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CONTRIBUTION OF THE KAYASTHAS TO THE PERSIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The Smriti of Yajnavalkya describes the Kayasthas as writers, scribes and village accountants. The Vishnu and Parashara Smritis have also similar references to them, describing them as magistrates, judges and chief executive officers. In the Garud Puran, Chitrugupta has been described as the giver of the script (Chitraguptaya namastubhyam veda aksharadatre – salutation to Chitrugupta, the giver of the script). The Rig Veda enjoins a salutation to Chitrugupta before offering sacrifice – Sri Chitraguptaya vain namah.

The Kayasthas reverently place a pen and an ink-pot before their founder and patron deity Chitrugupta on dooj (the 2nd day in the phase of the waxing moon), after Divali. They invoke his blessings to give them strength through the pen, considered mightier than the sword.

The constant transfer of land or land revenues in the early medieval period made by the political elites to priests, temples and officials led to the rise and growth of the new social groups of scribes called Kayasthas. A large number of writers and record keepers had to be employed to draft documents of assignment of land and to maintain records of lands and villages and of the gradually increasing number of revenues and pariharas given in the

grants'. The beginning of the fragmentation of lands on account of the law of partition of property from the Gupta period onwards made the maintenance of the details of the individual plots necessary. Sub - infeudation of the lands made the record - keeping an important activity.

The whole work was done by a class of writers who were known by various names such as Kayasthas, karanas, karanika, adhikrta, pustapata, chitragupta, lekhaka etc. In the beginning Kayasthas form, like the Brahmins in the ancient period, as one of the many classes. But gradually Kayastha became a generic term for the entire social groups engaged in record keeping. With the hardening of Social identities, the Kayasthas became a separate literary caste.

It is said that Brahma, the Creator, having established the four varnas - Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra - ordained Dharamraj (also called Yamraj, the god of death) to keep record of the deeds - good and evil - of all life - forms born and yet to be born on the earth, in the heavens above and in the lands below. Dharamraj, however, complained, "O Lord, how can I alone keep record of the deeds of the beings born into 84 lakh yonis (life - forms) in the three worlds? "Brahma then closed his eyes, meditated for a while and behold! There appeared a radiant figure with a quill-pen in one hand and an ink-pot in another. Brahma named him Chittagupta for he was conceived in his cognitive - self (chitta) and he was lying in Him, dormant and secret (gupta). He was born of Brahmas' body (kaya) and so the Lord decreed that his progenies be called Kayasthas. He was assigned to work as a minister, to write and record for Dharamraj. Thus, the fifth varna, the Kayastha, came into existence.

Faced with the problem of finding a place for the Kayasthas in the Varna system, the Brahmana lawgivers fell into the dilemmas of assigning their exact social status in the varna hierarchy and the confusion of their status remained and as late as in the 1950's, while the Allahabad High Court assigned them

Brahmana status, the Calcutta High Court called them Sudras. The rise of Kayasthas as literary caste posed a challenge to Brahman monopoly. Even though the Smriti literature began to denounce the Kayasthas, they began to form part of officialdom².

India had trade relations with Iran since ancient times but with the invasion of Mahmood Ghaznavi Persian Language made inroads in India. The Turko - Afghan elements preferred Persian which the Indian masses readily accepted being a secular language of that time. With the establishment of Delhi Sultanate and the introduction of their land revenue system, which was a modified form of the existing system by bringing in Turko - Afghan elements, the Kayastha formed an important class in the officialdom of the Sultanate revenue administration. Village Patwari was often a Kayastha, assigned with the task of maintaining village records. Further the Sultanate engagement with the subjects of India, particularly in the realm of land revenue, medicine, astronomy resulted in increasing interest with Indian theme. The Brahmins and Kayasthas were natural choices for such activity.

In the beginning Madrasas were opened with a view to teach Arabic and Persian to the muslim population but later on it was opened for Hindus, as a result of which Kayastha took a lead with the interest of getting more and more jobs in the court. Some of them excelled in this field and contributed to the Persian language and Literature by writing biography, history of kings, translation from Indian texts on different subjects and so on. For example Amir Khurso (1253-1325) compiled Khaaliq - Baril, a verse dictionary which deals with Hindi, Urdu Persian and Sanskrit. But only 170 verses are presently available to us. In 1553 Ajaz Chand Kayastha compiled a dictionary in verse form on lines of Khaaliq - Barili and named it as Mislakhaaliq - Barii.

On account of the innovation in revenue administration introduced by the Mughals, it was imperative that village scribe play a very important roles. Further, increasing participation and

access by the Kayasthas in the court administration resulted in the rise of many Kayastha writers in the Mughal periods. The Mughals encouraged as well as patronized men of letters without discrimination on ground of caste, creed and religion. As a result we see a large number of Kayastha poets, historians, translators and Kayastha experts who have written in different branches of science.

Some historians hold the view that during the reign of the Mughals, a number of Hindus who were educated and endowed with sharp intellect attained administrative positions through rapid adaptation to the Persian language and culture of India's new rulers. These influential Hindus got together and fomed a new caste known as Kayastha.

Kayasthas also migrated to various other parts of the country for getting proper jobs in the provincial kingdoms. They were patronized by Deccani kings as well. It is found that most of the Kayasthas who shifted to Hyderabad from Delhi and U.P. in the middle of the eighteenth century got employment in the court of the Nizam. In 1820, out of the 400 North Indian mansabdars, 60 were Kayasthas.

