



Migration Of The Brāhmanas Into The Region Of Dakṣiṇa Kośala: A Study Of The Epigraphic Records

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Abstract

There are at least two distinct phases when the Brāhmanas were migrated to different regions of the Indian sub-continent; the first phase goes back to a time period around 8th century BCE marked by an eastward and southward movement.¹ Large-scale migrations during the early mediaeval period coincided with the second phase of the Brāhmaṇic movement as well. What exactly caused the Brāhmanas to migrate to different parts of the Indian Subcontinent in the early mediaeval period or during ancient times is unknown. Although the arguments we have at our disposal are theoretical, they provide us insight into the possible causes as they are based on a thorough analysis of historical processes. The primary cause of the initial phase of the Brahmanic migration was presumably the start of the criticism of their sacrificial ritual practices, which grew increasingly radical and were opposed by the time of Buddhism and Jainism.² Brāhmaṇic tradition was gradually replaced by these two major religious practices, which then started to dominate the religious domain in the region. This may have been one of the causes because of which the migration process of the Brāhmanaṣas started to take place during this time. It is abundantly clear from the epigraphic records that the Brāhmanaṣas began to migrate from the northern region of the Indian sub-continent to its eastern, western, and southern peripheries during the early medieval period.

Keywords: Brāhmanas, Kara-śāsanas, Varṇa-Jāti, Gotra, Caraṇa, Pravara, Śākhā

To the theory of political unrest or instability as a possible cause of this migration, one can also add the better opportunities that motivated these Brāhmanas to leave their current residence and look for the place that would have offered them the best chance to thrive. The kind of opportunity that we are speaking of was presented by the early medieval political developments when we saw the new local kingdoms were beginning to emerge in different parts of the Indian Sub-continent. These newly emerging kingdoms were required to

¹ Singh, U., "Brāhmaṇa settlements in Ancient and Early Medieval India" in B.D. Chattopadhyaya (Ed.), *A Social History of Early India*, D.P. Chattopadhyaya (Gn. Ed.), *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization: Vol-2, Part-5*, Pearson Longman, New Delhi, 2009, p. 161.

² Singh., *Ibid.*, p. 162.

legitimate their political power to rule over their procured territory which was constantly changing. By establishing a genealogy for the royal lineage and tracing it back to some mythical or spiritual beings or elements, these migrating Brāhmaṇas helped them legitimize their authority. In the return of this favor, they were largely patronized by the rulers of these new kingdoms which we can see through these large numbers of land/villages grants to the Brāhmaṇas and their institutions. These granted villages were not just only free from the payment of taxes, not including the *kara-śāsanas* type of land grants, but were also free from any kind of forceful future obligations towards their donors. Such political and economic opportunities, no doubt, might have motivated Brāhmaṇas to migrate into these areas. Studying the epigraphic records made it certain that the region of Dakṣiṇa Kośala was one of such geo-political centers that attracted them and presented an ideal condition for them to thrive.

The early medieval Dakṣiṇa Kośala land grant charters attested to and depicted two distinct patterns of Brāhmaṇa migration: intra-regional and inter-regional. The land grant charters of the Śarabhapurīyas and Pāṇḍuvarṃśins are very much informative when it comes to giving ancestral data about both the donors and Brāhmaṇa donees. They have generally presented a detailed description on their *gotra*, *carāṇa*, *pravara* and *śākhā* which we have mentioned in the previous chapter. However, the later charters are mostly silent about the original place of these Brāhmaṇas from where they may have been immigrating into this region. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the Brāhmaṇas migrated in large numbers to this area because it presented them extraordinary opportunities. Through donations of villages and land, the newly established local ruling families enabled them to establish a permanent home in this area. The copper-plates land grant charters of the Somavarṃśins rulers frequently refers to the native places of these Brāhmaṇa donees which helps us successfully demonstrate their migration pattern. We have many epigraphic land grant records of the Somavarṃśins dynasty which presents examples of both the intra- and inter-regional migration of the Brāhmaṇas which was taking place in this region.

