

The Mauryas and Dakshina Koshala: A Note on both their Relations and Influence

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Received June 21, 2017

Accepted July 24, 2017

ABSTRACT

History, regional more than national, reflects men's aspiration and achievement in particular locality. With the Kalingan war ancient Odisha emerges to the full view of history but this seems to have been, at best, true for coastal area and not for the western part which forms the territory of South Koshala. Though the area of Dakshina Koshala remains unconquered under the Mauryas but still there exists interaction between the two and the article throws light on this aspect. Being a forest cover area and rich in resources like qualitative diamonds, forest products, elephants, mercenary troopers it was hard for Mauryan empire to ignore the area. The work also made plea that though this area for a long time remain behind the scene but it is wrong to assume that this was a backward area, because from the very beginning of human history it plays role in civilizational activities.

Key words: Forest, Janapada, Tribes.

INTRODUCTION:

Both man and society are directly proportional to each other. For the proper running of society, the most important physical institution created by man was 'State'. Machiavelli, political scientist from Italy in modern way defined it as power which had and have authority over men. However, ideas related to state and its functionalities not remain confined to western world only, our ancient literature though mainly religious in nature but one cannot ignore the facts related to political ideas found in it.ⁱ It was with the appearance of territorial entities, *janapadas*, process of state formation began. *Aitareya Brahmana* made first reference about the word *janapada* and mentions the *Kurus* and the *Uttara Madras* as the *janapadas* lying beyond the Himalayas.ⁱⁱ

The term *janapadas* refers to the territories where people especially during the later vedic age began to settled down. According to M.B Chande, *janapada* in its origin appears to have been a territory on which particular people or tribe or clan was settled such as *Panchala janapada*, *Kosala janapada* and so on.ⁱⁱⁱ However it was only by the time of later part of the Vedic age tribes started settling down and practice agriculture more extensively than earlier, which ensured supply of taxation, foremost condition for any state either monarchy or republics. Earlier people who owed allegiance to their tribes now shifted it to their territories or *janapads* on which

they get settled down. In his book *Janapada States in Ancient India*, Sudama Misra puts forward that the phase of *Janapadas* was essentially a link between the tribal and imperial polities.^{iv}

The *janapada* states were necessarily territorial but their boundaries could not settled for a long time due to regular conflicts between them. But gradually the administrative set up and geographical boundaries start becoming concrete which gave rise to prototype states, *Mahajanapadas* and again struggle among these traditional sixteen *Mahajanapadas* paved way for Magadhan Empire. But historical growth never remained same throughout the country, if there was Mauryan empire we had *Licchivika*, *Mallakas*, *Madrakas* as republics and besides these, we have tribal polities too witnessed in Atavika areas. One such tribal area was Dakshina Koshala which was part of Dandakaryanya area and was supplier of fine quality of diamonds, elephants, timber and other forest products. The Mauryan emperor Ashoka conquered Kalinga in 261 B.C, and it is believe that Dakshina Koshala area which lies on the west of Kalinga remained unconquered but both the empire and this atavika area had some kind of interaction between them.

Mauryan King Ashoka's rule of more than three decades is fairly well - documented in his inscriptions which acquaint us both with the events of his reign as well as his policies as a ruler. Major Rock Edict XIII and two special Edicts, one at Dhauli and other at Jaugada, provides us a

glimpse of the nature of Ashokan rule and conditions prevailing in Odisha after Kalingan war. ^v According to B. P Sahu, Ashoka effort to provide a civilized administration seems to have been, at best, restricted to the coastal belt and the predominant primitive, tribal people appear to have been outside the pale of civilization. Jaugada Inscription made reference about *avijita anta* which suggests that there were some unconquered tribes in or near Kalinga and this *atavika* land comprised roughly the present districts of Koraput and Kalahandi in Orissa and of Bastar in Madhya Pradesh. ^{vi} Hermann Kulke opines that Mauryas mainly controlled the coastal areas and some of the interior near present Mysore which they probably coveted because of the gold while large areas of the interior were inhabited by tribes which had not been defeated. The inscriptions explicitly mention such undefeated (*avijita*) neighbours and forest tribes. ^{vii} Thus it appears that the area of Dakshina Koshala was not conquered by Mauryas but indirect references about them in Rupnath inscription and Jaugada inscription hints that though, not under the direct control of Mauryas, the central power had knowledge about them.

HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY:

Dakshina Koshala was a forest covered area and it was because of the resources available in this area, it was hard to ignore the area. Das in his book, *Culture Heritage History and Dandakaranya*, volume one, contains that undivided Koraput, parts of Kalahandi districts of Odisha and partly the undivided Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh now in Chhattisgarh has been in various inscriptions, literature is denoted as Dandakaranya. ^{viii} As per *Koshala Khanda* ruler of Dakshina Koshala Bhanumat occupied the throne and married his only daughter to Dasaratha, king of Ayodhya. After his death, his son - in - law inherited Koshala state, situated to the south of the Vindhya precipices. Since then Koshala *Mahajanapada* with Ayodhya, its capital came to be known as Uttara Koshala in order to distinguish it from the Dakshina Koshala. ^{ix} Jay Chandra Narang about the historical geography of Dakshina Koshala is of the opinion that the upper Mahanadi valley between Odisha and Maharashtra and just below the Maikal range, is Dakshina Koshala. ^x Alexander Cunningham was the first who used the term Mahakoshala for Dakshina Koshala when he was endeavoured to fix the boundaries of this area.

