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Utopia of the Past: Concept of the golden age and the situation of the Shilpkar's (Dalit) in the Katyuri period.

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Abstract

Writing history without bias is a difficult task. Social, economic, religious, and even caste identities definitely influence your writing in some way or another. The history of Uttarakhand is also not untouched by this. European historians, Cambridge historians, leftist, nationalist, environmentalists, feminists, etc. have tried to understand the history of Uttarakhand from different perspectives. But most studies, even social studies, have been built on an upper-caste and elite perspective. In the history of Uttarakhand, Dalits and lower castes have been studied from a narrow and limited perspective. In fact, many layers of study based on lower caste and women's perspectives are still to be revealed in history writing. The presented research paper is an attempt to make a balanced study of the social condition of Dalits (Shilpkar) of that time by studying the concept of the Katyuri era and golden age.

Keywords: Shilpkar, Golden Age, Stratification, Harresment, Vedicization etc.

Introduction

Uttarakhand has been a mountainous state with adverse geographical conditions. In the distant past, various dynasties established their political power in this state situated in the foothills of the Himalayas. Finding the history of that distant past is a very difficult task due to natural disparities. Due to which it is not possible to achieve complete impartiality in history writing due to various reasons. Sometimes the past has been exaggerated and a particular group or community has been replaced with something inferior or useless. Some limitations of history and social writing have been mentioned here-

- I. Limited number of archaeological sources,
- II. Limited availability of local and written literature
- III. Limitations of oral literature
- IV. Self-based biased view of high-caste scholar writers regarding civilisation, culture, and historiography
- V. Prejudice and Biased Study of scholarly writers to established caste superiority
- VI. comparative study of the sources received during the vedic period.
- VII. Narrow and limited study of local history and culture.
- VIII. Neglect of women and Dalit studies.

Who were the Katyuri?

Historian Pt. Badridutt Pandey validates Uttarakhand from the Katyuri reigns 2500 years ago to 700 A.D.¹ Based on the calculation of dates inscribed by Kelharn in danpatra, Isthagandev, Lalitsurdev, and Bhudev are considered to be between 790 AD and 870 AD.² This dynasty is also called Kanthapuri. It has been mentioned as Kanthapuri in Jaggar (traditional devotional) songs.³ It is basically a word from the Sugdi language, which means a prime city of Shakya or Khash dynasty.⁴

In the folklores, the number of Katyuri is 9 million. So his political and social organization was tribal Republican. At the time in Uttarakhand, only Kunindas had such a powerful and statistical force. So all Uttarakhand historians agree that Kunind was the predecessor and forehead of the Katyuris.⁵ From approximately 700 AD till the next three centuries the Kartikeypur dynasty established political unity for the first time in the Central Himalayas. This is the first historical dynasty of the Central Himalayas.⁶

The capital of Kartikeyapur dynasty was Joshimath. This district of Kunind existed under the name Karti during the Gupta period.⁷ According to Pt. Baddridatt Pandey Karvipur was near Baijnath



village, where the Katyuri king established his new capital. There they built canals, ponds, markets etc.

In Kumaoni folklore, the Katyuri Raj pedigree is given as follows:⁹

Pachham Khali me ko raja basni?

Buda Raja Sasandi ko paat

Gora ko Pat Sanvala ko pat

Nele chauri, Ujhaan ko pat.

Manach vani ko ghat lagyon

Dwarahat me dawarmandal chino

Khimsari Haat me khel lagyo

Ranchulihat me raj ramayo asandi

Asandi ko Basanti

Ajopitha Gazopitha, Narpitha, Prithiranjana, Prithvipal

The period of certain Katyuri rulers is generally determined as below, although there is some ambiguity with respect to the exact number of years ruled by each king.

1. Vasu dev
2. Basantana Dev (850–870 CE)
3. Kharpar Dev (870–880 CE)
4. Abhiraj Dev (880–890 CE)
5. Tribhuvanraj Dev (890–900 CE)
6. Nimbarta Dev (900–915 CE)
7. Istanga (915–930 CE)
8. Lalitasura Dev (930–955 CE)
9. Bhui Dev (955–970 CE)
10. Salonaditya (970–985 CE)
11. Ichchhata Dev (985–1000 CE)
12. Deshat Dev (1000–1015 CE)
13. Padmata Dev (1015–1045 CE)
14. Subhiksharaja Dev (1045–1060 CE)
15. Dham Dev and
16. Bir Dev (very short period)

The Katuru period records-

1. Bageshwar record of Tribhuvanrajadev
2. Pandukeshwar copper plate inscription of Lalitsurdev
3. Pandukeshwar copper plate inscription of Lalitsurdev
4. Kandara inscription of Lalitsurdev
5. Bageshwar inscription of Bhudev
6. Baleshwar record of deshatdev
7. Padukeshwar record of Pamatdev
8. Pandukeshwar record of Subhakrajadev
9. Three inscriptions of Baijnath.