Some of the prominent Kayasthas who contributed to the Persian language and literature in different fields are:

History:

Nain Sukh Kamaraj: He served in revenue department during the late days of Aurangzeb and was the author of two books : (a) An account of Prince Azam, Aurangzeb's second son, and his activities in the war of succession after his father's death Azam ul-Harb (b) A history of contemporary events convering twelve years witnessed by him, from the murder of Farrukh Siyar and accession of young Roshan Akhtar as Muhammad Shah. Its title was ibrat – Namah.

Khushhal Chand Kayastha: Took job as revenue officer durint the days of Aurangzeb and his successor. He arrange the material for writing a history book in two main parts (a) followed the

familiar fashion introduced by earlier historian (1) Prophets and Caliphs (ii) India down to Lodis; (b) Dealt exclusively with the Mughals (i) Babur to Rafi ud-Dawlah (ii) Mohammad Shah. He named his book *Tarikh-i-Mohammad Shahi*.

Sunder Lal: He wrote a history of Kol, Mathura and Brindaban. It was entitled *Gul-i-be Khazan* and also *Majmuah -e- Faiz*.

Raja Ratan Singh Zakhmi: He held the titles of *Rajahand Fakhr ud-Dawlah Dabir ul Mulk*. He was a poet as well as a historian. He wrote poetry under the pen-name of Zakhmi. He wrote a history of the Awadh Nawabs upto Mohammad Ali Shah, entitled *Sultan ul-Tawarikh*. Among his other works were a *tazkirah* of poets, and a manual of moral exhortations, *jam-i-Giti Numa*. He was also an accomplished scholar of astronomy and composed two books on that subject, namely, *Hadaiq-un-Nujam* and *Miya ul-Azman*.

Translation:

Chander Sen B. Kashi Das Kayastha: lived in the reign of Aurangzeb and translated *Bhagwat Puran* in Persian.

Chaturbhuj Kayastha: He lived in the days of Akbar and made an independent translation of *Singhasan - Battisi*, the Sanskrit book of anecdotes; their hero being *Rajan Bikramajit*. Chaturbhuj brought out his work under the title: *Shah - Namah*.

Lal Bihari: He translated from Sanskrit the popular digest, *Mitakshar*. It was a summary of the corpus of laws, *Smritis*, prepared by the ancient jurist, *Gyaneshwar*. According to Lal Bihari, the Hindus of his age being mostly familiar with Persian, he undertook the project hoping that his work would make the essential Hindu law easily accessible to its seekers.

Poetry:

Jaswant Rai Munshi: Saadat ullah Khan, Mohammad Said, the governor of Carnatic, was impressed by his abilities and offered him employment. Besides a *Diwan* of verses, Kaswant Rai wrote a biographical account of his patron, naming it *said namah* and left a collection of miscellaneous papers: *Masawwadat*.

Kishan Chand Qarib: came to Lucknow from Delhi and got job under Asaf-ud-Dawlah. He established himself as a Poet.

Lala Sukh Raj Sabqat: in poetry he received instruction under Mirza Bedil. The latter acknowledged him as the most accomplished of his Hindu pupils. He has a Diwan to his credit which contains about ten thousand verses. He also depicted the war fought by his patron, Saiyed Husain Ali, against the governor of the Deccan, Dawud Khan, naming it Jang – Namah.

Bal Mukund Shuhud: He was a poet from Bihar who came to Delhi during the reign of Mohammad Shah in connection with official business and stayed there for some time and made contacts with poets of the capital and enjoyed their literary company.

There were others who wrote on different subjects like Mahtab Singh wrote on topography and human environment, entitled *Tawarikh-i-Mulk-i-Hazarah*. Ratan Lal was the author of a geographical tract, *Risalah-i-jughrafiyah*. Multani Lal Judat was famous for his Insha and attempted essays on the known pattern of Maqamat, initiated by early masters of Arabic and Persian Prose. Kanhaji Mal Kayastha Azimabadi was employed as secretary and interpreter under Francis Hawkins. He was interested in arithmetic, geometry and astronomy and wrote a book on these subjects entitled *Khazain ul-ilm*.

The Kayasthas Pathshalas in North India necessarily include Persian language and literature as one of the subjects which was replaced by Urdu and later by English.

The Kayastha script which was prevalent in North India used mainly for official purpose was a form of devnagari but the language used by these script writers were full of Persian vocabulary.

With the passing of time, the Kayasthas have surged ahead. They have broken new rounds in vacations other than those relating to writing and record – keeping, and excelled in them. Thus, in public life, Dr. Rajendra Prasad rose to become the first President of the Republic of India, whereas Lal Bahadur Shastri

succeeded Jawaharlal Nehru as the Prime Minister, Dr. Sampuranand was the Chief Minister of U.P. and Governor of Rajasthan, besides being a literary figure. Jaya Prakash Narain brought down Indira Gandhi, Subhas Chandra Bose fought the British rule militarily. Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar and Jagdish Chandra Bose were eminent scientists. Munshi Prem Chand, Harivansh Rai Bachchan, Raghupat Sahai "Firaque" Goraphuri, Dr. Vrindavan J. Verma, Dr. Ram Kumar Verma and Dr. Dharm Vir Bharti have been men of letters. Swami Vivekanand was a philosopher and a true India. Amitabh Bachchan and Shatrughan Sinha have excelled in the celluloid world, Mukesh and Sonu Nigam in the world of music and Ramanand Sagar on the small screen. Not many Kayasthas have, however, been industrialists or businessmen.