The terms like Aranya, Vana, Atavi, Jangala, Atavikas etc. used for forest and forest

dwellers. Right from the beginning, forest remains the hub of natural resources and civilized world always depend on these resources for fulfillment of its requirements. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* refers at length to methods of tax collection and related problems and a control over potential sources of revenue and forest products one among them. Dakshina Koshala area was famous for diamonds, according to text near about six kinds of diamonds and among them *Madhyamarashtraka* variety of diamonds came from South Koshala. ^{xi} The region of western Odisha besides famous for gem belts also rich in iron deposits which were exploited in plenty and transported to the coastal Orissa and other trading centres. ^{xii}

For procuring these resources and bringing them to the centre, roads were important. Though a northerner, Kautilya stands for Dakshinapatha. He says, 'If the southern roads does not lead to countries from which came blankets, skins or animals like horses, it brings in far more valuable products like conch - shells, diamonds, gems, pearls and gold and it is wiser to follow those roads traversing the mining areas as frequented by people.' Among the various classes of roads, *Vanapatha* (road leads to forests) were one of the type which leads to forests. All these various roads brought to markets commodities of different kinds from all parts of the country from which they were derived, from out-of-the way places like mines and forests. ^{xiii}

Besides, diamonds and elephants, forest areas also remain source of gallant soldiery and this is adequately recognized by Kautilya he says, 'the country full of forts, clans of robbers, Mlechchha people and wild tribes is always a menace.' Again a king in despair is advised to turn as a last source of strength to an army recruited from the fearless soldiers of the warrior - clans, gangs of brigands, the foresters and the Mlechchha tribes like the kiratas. Among these, Kautilya again values the Atavikas more than the choras and pratiradhakas who are used to nocturnal operations hiding in forests, and to petty plunder of rich individuals. On the other hand, Atavikas are settled people, proud of their country, operating openly in day- light, engaging in open warfare and publicly plundering property and killing people like independent sovereigns. But inspite of their qualities, Kautilya counted Atavikas as a source of external danger to the state along with the Rashtramukhyas and Antapala. ^{xiv}

INFLUENCE:

It is clear that this atavika region influenced the economic activities of the centre but this influence was not single - sided, area of Dakshina Koshala definitely would get influenced by this interaction. Dakshina Koshala was an atavika region having tribal polity and Ashoka in his inscription mentions them as troublesome forest people of central India. In the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudragupta, first inscripational reference of Dakshina Koshala was found in which he refers to this area as forest Kingdom (*atavika - rajyas*) which indicates that people who were once seen as troublesome forest tribes in the Mauryan times were now transformed into a state polity. No doubt internal factors were more important but one cannot ignore the external factors in which its trading interaction with Mauryan empire too had its role and B.P Sahu too supports this opinion. In 1981 a city was discovered and partly excavated in western Odisha which was about 1 mile long and 500 yards wide, surrounded by a solid brick wall. At this site Northern Black Polished ware was also discovered which shows that material advancements of north even reached in these far flung areas.^{xv}

However, it was during the Gupta period that this region fully came out of its political veil. It was under the Sarabhauriyas first local dynasty emerged in this area with Sarabhauria (present Sirpur) with its capital. After Sarabhauriyas, area was ruled by dynasties like Panduvamasis, Somavamsis and so on. Even during the Medieval period under the Akbar, the hill countries stretching Bishenpur to Karonde, Bastar and Jaypur were left to the entire management of the native chiefs who either rendered military service to the Mughal governors or paid a light quit rent.^{xvi} Chhattisgarh was under Maratha rule that is Bhonsle of Nagpur and after continuous plundering, Odisha too became part of their rule. They made use of forest - clad and hill bound region of western border of Odisha to enter into the heart of odisha or into Bengal through Odisha. In modern times Chhattisgarh joins Central province and in 1905 Sambalpur district was transferred to Odisha and the estates of Surguja were transferred from Bengal to Chhattisgarh. In 1956 under State Reorganisation Act, western part of Dakshina Koshala merged into Madhya Pradesh and in November 2000 new state of Chhattisgarh was formed. Now people of western Odisha demand separate state of Koshala. Let us

wait, and see which new chapter adds into the history of Dakshina Koshala.

CONCLUSION:

It is generally believed that whenever interaction occurred between civilized and tribal population, later ones are always exploited by earlier but this is not always true. In his one inscription, Ashoka demanded obedience and acquiescence from the forest dwellers lest they be subjected to military action and in his another inscription, he exhorts his officers to strive to gain the trust and allegiance of the unconquered people's on the borders of his empire. This shows the far - sightedness of Ashoka, as he was fully aware both about the strength of these forest dwellers as well as the availability of resources in their area, so to deal with these people he followed a balanced policy. It is the need of time to learn from our past, as this area still dominates by a large number of tribal population and to minimize some of the present conflicts in these areas, it is important to follow up a balanced policy.

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