The Katyuri era described as a golden age-

Yamuna Dutt Vaishnav and other historians have called the Katuru period the golden age of kumaon. But was it really a golden age? On the basis of the social conditions of the shilpkar (lower caste) in the Katuru era, will it be called the golden age? The following facts have been given by historians to consider the Katyuri period as the golden age:

- ❖ Successful diplomacy and relations with neighbouring states.

- ❖ Administrative policies.
- ❖ Vedicization of tribal traditions.
- ❖ Period of solidity and tranquillity.
- ❖ Secured defence management.
- ❖ Period of progress in Sanskrit literature.
- ❖ Local language development.
- ❖ Period of development of art and architecture.

On the basis of these concepts of the Golden Age, the Gupta period in India, the Elizabethan period in England, and the period of Peter the Great in Russia have been called the Golden Age. But the important question becomes whether we can also analyse local history on this basis.

Firstly, in the early mediaeval period, which was a period of political upheaval throughout India, how would the Katyuri period have been able to save itself from this political turmoil? In the words of Romila Thapar, the Golden Age is a utopia whose existence lies in the distant past. From the point of view of historical chronology, civilisations always try to prove their past as glorious and ideal in order to analyse their status and influence their contemporary and future generations. Support for a 'golden age' is a pre-requisite for civilizational claims. Civilizations are said to have a golden age when almost every expression of life reaches the pinnacle of excellence.

The Shilpkar (Dalit) and social stratification-

In Katuru time, the major place of Shilpkar was divided into three social stratification.

- ✚ Handicraft Class
- ✚ Musician-dancer Class
- ✚ Village-servant Class

Handicraft class-

During the Katyuri period, people of all classes rural and urban area had separate residences, there was a prohibition on marriage and food among themselves. The work of Odh Mistry (Mason) was used to construct craft temples, buildings, pronouncements, nauls, and god statues. They had a high place in his own shilpkar society, not on the other high caste societies. Chimiya's work was the construction of wood, boxes, Okhli, etc.¹⁰ Koli used to work in oil extraction. this class also did the work of weaving clothes. The work of the chipi class was related to dyeing and print cloth. They can be compared to local dyers. bhou was the next scheduled caste, whose work was to extract oil from mustard, rye, hemp, bhangzira, and dolu. Agriya, Dhanoreya, Khatunia, Lohar, Tiruva, etc. used to manufacture and mine various iron products. Tamta used to make copper utensils and musical instruments and made copper idols.¹¹

People of the Dhoni/Dhuni caste used to do the work of sorting gold from rivers. Sunar (goldsmith) was a scheduled caste who worked. and used to make fine ornaments. And they used to do the work of writing articles on copper plates, ironclad, and stone. Rudheya shilpkar used to make Solty, Kandi, Dalia basket, mat, and kande (large vessels for storing grains). products made of bamboo were manufactured by the people of baidi caste.¹²

Hunakiya are the potters of Uttarakhand, who use to make soil pots, lamps, handi, ducks (for water), hinsra (for chubena mud), etc.¹³

Artisian Group (Musician- Dancer Group):

The work of the beda/vadi caste was to perform acrobatics, stunts, fireworking dance, farce(swang), and humorous drama. In Uttarakhand, they are the born worshiper of music, folk poet, and dancer.¹⁴ Das (Auji) was an expert in dhol sagar here, who used to use drums and trumpets on various social, religious, and other auspicious occasions. These slaves remembered the Devastali and Rajavali verbally. During the Katuri period, they used drums and trumpets to motivate soldiers.¹⁵

The genealogy of katyuri kings has been described by the durmmer Khekdas as follows-

**Raja Asanti Vasanti
Gora Savola Ilan Tilan
Bada Raja Pithora Prithamdev
Suraj Tapni Ka Raja Dhamdev**

Bhootangi deity (kavva) belonged to this class. Bhikuwa Pauhari (watchman) among katyuri jagars belonged to this class. Atav (drum stick) rice and bhabhut were taken as prasad by the drum-playing guru in Jagar. According to Dr. Madan Bhatt, the first guru of the das was Ramdas.¹⁶ In ancient times, his place of residence was called Dumoda or Doomataw.¹⁷ This class included people from village servant class.

