

Kuvalayamala –A source of Social and Cultural History of Rajasthan

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Abstract- Jain Literature in the form of manuscripts and publication during the 8th century A.D. is very rich. For the social and cultural history of Rajasthan the Jain sources literary as well as Archeology are important and immense valuable. Uddyotana Suri's work on Kuvalayamala Kaha is very exhaustive work on social and cultural history of the people during the period under study. The Kuvalayamala mentioned the social, cultural, political and economic condition of the people. This paper shows that the people were sincere to their religion and dedicated in the social activities fixed by the dharmas.

Keywords- Kuvalayamala, Eight Century A.D., Jain Literature, Social and cultural History of Rajasthan, History of Rajasthan

I. INTRODUCTION

Jain Literature in the form of manuscripts and publications during the period under review is very wide. A large number of literary works written by the Jain writers are found preserved in the Jaina Sastrabhandaras of Rajasthan. The manuscripts are also in the Anup Library, Bikaner, Saraswati Bhandar Library, Udaipur and the Pustak Prakash, Jodhpur [1]. For the social, economic, political and cultural history of Rajasthan, the Jaina sources Literary as well as Archaeology are important. Of the literary works, the Kuvalayamala Kaha compiled by Uddyotana suri is extremely useful. Jalore during the 8th century A.D. was a famous seat of learning. The scholars of this place were famous for their learning & scholarship and their fame spread far and wide [2]. Uddyotana suri studies there under the guidance of virabhadra

Suri and Haribhadra Suri and wrote the Kuvalayamala in 778 A.D. during the reign of Vatsaraja Pratihar [3]. It is a religious tale narrated in Prakrit prose and verse on the pattern of the Sanskrit Champukavya. Some of its passages throw some light on the contemporary history of this region [4]. While making comparison of Kuvalayamala with samaraicakaha, the former is better than later [5]. Although the manuscript is mainly concerned with religion, yet it also throws a flood of light on the various aspects of the society.

It tell us that sivachmda Gani, a spiritual ancestor of Uddyotana Suri came to Bhinmal from Punjab for pilgrimage and his disciple Yakshadatta and other adorned the Gurjara land with temples [6]. It is of interest to note that the earliest reference to the word, Gurjara, is found in the Kuvalayamala. It says that the Gurjaras were differentiated from the Saindhvas, Latas, Malavas and Meravas as described devotees of dharma and they were clever in matters of peace and war. Obviously, the differentia here is provided by the geographical location of these people. If the Latas, Saindhavas, Maravas and Malvas are the people of Late, Sindh, Marwar, and Malwa respectively then the word Gurjara should naturally stand for the people of the territory known as Gurjara [7].

II. JUDICIARY AND LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

Another important feature of Kuvalayamala is that it gives description of 34 Janpads, 47 towns, 7 villages, 21 mountains, 8 rivers, 2 seas and 20 states of India. Ujjani, Ayodhayay, Kamand, Kanchi, Kashambhi, Taxila, Pataliputra, Prayog, Bhinmal, Mathura,

Makand Rajgarth, Varanasi, Saket, Hastinapur etc. were famous chief cities and towns of India, which attracted many merchants and peace loving citizens to come down to these places and settle [8].

So far as the political life is concerned, the Kuvalayamala yields important information during the reign of Vatsraja Pratihara, who gave royal patronage to the Brahmins, Jain Acharyas and merchants for their security of trade and commerce [9]. The ruler enjoyed various powers with the assistance of a chief minister and other ministers. The post of the chief Minister was hereditary and highly respected. All the other ministers and samantas (nobles) addressed him respectfully as a Mahamantrin [10]. Besides Mahamantrin, there was a cabinet called 'Vatsav Sabha' to assist the ruler. The judicial system of the period has also been described in the Kuvalayamala. It describes that theft was a serious crime for which an individual could be subjected to torture. The court was presided over by the ruler himself, who had the right to fine a criminal and certain circumstances to confiscate the guilty person's property [11].

There were dharmasatrapathakas and judicial officers called the Karanikas, who asked the questions from the accused about the charges, thereafter submitted their report to the ruler. It is of interest to note that formulation of charges required the cooperation of the representation of the people mahallakas in the Kuvalayamala. The nagar – mahallakas had to play their important role in the judicial functions. They used to call the figures with judicial matters from the towns and villages [12]. In villages direct democracy operated even more effectively than in towns. An interesting example comes from the Kuvalayamala, where one Mayaditya brings together the grammahattaras and tries to commit suicide, after telling them as follows: "*I have committed the greatest crime of doing ill to a friend. Hence, I shall enter a burning fire. Kindly give me as fuel and fire.*" The mahattaras gave their opinions about the character of the sin suggesting various means by which he could expiate it and when the

chief mahamattara advised Mayaditya to enter the sacred waters of the Ganga, all of them echoed the former's words by advising the latter to go to the Ganga river, bathe in it, and give up his body by starving himself to death [13].

