonies that remained faithful to the arts, religion and literature of Bharat⁷). Levi read in the ancient world a Bhartiya Civilization inspired world order, he saw Bharat's “ footprints far and wide,” de la Mediterranee a l'océan pacifique , les nations proches et lointaines (from the Mediterranean to the pacific ocean, nations far and wide revealed Bharat's civilizational reach) and the countries that had preserved Bharat's civilizational footprints, came round together around Bharat as it were and projected converging rays of light, at last lightening up the night that had long silenced or engulfed her civilizational memory, “ un faisceau convergent de rayons sur la nuit muette de son passe.

The millennial anniversary of Rajendra Chola's Corporation thus presents an opportunity when efforts to retrace, reactive and reinvent Bharat's civilisational footprints in its various dimensions could be initiated not only to remind ourselves of our part civilisational heights

and achievements but to also re-forge and reformulate strategies keeping in view our aspiration to emerge as a civilisational state.

Not only did Rajendra Venture as far as Bengal in the north and the east in course of his conquests, but, having defeated the kings of Bengal and the surrounding region and having accepted their vassalage, Rajendra, did that which symbolically reflected Bharat's subliminal unity, he brought the waters of the sacred Ganga, in a spirit of reverence to his new capital and poured it into the "Cholagangam" the large irrigation tank in the city. That epochal civilization act not only earned for Rajendra the sobriquet "GangaiKondachola" but also dissolved the artificial North-South demarcation by demonstrating How India's sacred and life-giving river flowing in the north could be equally invoked and invited to spread her life sustaining waters for no wishing and enlivening southern land and lives.

An astute strategists and a fearless planner, Rajendra did not hesitate to launch "Many ships in the midst of the rolling Sea" to subjugate the powerful Kingdom of Sri Vijaya which was hampering trade between India and the Fer east. Jaking order a number of parts along the route, prominent among them being Kadaram, Malacc of later countries, Rajendra protected the commercial interest of his merchants form Tamilakam an monopolized "Trade to the east" Seem through the prism of present he ensured that strategic and commercial control o the Malacca strait, and the region beyond remained under the control of his Hindu empire. This conquest saw him being paid homage by other surrounding. Hinduised states of the region and earned him the title "Kadaram Konda" the subjugator of Kadaram.

In order to demonstrate his strength as well as goodwill and to preserve the links of his empire with China, Rajendra, following in the boot steps of his illustrious, father, sent on embassy sometime in 1033. With the Chola Monarch controlling most of the sea lanes in the Indian ocean region and extending the empire's sway and commercial controls right up to the South China sea, the Indian ocean was often referred to as the "Chola Lake". K.A. Nilakant Sastri (1892-1975) was to note, the Cholas "built up a remarkably efficient administrative system which combined vigorous control control which a very large measure of local autonomy. And liberally patronized the arts and allowed it to reach a higher water mark. Rajendra's Chef d'oeuvre, the temple of Gangaikondacholapuram, remains, to this day a manifestation of the allocable and aesthetic heights that the Chola Empire reached under him.

In a widely discussed study "The China wave" Rise of a civilisational state" (2011) a leading Chinese public intellectual Zhang Weiwei discussing China's rise, has argued that a civilisational State China is "both old and young, both tradition and modern, both Chinese and international. "These characteristics most naturally apply to Bharat as well. Zhing also distills eight features that define or distinguish a civilisational state and among these the "four unique" were the defining Pillars, "super-large population", "a super vast territory" "a super long tradition," super rich culture." Moreover a civilization state, Zhang has argued an "exceedingly strong historical and cultural tradition and sees each of these "four unique" combine the elements of the old Chinese civilisation and the new modern state. It is in that some that the anniversary of Rajendra's coronation offers a unique opportunity to revisit these dimensions of the part in the spirit of present exigencies and in an occasion for evolving and renewing fresh civilisation linkages in all their dimension, strategic, cultural educational and economic.

As Jagore once said, “the relics of the true history of Bharat are outside Bharat. For out history is the history of ideas, of how there, like ripe founas, burst themselves and were carried across the seas and developed in to magnificent fruitfulness..... The civilisation of Bharat like the banyan tree has spread its beneficent shade away from its own birthplace.

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