CHAPTER VII

KAYASTHAS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE

Kāyastha in Sanskrit Literature:

Soddhala calls himself a Kāyastha and at the same time claims to be a Kṣatriya. Kāle says that Kāyastha is a man of mixed origin, being the offspring of a Kṣatriya father and a Śūdra mother. They formed the written class. According to Wilson, men of the Kāyastha tribe were usually employed by Hindu princes in the collection and record of their revenue and their character for extortion became proverbial. On account of this, their spirit of extortion and treacherous disposition, they came to be hated by the people. These court scribes were known in literature as very clever and unscrupulous.

1. UK : P. 10.
2. Śūdraka : Mṛcchakatika Ed. by Kāle M. R., notes P. 94.

:\ Mṛcchakatika Ed. by Karmākar R. D. P. 430.

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During the reign of Asoka, Rajuka and Lajuka were the officers who drew taxes and looked after the public policy. Asoka had full faith in them and hence complete powers were delegated to them. Dr. Buhler points out that the words Rajuka and Lajuka were used for eminent statesman. Their occupation was that of Lekhaka and Gaṇaka and hence historians consider them as Kāyasthas.¹

The Kāyastha appears in an unfavourable light. They are compared to serpents in the Mrčchakatika². The court of justice is compared to the ocean and Kāyastha was also one of the authorities of the Rājakaraṇa. Kāyastha is mentioned along with a rogue, cāta in the Mrčchakatika.³

4. Yājñavalkya Smṛti refers to Kāyastha⁴ and the Mitaksara

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³ Yajnavalkya Smṛti, I-336, PP. 365-367
on it says that a Kayastha is a writer (Lekhaka) and an accountant (Ganaka). He is a favourite of kings and fraudulent by nature. People should be protected from his harassment. Vīramitrodāya on Yājñavalkya Smṛti says that Kayastha was a writer appointed by a king, Rājādhiśṛṣṭa.

In the same sense Kayastha Dhanadatta is referred to as appointed (Niyukta) in the Mṛchakatīka. It is stated in the Brahma Purāṇa that Kayastha was an officer.¹

In the Mūdrārākṣasa,² we find that Rakṣasa's bosom friend Śakatadāsa is a Kayastha and a professional writer. Canakoṣa, in this context says that much notice need not be taken of Śakatadāsa because he was after all a Kayastha, who was incapable of doing any serious harm.

Parāsari gives a fanciful but humourous derivation of the word.³ According to its letters e.g. Ka is taken from Kāka, a crow whose excessive fondness for passion is found

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1. Brahma Purāṇa, Ch. XLIV - 37
2. Viśākhadatta: Mūdrārākṣasa, I, P. 19
3. Śūdraka: Mṛchakatīka, Ed. by Kāle M.R., notes P. 94

GSI I, p. 206, foot-note.

Sudraka: Mṛchakatīka, Ed. by Kāle M.R., notes P. 94

GSI I, p. 206, foot-note.

कामानन्तंतवते हस्ताखलुक्यति शयनपल्लु मुद्यावतिर्यति।
ओऽ श्रवणात्तिष्ठो रूपृक्षम कायकमः कृं जन्मिति॥
in the Kayasthas. "Ya" is taken from Yama, the God of death as he is cruel by nature, and "Stha" from Sthapati, the Carpenter, who is known for his hard stroke.

In the list of officials mentioned by name in the inscription of Bhaskaravarman, a king of Kāmpā, and a contemporary of Harṣa, there is a mention of a Kayastha (Scribe).¹ The word Kayastha as a name of a post can be found in epigraphy in the 5th cent. A.D. in the Damodarpur copper plate grants.²

Kayastha's Origin:

The traditional account of the origin of the Kayastha mentions that once Ādharma approached Brahmā and said that he being alone was not able to chastise the sinful persons. Brahmā replied that he would be helpful to him in that respect. Brahmā practised penance for thousand years and when it was over, he found a brilliant person standing before him, an inkpot and a slate. When asked, the latter replied that he was born through Brahmā's body during the penance. Brahmā was rejoiced at this reply and

¹. HCI, Vol. III, p. 351.
². EI, Vol. XII 65, XIX 118 f.
he was named as Kayastha (staying in the body) and as he stayed wonderfully in the body his epithet was Citragupta. Dharmarāja entrusted him to note down the good and evil deeds of human beings.