According to the Tameshwar inscription of katyuri period Pauravarman, the residence of Shilpkar is called-

Burdepallika¹⁸: The carpenter
Chandulak Pallika, Barber
Visakhil Pallika¹⁹, Johri (goldsmith)
Deakulik-Shilpi temple builder
Silver²⁰: Laundryman
Pattwaik-Silk weavers
Didink Pallika- Adobe of instrument playing slaves²¹

In most of the areas of Garwal and Kumauon, hemp fibers were used extensively to obtain cloth and rope, which was called bhangola. Koli a sub-caste of shilpkar used to weave it.²²

Harikrishna Ratudi has mentioned the following shilpkar castes.²³

Shilpkar Class	And their works
Odh Mistry	Vastushilpi, Parangat, in building construction work
Chimiar	Is related to wood production and construction art.
Koli	Oil Extract, Weave Clothing, etc.
Chippi	Dyeing and printing of hidden clothing
Bhoul	Oil extract.

Agaria	Excavation of iron and tablets
Dhanauria	Quilt mattress maker
Khatunia	Making tools related to Dale
Lohar	Making tools in iron furnace (aafar)
Tamta	Making utensils, idols, musical instruments, and coins from copper.
Rudheya	Products made from Ringal (chimonobamusa falcata)
Baidi	Making Products from bamboo (bamusa vulgaris)
Baidivadi	Acrobatics, Humour
Auji ya Das	Sewing clothes or Praising Deity
Hudkiya	Praise and songs of Deity etc.
Bhatt or Raii	Description of heroic tales, virudavalis, and genealogy of Uttarakhand through songs, drama etc.
Mirasi or Dhaki	Devine dance, invocation, religious singing.
Athpehriya	Playing naubat in the royal palace, playing the heroic musical instrument ransingh etc.

(Village servant Class)

These were the lowest class shilpkar in the social level. they used to serve their patrons and other villagers.

Haliya	Ploughing, weeding, inter culturing, and taking care of animals
Prehari	Transmitting information from one place to another
Wagudi	Used to help the king in the hunt.
Bade	To maintain animals and to organize animals for religious actions
Jhulia	Operating various activities for rural entertainment.
Bakhriya	Used to care for the horses and other animals that knew about the war.
Nagarbi or Pumpi	Used to make pood themes of animals' skins and hemorrhoids from these dead animals.
Patar	They were involved in making and bringing the leaves to be served at weddings and throwing away the used leaves.

Discussion and conclusion-

That stratification of lower cast (Shilpkar) clearly indicates that the condition of Shilpkar isn't satisfying. The upper layer of cast stratification means upper cast has a smaller, not equal social status. But in the lower label social, economical, and religious equality haven't been seen. More you are lower in the social status, cruelty and harassment is more common. Finding the truth in ancient, mediaeval, and modern texts is a brain-storming task. Because these texts were written in those eras to glorify the crown, most of them were written by exploiters. The oral folktales expressed by the Shilpkar expressing their pain and distress were presented in a disgusting manner because these texts were written and sung by lower-caste people. The upper class considered this language inferior and hated it because these languages were the expression of lower caste that they were feeling in their lives at the time. That is why it was not mentioned in writing in any sculpture, book, or inscription. With time oppression, harassment, and verbal presentation of this pain increased, but the equality seemed to say that Delhi is still far away.

In those times, marrying someone from a lower caste resulted in castelessness and social boycott. If a Brahmin man married a girl of a lower caste or class, he was thrown out of the caste. The marriage of Das Heera of Bageshwar was an example of this.²⁴ Famous historian Baddridutt Panday says that Katyuri king married his maternal aunt. In his kingdom, nails were driven into the shoulders of those palanquin so that the people of the elite class could not face any kind of trouble while carrying the palanquin on the up and down mountain paths.²⁵ The story of the atrocities of the Katyuri dynasty still resonates in the Katyuri valley. There is a song about king Brahmadev (Viram Dev)-

Jai Virma jyu ko aal banko, dhal bano, tumri kaman banko
 Aasan banko, sihasan banko, navad ko shearo banko
 Raja Virma Lakhanpur runi, jai Virma ko ghat boya chou
 Sulti nai lai loni paincha, ulti nai le deni
 Saat khava batuni, chal nail chai lene
 Mal tali shauken mali ki dasuat udhani
 Garam pankhi chausinghia lakha bhotiyalu kamla lene
 Achari karni, bibi dhakuni taruni tiryahitad ni dina
 Varuni bakri charan ni dena