The first of such examples we can mention here is the Patna plates of Mahābhavagupta I Janamejaya, dated to the last quarter of the 9th century AD, records the grant of a village called Vakaveḍḍa to the number of four Brāhmaṇas who were originally hailed from four different places.³ The first among them was a Brāhmaṇa called Bhaṭṭaputra Dāmāka immigrated from the Pampāsarasi, another one is not named in the charters and mentioned as the son of the Nārapagaṇḍa who came from the place called Oḍayaśṛṅga, the third Brāhmaṇa named as Bhaṭṭaputra Vāsudeva was from Koṇakaleḍḍa, and the last one is Koṇḍadeva an immigrant from Kaliṅga.⁴ Geographically, the place from where the first Brāhmaṇa was coming identified with a probable place near to the lake Pampā whereas the second place has been identified by Binayak Mishra as Oḍasing in the Athamalika region of Odisha which is a contrast location given by Hira Lal.⁵ The third

³ “Patna plates of Mahābhavagupta I Janamejaya”, Shastri., *ISPS: Part-II (Inscriptions)*, ICHR, Motilal Banarasidass, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 172-78.

⁴ Shastri., *ISPS: Part-II (Inscriptions)*, ICHR, Motilal Banarasidass, New delhi, 1995, pp. 172-78

⁵ Shastri., *Ibid.*, p. 176n; Mishra, Binayak., *Dynasties of Medieval Orissa*, Ramanand Vidya Bhawan, Calcutta, 1933, p. 67; Lal, Hira, *Epigraphia Indica: Vol. XI (1911-12)*, ASI, 1981, New Delhi, P. 198, he has identified this place as Udayagiri area in Bhubaneswar.

place is identified with the modern Koknara or Konknara situated in the four miles away from the Narsinghnath in the Sambalpur district of the Odisha while the fourth Brāhmaṇa hailed from the famous Kalinga rightly corresponded with the modern areas of Puri-Ganjam and coastal northern Andhra Pradesh.⁶ During this time the surrounding region of the Sambalpur district comes under the territorial extension of the Dakṣiṇa Kośala whereas the Kalinga was just another neighboring kingdom to it, in this way the present charter gives a good example of an intra- and inter-regional migration of the Brāhmaṇas.

Similarly, the Satalama plates of the Mahābhavagupta I Janamejaya, dated to the last quarter of the 9th century AD, mentioned that the village of Satalama was given in donation to Bhaṭṭaputra Sānthakara who was being further cited as migrated from the village called Puruṣamaṇḍapa situated in the Odra country.⁷ The granted village is the same find spot Satalama which has been successfully located in 15 miles south of Bargarh and 32 miles south-west from Sambalpur whereas the village where this Brāhmaṇa was migrated from is not yet identified but the region of Odra has been corresponded with the lower part of the present state of Odisha.⁸ In an addition to it, the Patna plates of Mahāśivagupta I Yayāti, records that a piece of land in the northern part of the village called Talakajja, identified with the modern Talagaja situated around 10 miles south-east of the Bolangir district in Odisha.⁹ Here the village was being granted to a Brāhmaṇa named Kāmadeva along with the bed of the lower river.¹⁰ The present charters revealed that the Brāhmaṇa here was an migrant from the place called Mādhvāla and a resident of Jalajaḍḍa in Kośala, when the first place is not yet located anywhere, the second one has been identified with the modern Jalajoḍo near the same Talagaja same as the above mentioned.¹¹ This sort of migration indicates to a short distance movement made by the Brāhmaṇas who shift their residency to a better place with larger opportunities and greater means of livelihood. The Nibinna plates of the same above-mentioned ruler Mahāśivagupta I Yayāti, dated to the first half of the 10th century AD, records the grant of a village called Niviṇḍa in Uttara-pallī which is positioned in the Gandhaṭapāti-maṇḍala and attached with Kośala-deśa given to the Brāhmaṇa Dikṣita Puṇḍarikaśarman.¹² The Brāhmaṇa here was migrated to this area from the village of Bhataparoli who is the resident of another village named Marameṇḍā in the same Kośala territory.¹³ The geographical identity to these mentioned places is not yet available to us but it has successfully manifested another example which gives the instance of short distance and intra-regional migration of the Brāhmaṇas within the territorial extension of the Mahā-Kośala or south Kośala. There are numerous other epigraphic land grant records from the Somavamśins dynasty that demonstrate the similar patterns of intra-regional migration of the Brāhmaṇas.

⁶ Shastri., *Ibid.*, p. 177n.

⁷ “Satalama plates of the Mahābhavagupta I Janamejaya”, Shastri., *ISPS: Part-II (Inscriptions)*, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 189-93.

⁸ Lal, Hira., *Epigraphia Indica: Vol.XI*, Ed., by E. Hultzsch, Calcutta, 1911-12, p. 201, see the table for the geographical location mentioned in the grant; Mishra, B., *Op. Cit.*, p. 66. Shastri, *Opt. Cit.*, p. 192n.