This Citragupta was married with Subhāvati the daughter of a Brāhmaṇa named Susārmā an inhabitant of Avantī. The second wife of Citragupta was Nandi, the daughter of Manu. He got twelve sons, eight from the first wife, namely, Śyāmasundara, Sāringadvara, Dharmadeva, Sumati, Dēmodara, Dinadayāla, Sadānanda, and Rāghavaraṇa, and also four sons from the second wife, namely, Yugaṇdhara, Bhānuprakāśa, Dharmadhvaja and Rāmadayāla.

All these twelve sons were sent to different directions after their marriage. They inhabited in different regions and their descendants were known as Kayasthas, divided into sub castes. They are as under:


Vālmika Kayasthas:

The Vālmika Kayasthas who are predominantly found in north India, and South Gujarat are said to be descendants
of Rāghavarāma, the son of Citragupta. Rāghavarāma and his wife Manjubhāṣīni went to the hermitage of Vālmikī and stayed there, therefore, their descendants were called Vālmika Kāyasthas.¹

Gopinātha sinha² thinks that the real name of Vālmika Kāyasthas of Gujarat is Vallabh Kāyastha. Valabhipura was founded by Vallabha, the eleventh son of Citragupta. Thus Vallabha may be identified with Rāghavarāma. In childhood Vallabha was handed over to Vālmikī and the sage took him to some hermitage in Saurāstra near Abu mountain and educated him.

Cāndrasenī Kāyasthas:

Besides the Citragupta Kāyastha caste, there is also a caste named Cāndrasenī Kāyasthas. The legend says that when Pārśurāma took his bow to make the earth devoid of Kṣatriyas, the wives of Kṣatriyas moved to the hermitages of sages. One of them was the wife of Candrasena, who went to the hermitage of the sage Dālabhya. Pārśurāma arrived at this hermitage and saw that she was pregnant. He was

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1. i. Munsif Nanda Prasāda : Vālmika Kāyastha Saṃskṛti Darsana, P. 1. (1930)
prepared to destroy the foetus according to his vow. The sage handed her over to Parśurāma. Parśurāma was pleased with this obligation and requested him to ask for something. The sage requested him to hand over foetus of the lady. Parśurāma complied with it and said that the offspring should be named as Kāyastha. The son born from the foetus was known as Somarāja. He was married to a daughter belonging to Citragupta Kāyasthas. The descendants of Cāndraseni Kṣatriyas are known as Kāyastha Prabhus who are predominantly inhabitants of the Southern part of India.

Another legend says¹ that the Kāyasthas are the descendants of a Kṣatriya father and a Sudrā mother. It is said that Citragupta must have married a Sudrā wife, but we find no mention anywhere about her. The Purānik account of Citragupta's marriage with Subhāvatī (a Brahmin girl) and with Nandī (the daughter of Manu) is more reliable and hence the above legend seems to be baseless. However, if we consider it to be true, it is certain that the caste of a family is decided by the caste of the father and not by that of the mother. Thus Citragupta Kāyasthas belong to Kṣatriya caste. A number of evidences are quoted by

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R. G. Biwan to prove that Kayasthas belonged to Kshatriya caste and the laws of Sudras do not apply to the Kayastha community.

Kayasthas in Inscriptions:

Kayasthas are found as writers in inscriptions. From the names of writers of Gurjara, Maitraka Rastrakūṭa and other miscellaneous records it appears that there was a regular office, and its holder, bearing the titles Sāndhi-vigrāhika and Divirāpati, was a hereditary officer. We find a number of names of the writer's group, but no caste is mentioned in all these inscriptions, except once in a record of Rastrakūṭa Amoghavarsa where the phrase Vālabha Kayastha is specially mentioned. Thus it is possible that this writer class did not originally form a caste, in the sense, in which we use it today; but formed a functional group. It is in this sense, i.e. in the primary sense of office, that the term Prathama or Jyestha Kayastha is used in the 5th, 6th and even the 8th century inscriptions of the Guptas and other dynasties of Bengal. In the same

sense, according to Yajña-valkya Smṛti, as we have seen, Kaya-
stha was an accountant and a scribe.