Glory to Brahmadev! His pride is crooked, his slope is crooked, his seat is crooked, his throne is also strange. He himself (except Katyuri) lives in Lakhanpur. Their method of farming is also strange. When they borrow food, they take it from the straight drain (a wooden vessel measuring two seers) and when they return it, they give it from the reverse drain. To collect the grain, it is aired in seven barns, then accepted, and then filtered through a sieve. They collect tithe from lower Terai Bhabar (Mal) to upper Saukya country. From the Bhotis they take hot pankhi (dough), a four-horned goat, and blankets. They commit atrocities and commit atrocities. Young girls are not allowed to walk on the road (they are kidnapped) and beautiful goats are not allowed to graze.²⁶ The situation of third-class shilpkar was extremely pathetic. Even

among the slave shilpkar, people of the upper class did not accept food prepared by the hands of the shilpkars.²⁷

According to Oakley and Gerola, the Katyuri king Pritamdev had several queens but no sons. In old age, he wanted to marry Mola Devi, daughter of Pundir Raja Amardev of Mayapur Haat. Despite being an independent king, Amardev was afraid of the power of Katyuri king Pritamdev. Even though his caste was considered higher than the caste of the Katyuri king, he does not want to marry his seven-year-old daughter to an old king, but in the end, fearing the Katyuri king, he gets his daughter married to him. Pritamdev had a son named Dhamdev from that queen. The same Dhamdev killed his father for the throne. (Himalayan Folklore, Page 123). On the basis of the above facts, we have to consider some facts:

At first, Pritam Dev had many queens, but he had no sons. That's why he wants to marry a seven-year-old girl in his old age. Which explains the poor condition of women. These women would belong to elite classes or castes. The situation of women belonging to lower classes or castes will be even more unimaginable; incidents like mental torture, adultery, and physical labour are possible. If women of the elite class had no rights, then the situation of women of the lower class would probably be even worse.

Second, why does the king marry in another kingdom, Mayapur? There may possibly be a religious reason. But it is worth considering that there will be women in his kingdom as well. And according to the divine principle of kingship, the people of his kingdom will have to obey his orders. The king married his women's, probably from within his own kingdom, who would be his equals or of similar social status. One fact that makes the social stratification clear is that he cannot marry women of lower status and lower caste. Even if he has a son from a woman of low social status, it does not seem socially possible for him to get the rights of a king.

Third, Dham Dev killed his father for the throne. His father married his mother when he was old, and when he grew up, his father became even older, so why did he kill his father? After some time, he would have attained the throne. This is not a sign of republican democratic governance.

One such description is found in the context of slaves. The sons and daughters of grain grinders were captured and made slaves. There was no single system for collecting taxes. The Katyuri rulers had deployed slaves along the road to collect water from their favourite stream or spring (Hatchina), located about 12 miles from the palace. Who remained there day and night, passing water from one hand to the other. This fact confirms slavery in the Katyuri period. (Himalayan Gazetteer-Part-2 Translated by Prakash Thapliyal Page 228.)

The state's revenue was collected in kind and it was also customary that a part of the grain brought to the treasury be ground for the use of the royal family. Each village took turns grinding grains, which was its responsibility towards the state. Still, while giving grains from the store, the royal servants used to use the Nali (a scale-utensil commonly used for measuring in the mountains) which was

turned upside down and grains were filled a little deeper in the bottom. Still it was said that a drain has been given to the grain. When people brought ground grains, the king's subordinates would spread seven mats around a big stone and then climb on the stone and scatter the flour in the air. Thick pieces would fall on nearby carpets and only very finely ground flour would fly to the seventh carpet. By then the officer would come down and pick up the flour collected on the seventh floor and ask the people to take away the rest as it was not fit for his master's use. (Himalayan Gazetteer-Part-2 Translated by Prakash Thapliyal Page 228.) Here one fact becomes worth considering that the flour falls on seven carpets here. And the king's officials take the fine flour from the last carpet, how would the ground flour present in the remaining six carpets be distributed? Possibly in accordance with social stratification, because in the contemporary social classification, historians and sociologists mention the Mangkhani caste (those who eat by begging). Probably, the thickest and pebbled flour is obtained from this category. A pebble less than that would be given to the less dominant caste on the basis of social hierarchy and in the same hierarchy to the dominant caste. On the above basis it is not possible to imagine a uniform republican governance system.

On the basis of above discussion, it becomes clear that not only was their class division in the contemporary society, but the social status of people was also determined on the basis of particular craft or caste. Their isolated residence also demonstrates the following low levels in their social division. The Katuri period may be a golden age in terms of Sanskrit development, art and sculptures religious prospectus (village deity), etc, But not for the lower caste people, and not for women either.

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