III. CASTES AND THEIR ACTIVITIES

The Prasastis of the Kuvalayamala mentions various castes and gotras of social hierarchy. The Brahmanas of this period had maintained their influential position in society, not only on account of their birth, but also their learning and character [14]. Among the Kshatriyas, the main castes were the Pratiharas, Chauhans, Parmars, Chalukyas, Guhilas & Yadavas. Besides, there were also sub – castes among the Kshatriyas such as Thakur, Ikshvaku, etc. the people born in Ikshvaku caste were called Kshatriyas, but during this period the Kushans, Sakas, Palavas and many other people, Aryans, as well as Non – Aryans also joined the Kshatriyas varna [15].

Of the Vaisyas, a very large number gave up agricultural activities because they found trade and commerce much more lucrative less laborious and more in consonance with their idea of dharma, which suited himself in the highly agricultural operations. The doors of the Vaisyas were opened to every new comer who took up the profession of trade; even through the incomers generally fell into sub – caste of their own. Dhan Dev of Kuvalayamala was originally sudra was welcomed by the trade 'Mandal' of vaisyas and he was called vaisya. It shows that the vaisya caste was being formed according to the profession [16]. The position of the sudra during this period had improved a good deal. As a very large number of vaisyas gave up agricultural activities, the sudras became the true vaisyas. The agriculture, pasturage and handicrafts were their monopoly. They also took part in trade and commerce and thus improved their economic conditions [17].

Very often the people standing outside the caste system were called mleccha or mlecchjati. But indigenous people i.e. the shabar, kirata, khas, orda, gonda, polinda, kocha, bharruya, bhilla were also

termed mlechha because they too stood outside the pale of Aryan culture. They had their own organization and their own way of living which differed markedly from that of orthodox Aryans [18].

IV. SOCIAL FEATURES

From the Kuvalayamala we have the names of manirasana, marakatamanikanthika, amuktavali and ornaments of pearl and gold. In summer, the rich ladies used camphor powder and garlands of patala and mollika. In winter they put their faces and collyrium for their eyes. Poor village wives bedecked themselves with sankha bangles and ornaments set not with jewels but with shining glass pieces. For their face they used turmeric instead of the rich lady's saffron [19].

Although the birth of the son was supposed to be considered to save his parents from hell, yet the birth of daughter was not considered as curse. From the Kuvalayamala itself it is known that at the time of her birth, she was not only welcomed with joy by her family members, but after 12 days her birthday ceremony was also performed with great enthuse. She was given the education of various arts, but it is a rare example the status of women, otherwise the status of women seems to have deteriorated. The evils of polygamy and sati considerably reduced her status [20].

Apart from the social history, the Kuvalayamala also throws a light on the religious condition of the people. It mentions that the festivals held by the Jaina on the days of the 'diksha' or initiation, promotion to higher in spiritual line and succession to the Acharyapada [21].

V. RELIGION OF THE PEOPLE

During this period the three sects, namely Vaisnavism, Savism and Saktism remained in flourishing condition in Rajasthan. Jainism was also in flourishing condition. It is known from the Prasasti of the katha that Uddyotana Suri composed the Kuvalayamala in the temple of Adinatha (construed by Virbhadrha in the town of Jabalipura (Jalor.) The

famous Jaina temples of Jalore i.e. Adinatha, Mahavir, Parsvanath and Santinatha were repaired from time to time. Images were placed and charities were given to them by the Sravakas. The ruling chiefs however, gave royal patronage to the Brahmins, Jaina Acharyas and security of trade and commerce to the merchants. Temples were assigned land of a part of its revenue for their maintenance. The Panchayats, Acharyas and other notable persons of the royal family were appointed to look after these arrangements on the festive occasions [22]. It mentions the superstitious practice of 'purta dharma' which was popular in the eighth and succeeding centuries. It included in the excavation of deep wells and tanks, distribution of food, maintenance of public gardens and charitable endowments [23]. Similarly, Tirthayatras and Tirthas was the another institution which has been described in the Kuvalayamala. The Orthodox Hindus of the period genuinely believed that a visit to a sacred loosened the bond of Karma, offered one an opportunity of coming into contact with spiritual great people. The Kuvalayamala further mentions the example of Mayaditya who is represented as going to the highly sacred river of the Gods (Ganga) which was respected even by divine beings and removed all sins. It also mentions a sinner advised by mahattaras to gift away all his property, store of gain, clothes, cash, bedding, seat, sticks, quadrupeds etc. to the Brahmins to save of this hair and to visit Gangadavara, Virbhadrha and Puskara, dressed a beggar [24].

Another interesting feature of the Kuvalayamala is that it refers to the education system prevalent in Rajasthan during this period. On the auspicious day fixed by the astrologers, the boy was taken (generally in his eight year) to the Kulacharya, a guru or Uupadhaya to be taught the various subjects. The main subjects were philosophy, theology, grammar, metrics, music etc. a brief description the students of Vijaipuri Math has been given by the Kuvalayamala.

VI. CONCLUSION

Thus, the paper throws the light on the various aspects of the society and culture during the eight century A.D. The paper will help the researchers to evaluate the facts of castes, gotras, religion, education, judiciary and social life of that period with the present system of the society. As a matter of fact, the Kuvalayamala being a part of the Jain literature is an outstanding work, which is presently preserved in the Jain Sastrabhandaras (Jaiselmer). It is also preserved in the Anup Library (Bikaner), Saraswati Bhandar Library (Udaipur) and the Pustak Prakash Library (Jodhpur).

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