In India, where professions were long since hereditary, they tended to form distinct castes. When actually this practice originated, is not known; but about the 10th cen-
tury, these sub-castes began to appear in inscriptions. The Kāyastha is one of these sub-castes. It is mentioned as a distinct entity in Calukya records from the time of Mul-
raja onwards, in the inscriptions of Gurjara Pratiharas and their successors, the Gahayālas of Kanauj and Pālas and their successors in Bengal. The names of some of the Kāyasthas, who were the writers of the Calukya inscriptions, have been given as Jejja, Kāñcana, Vatsesvara, Kekka, Kekā, Kekkal, Laksam, Valiga, Sahajiga, Sāntikumāra, Somasimha, Vājada, and Kumāra Vasarina.

Original Varna of Kāyastha Caste:

Gurjara Kāyasthas trace their descent from one or the other of Kṣatriya dynasties. Soddhala himself being a Kāyastha at the same time claims to be a Kṣatriya. Siladitya's brother Kalāditya was an incarnation of Kāyastha, a Gana of Siva. According to Soddhala\(^1\) this Kalāditya left behind him

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1. UK : P. 10 स्वर्गोद्भूति जिन कर्तव्य जलमंग्ली पौर्णिमिति इत्यादि स्वर्गायं विषयाद्वित्ति श्वेत्यकोषमः स्वर्गायं विषयाद्वित्ति श्वेत्यकोषः स्वर्गायं विषयाद्वित्ति श्वेत्यकोषः स्वर्गायं विषयाद्वित्ति श्वेत्यकोषः स्वर्गायं विषयाद्वित्ति श्वेत्यकोषः स्वर्गायं विषयाद्वित्ति श्वेत्यकोषः
an extensive family of Kayastha Ksatriya caste. One of the branches of that caste was Valabha, belonging to Valabhi.

According to one inscriptionsal account,\(^1\) they were the descendants of a Śūdra servant of a sage named Kāchāra, but were blessed to become wise diplomatās by a boon of Śiva, while another inscription would claim their descent from Kasyapa. Bengali tradition traces the origin of the upper classes of Bengal Kayasthas to the five attendants of the five Brāhmaṇas who came to Bengal from Kanauj at the invitation of Ādiśūra.\(^2\)

If personal names have any significance, the name endings Bhatta and Bhatti, in the names of Gurjara, Māttakā and Rastrakūta writers would show that these were probably Brāhmaṇas. Names of some of the writers of Cauḍukya plates, in same cases are Ksatriya like Śātkumāra, Somasimha, Kumāra, Jaitrasimha, whereas in one case it seems to be Brāhmaṇa-like,\(^3\) Vāteśvara. But the same cannot be said about Anahila, the first writer. He is supposed to be a shepherd, in the famous story of the foundation of Anahilapura

\(^1\) History of Bengal, I, 586.
\(^2\) Smith : The early History of India, P. 412.
\(^3\) Kāne P. V. : History of Dharmaśāstra II i. P. 77, NIA, I 743.
One wonders whether the founder of the writer class of Valabhi plated was originally a pure Kṣatriya or Brāhmaṇa or belonged to a mixed caste.¹

Kāyastha as a caste Name:

We find the earliest mention of Kāyastha as a caste name in the Sanjān copper plate grant of the Rastrakūta king Amoghavarsa I dated 871 A.D.² It has been written by Dharmaṇikarana Senābhogika Guṇa-Dhavala of the Vālabha Kāyastha Vamsa i.e. the very Kāyastha family to which our poet belonged. Soddhala has said nothing about any other sections of the Kāyastha caste except his own as existing in his time in his part of the country. But the distinctive adjective Vālabha signifying the locality of its origin clearly shows that there were Kāyasthas other than the Vālabha, even in the Ninth century. Although the word Kāyastha originally meant the name of a post, people following the occupation for generations came to be known as a distinct caste. This will be clear if we look to the caste names of India, which are mostly occupational names. It is not unlikely that Kāyastha as a caste commenced formation from the 8th century A.D.