⁹ Lal, Hira., *Ibid.*, p. 200; Shastri, Shastri., *ISPS: Part-II (Inscriptions)*, 1995, pp. 189-93., pp. 226-32, 230n.

¹⁰ Shastri., *Ibid.*

¹¹ Shastri., *Ibid.*, p. 231n.

¹² “Nibinna plates Mahāśivagupta I Yayāti”, Shastri., *ISPS: Part-II (Inscriptions)*, New Delhi, 1995, pp. 240-45.

¹³ *Ibid.*

During this period, in addition to the Brāhmaṇas' short-distance migration, we have ample evidence in the form of land grant charters that supports the prevalence of a long-distance migration as well. The migration followed a common pattern, mostly from the northern regions of the sub-continent into this region under discussion. For instance, Two of the Kālibhanā copper-plates land grant charters of the Somavamśins king Mahābhavagupta I Janameja, issued in his 6th and 34th regnal years and dated to the end of the 9th and early 10th century AD respectively,¹⁴ presents the best example for the inter-regional migration of the Brāhmaṇas. The first set of charters reveals that the village of Jambuḡrāma, identified with the modern Jamgaon situated near to its find spot located in the Sambalpur district of Odisha, was given to a Brāhmaṇa named Bhaṭṭaputra Govinda who was cited as originally hailed from the place called Hastipada.¹⁵ Though the place called Hastipada is not yet rightly identified but Sircar and Rath connects the place with some celebrated village called Hastigrāma near Vaiśālī in the modern Besarh in the Muzaffarpur district of North Bihar.¹⁶ Similarly, the second set of land grant charters records that the village called Konnayilla situated in the Tokkāṛā *viśaya* of the Kośaladeśa donated on the behalf of a Brāhmaṇa named Bhaṭṭaputra Devu who was an immigrant from the place called Muḡtāvathi in Śrāvasti.¹⁷ Though the granted village is not successfully identified yet, the *viśaya* or the district of Tokkāṛā where it was situated has been located in the modern Ṭukrā, about 14 miles east of the to the Bargarh town in Odisha.¹⁸ The place named Śrāvasti from where the present Brāhmaṇa was migrating corresponded to the modern Set-Mahet on the border between the Gonda and Bahraich districts of Uttar Pradesh.¹⁹ One more example of such migration¹⁹ from the region of Śrāvasti we can add here, though there are many more, comes from the Pātna plates of Mahāśivagupta I Yayāti dated to a time period of middle of the 10th century AD.²⁰ The present land grant charters records the grant of the village called Delādeli in the Telātata *viśaya* which is again placed in the Kośala-deśa.²¹ The grant was made on the behalf of the Bhaṭṭa Mahodadhi who has been mentioned as migrated from a place called Kāsillī located in the Śrāvasti *maṇḡala*.²² The grated village has been matched to the modern Dedil which is situated not very far from the Tel river valley in the Pātna region of Bolangir district in Odisha whereas the Śrāvasti was a distant land located in Set-Mahet region.²³ The Jetasinga-Dungri plates of Mahāśivagupta III Yayāti, found in the boundary of Jetasinga and Dungri villages, Bolangir district of Odisha, issued in his 3rd regnal year, fifth day of the bright fortnight of the month of *Vaiśākha*, which corresponds to the first half of the 11th century AD.²⁴ The *Praśasti* has recorded two villages which were being given as donation to an immigrant Brāhmaṇa named Bhaṭṭaputra Yaśakara was originally from the place called *Hastigrāma* situated in *Madhyadeśa*. In addition to these examples of the long-distance migration of Brāhmaṇas, we have many

¹⁴ Sircar, D.C. and Ratha, P.C., *Indian Historical Quarterly: Vol-XX, No.3, Ed.*, by Narendra Nath Law, The Calcutta Oriental Press, Calcutta, sep.1944, pp. 237-50; Shastri, A.M., *ISPS:Part-I (Introduction)*, 1995, p. 200

¹⁵ Shastri., *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Sircar and Ratha., *Opt. Cit.*, p. 241.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Sircar and Ratha., *Opt. Cit.*, 1944, pp. 246-47.

²⁰ Sastri., *ISPS: Part-I (Introduction)*, 1995, p. 204.