2. EI, Vol. XVIII. PP. 235 ff.É.
It is difficult to say when the mythical stories about the origin of the different sections of the Kayasthas came into existence. The story of the origin of Valabha Kayasthas is not later than the 11th century A.D. Citragupta-origin of the Kayastha is perhaps still later. The earliest epigraphic mention of Citragupta having any connection with the Kayasthas is found in a charter of Govinda-candra-deva of Kanauja dated 1115 A.D.\(^1\) This plate was written by a Vastavya Kayastha Thakkura named Jalhana, who has been described as born of a Karnik family, resembling Citragupta in qualities (as a writer). This was only a prelude. From this resemblance in occupation, the idea of descent from him was conceived. \(1\)\(^{\text{EC, Vol. VIII pp. 152 & 153.}}\) 

\(2\)\(^{\text{Śrī Hariśa : Naiśadhiya-carita, 14 - 66.}}\)

\(1\)\(^{\text{EC, Vol. VIII pp. 152 & 153.}}\)
History of the Kayastha:

There are ample references to Kayasthas in epigraphy but in it there is no mention of their Citragupta descent. We have seen that the Valabha Kayasthas are mentioned in epigraphy and in the Sanskrit literature but they are not heard of now a days.

In Gujarat, Yalam Brahmanas of Vala were the priests of Kayasthas about 1150 A. D. It is said that they asked heavy Dakšinās for the performance of the marriage ceremonies of the Kayasthas. This was the cause of displeasure and thus Kayasthas left them and accepted Brāhmaṇas of Talaja as their priests. From historical accounts, it appears that Valmika Kayasthas migrated to south Gujarat from Saurāstra and North India for the sake of service during the mogul period and dwelt in Kodinār, Radhanpur, Dholka, Surat, Palsāna, Sāngadha, Vyāra, Navsāri, etc.


Munsif Nanda Prasāda: Vālmika Kayastha Sanskriti Darśana, P. 3.
In fact, we find mention of a Valamya Kayastha donor in a pillar inscription of Bhinnamala dated 1206 A. D.1

Siddhala has referred to the fact that his forefathers held for generations the post of Dhruvaprabhu. Dhruvas were village accountants and their posts were hereditary. The Dhruvaprabhus were district accountants having under them village accountants. By holding the post for generations, they perhaps came to be known as Dhruvaprabhus. We find in the Bhinnamala inscriptions that in some cases the writers of them were Dhruvas, which is the legitimate duty of the Kayasthas; so these Dhruvas were most probably of the Kayastha caste. There is a section of writers in the Bombay State, who are called Dhruvaprabhus. They say that they have descended from Dhruva, the son of king Uttanapada. We think that they are the Valabha Kayasthas and have completely forgotten their old tradition; and as they are called Dhruvaprabhus, they are connecting themselves with Dhruva, the epic hero.

Dhruva denotes a fixed or permanent hereditary officer in charge of records and accounts of a village, the Talati and Kulkarni of modern time. One of the chief duties of the

Dhruvas was to see that farmers did not take more revenue than the royal share. The name is still in vogue in Cutch where village accountants are called Dhru or Dhruva. Dhru is also a common surname among the Nagara Brāhmanas and Modha and other Baniás in Cutch, Gujarat and Kathiawar.

These Dhruvaprabhus claim to be of the same stock as the Pattana - Prabhus, another writer class of the Bombay State. This epithet of Pattana is derived from their residence in Pattana or Pātan. They are also called Pāthāre or Pātharīya. In the Skandapurana, their descent has been traced from a king named Āsvapati of the solar race of Ksatriyas. Under a curse from Bhṛgu Rai his descendants have been degraded from the kingly office to that of a writer. The details of these Prabhus are found in the Bombay Gazetteer.2

Kayastha Authors:

Munshi says3 that Kāncana, the son of Kayastha Jejala, was the writer of Mularaja's copper plates. He has also referred to Kakkala, a Kayastha and a great grammarian who

1. Skandapurāṇa, Sahyādri Khandā Ch. 27 & 28.
3. Munši K. M.: Glory that was Gurjar Desa, P. 171.
was a friend of Hemacandra.  

The editor of Rāmcarita by Abhinanda has noted that the second supplement of Rāmcarita is attributed to one Bhīmakavi in the colophones of all the four cantos. This Bhīmakavi belonged to a Kāyastha family, and was the son of one Śrī Devapāla. It is possible therefore, that the author Bhīma might have belonged to Gujarat, though the original place of Kāyastha community is Bengal and North India. The members of that community must have migrated to Gujarat as early as the 10th cent. A. D. and this is corroborated by the fact that Soddhala, another Kāyastha poet, who flourished in the courts of Konkana kings, was born in Gujarat.