²¹ Shastri., *ISPS: Part-II (Inscriptions)*, 1995, pp.246-50, 250n.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ "*Jetasinga-Dungri plates of Mahāśivagupta III Yayāti*", Shastri, *ISPS: Part.II*, 1995, pp. 276-84

other land grant charters that trace the original home of the Brāhmaṇas i.e, Śrāvasti and *Madhyadeśa* from where they had migrated into this region of Dakṣiṇa Kośala.

One of such examples of migration, further, comes from the Gaintala plates of Mahābhavaguta I janamejaya which is issued in his 17th regnal year and has been dated to a time towards the close of the 9th century AD.²⁵ The present charter records the donation of the village called Ṛṣigrāma in the district-*viṣaya* of Nimunā to a Brāhmaṇa named Bhaṭṭaputra Tiku.²⁶ The Brāhmaṇa recipient of the grant has been described as the immigrant of the village called Śāluvi situated in the Madhyadeśa.²⁷ Similarly, Chaudwār plates of the same ruler records that the two villages called Raṇḍā and Alaṇḍalā in the Povā *viṣaya* together with the villages of Tuleṇḍā in the Sandānā *viṣaya* and Arkigrāma in the Tulumva *khaṇḍa*, all of them situated in the Kośala-*deśa*, granted to a learned Brāhmaṇa named Bhaṭṭa Mahattam Sādharāṇa.²⁸ The present Brāhmaṇa beneficiary of the grant had come from a place called Takāri.²⁹ The villages being granted here are situated in and around Bolangir, Bargarh, and Sambalpur districts of Western Odisha, which were clearly coming under the Kośala territory. However, the migrated place from which the present Brāhmaṇa originated has been identified with a famous Brāhmaṇa village called Ṭakkārikā or Tarkārikā, situated in the Madhyadeśa. According to Shastri, the present village was involved in the supply of the Brāhmaṇas to different parts of the sub-continent.³⁰

Consequently, we have observed multiple occasions where Brāhmaṇas were brought to the south of Kośala from neighboring territories like Kaliṅga and Oḍṛa, as well as from the areas of Northern India. The migration was also taking place within the geo-political extension of early medieval Dakṣiṇa Kośala. The instances signify the nature and purpose of the Brāhmaṇic migration which was motivated by the search for better socio-political and economic opportunities, and the requirements of the royal families. The migration patterns suggest that the present discussing region witnessed both the intra- and inter-regional migration of the Brāhmaṇas. Due to the ruling families' generous response, which is evident in the overwhelming patronization of these migrated Brāhmaṇas in the form of village/Land grants, they eventually made this place their permanent home.

The establishment of the permanent settlement of the Brāhmaṇas in the region of Dakṣiṇa Kośala subsequently had a substantial impact on its society. It started to completely alter the predominant tribal configuration that was previously at play in the region. The new social stratifications based on the *varṇa/jāti-vyavastha* were now brought to this region by these migrated Brāhmaṇas who introduced its principles and thus, started configuring a new social structure accordingly. The system was widely prevailed under the

²⁵ “Gaintala plates of Mahābhavaguta I janamejaya”, Shastri., *ISPS: Part-II (Inscriptions)*, 1995, pp. 200-205.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ “Chaudwār plates Mahābhavaguta I janamejaya”, Shastri., *ISPS: Part-II (Inscriptions)*, 1995, pp. pp. 206-12; Fleet, J.F., *Epigraphia Indica: Vol-III*, Ed., by E. Hultzsch, Calcutta, 1894-95, pp. 345-51.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Shastri, *Ibid.*, p. 211n.

efforts of the Brāhmaṇas and the Kings. The mutually beneficial relationship that developed between these two dominant socio-political groups helped them to reshape the subsequent social scenario of the area.

Conclusion: The changes in the social sphere resulted as such due to the kind of interaction took place between the two different group of people or society, the Tribal and the Brāhmaṇical. Due to the confrontation of two very distinct cultural traditions, the region had a wide spread socio-religious implications. A two-way process of cultural appropriation or acculturation is one way to observe the simultaneous reflection of this socio-political interaction and transformation. An instance of this can be found in the Jagannāth cult tradition, where the deity's origins stem from tribal social and ritual traditions that were later integrated and appropriated into a single Brāhmaṇic socio-cultural and religious tradition. In a similar vein, the continuation of the autochthonous deity Sthambésvari as a tutelary deity has been demonstrated in the inscriptions of the Śulki rulers, who were tribal in origin, and one of the land grant charters from the sixth century of the Rājā Tuṣṭīkara. Thus, the process of social change goes through the two-way process of acculturation modifying or influencing both the Brāhmaṇical and Tribal socio-religious components.

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