Amongst the ancient authors, whose works are in Gujarati, Keshava Hyderām, Kāyastha-Ādyā-Kavi, was a resident of Pāṭan. He possibly flourished about 1473 A. D. He composed the tenth Skandha of the Bhāgavata, in Gujarati Version.

2. Abhinanda: Rāmcarita, intro., P. XXIX.
Ganapati, the author of Madhavānala-kāmamakandāla Prabandha, was the son of Narasa, and was a Kayastha by caste.¹ He was an inhabitant of Āmoda (Broach District). He composed the work in Saṃvat 1584 in Couplets, called Dogdhaka or Duhās divided into eight parts. It is a romance in old Western Rājasthānī. This Prabandha is published in Gaikwad's Oriental Series, No. 93.

Madhavās Sundardās,² a resident of Ankleshvar later on migrated to Surat. He wrote a number of poems on Vaiṣṇavism, such as Brāmaṇa Gitā, Okhā hārana, Rāsa Panača-dhyāyi, Kamsavādha etc.

Ramacandra Sukla has referred to several Hindi poets, and authors who were Kāyasthas by caste. They are noted below:

Puhakara Kavi³ - He was Kāyastha by caste and flourished during the reign of Jehangir. He was a resident of ............................


मोनि म्यालि कामस्य काव्य, लालिताजिंश निपुणः।
पुरुष विषय माध्यमा, दीप ज्यादा दूर हुँसतः।


चूरले तालि पीता ज्याध्यात्मना, अज्ञातिचार जो ज्ञाता।
कालयुग कुलहने लालितार्थात्मि, अज्ञातनियत सुंदरदास।

Partapapura, Dist. Mainpuri; but later on, he left it and came over to Bhumi Gāṇva, near Somanātha in Gujarat. He wrote 'Rāsratana', a Prabandha in Hindi in Samvat 1673.

Bhikhāridāśa, a Śrīvāstava Kāyastha by caste, and a resident of Avadha, wrote Kavyanirnaya in Hindi, in Samvat 1803.¹

Rūpasāhi, a Śrīvāstava Kāyastha, wrote Rūpavilāsa in Samvat 1813. He was a resident of Panna.²

Chatrasiṁha, a Śrīvāstava Kāyastha, was a resident of Anterā or Batesvara-kṣetra. He wrote Vijaya Muktāvalī, a story of Mahābhārata in Prabandha Kāvyā in Samvat 1757.³

Ghāna Ānanda Kāyastha, who was born in 1746, was a Mir Munsī of Badasah Muḥammedaśah. He has written Sujana-saṅgara, Viraha-līla, Koka-sāra and some other works.⁴

Bakṣi Hansarāja, a Śrīvāstava Kāyastha born in Samvat 1599 at Patna, wrote Sneha-saṅgara, Viraha-vilāsa, Rayacandrika and others.⁵

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1. HSI, P. 256.
2. HSI, P. 270.
3. HSI, P. 302.
4. HSI, P. 309.
5. HSI, P. 325,
Bavala-sinha Kayastha, a resident of Zahsi, wrote Rasapahcadhya$i, Rāmoandra Vilāsa, and Saṅka-mocana in Samvat 1873.1

Ramasahāyadāsa, a resident of Chaubepur, Dist. Benares was the son of Bhavānīdāsa Kayastha. He wrote Rāma Satasa Vāṇi vibhūsana and other works in Samvat 18732.

Premacanda, a wellknown Hindi novelist was born at Lahāmī near Benares in Samvat 1880.3 He belonged to the Kayastha caste. During his time, it was a tradition that a Kayastha in general should know Urdu, Persian and Arabic, and so he was well-versed in these languages.

Amongst the modern Gujarati Kayastha writers Ranajitram Vavābhai4 (1883 - 1917 A. D.) was a wellknown research scholar and a critic. Number of stories written by him are published in monthly magazines like Sahitya and Sundarīsubodha. His Loka-gita-samgraha was published in his memory after his death at Surat.

1. HSI, P. 356.
2. HSI, P. 357.
Ratilal Chunilal Diwan has written some books on medicine, grammar and has prepared a list of persons of the Vālmika Kayastha caste. Amongst the living authors Dhansukhalal Kṛṣṇa lal Mehta is a famous author of short stories, dramas and humorous articles. Sri Kṛṣṇalal Surajaram Vakil, a well-known scholar and educationalist has written many books in English and Gujarati on education.