CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

(A) Subject and its importance

In the early medieval age India was facing a great socio-political topsyturvy. The death of great king Harsha in 7th century A.D. brought unfortunate results for the whole of India. The country had been divided into several small states each trying to gain at the cost of others. There was a conspicuous lack of the national unity. The rulers were quite vagrant and having large mutual contentions while, on the other hand, the foreign invasions were taking place frequently. Thus, the society was always afraid of invasions and non-safety. Naturally in such an environment the art and literature can not run smoothly. It might be an occasion, of course, favourable for soldiers' steels but not for poets' pens. We will have, however, to acknowledge the supremacy of those poets particularly who even amidst the unfavourable circumstances from 12th century A.D. onwards have shown their keen interest and devotion to the contribution to Sanskrit literature.

As a matter of fact the days of early medieval age were a period of crucial decline in almost all spheres of the social life excepting a very few. The country was in the grip of a pathetic moral bankruptcy and had to pay its
great cost in course of time. It will be quite useful to be acquainted with the then social conditions. From this point of view the literary contributions of that age may be of great significance. We can be able to understand properly the conditions of that crucial age by means of the cultural study of contemporary literature. With this aim in view I have taken the literary works of Vatsaraśa composed in the same age (between 12th - 13th century A.D. as will be discussed afterwards) for the present study.

We came to know for the first time about Vatsaraśa's literary composition when C.D. Dalal edited and published them under the title *Rūpakagatkam* in 1918 in the Gaekwad's Oriental Series (No. 8). The *Rūpakagatkam* (ES) is a collection of six Sanskrit plays of different types viz. a Vyāyoga; Kirtitrilukā; a Bhūna, Karpurācarita; an Thāmṛga, Rukminītharaṇa; a Dīma, Triruradēha; a Brahasana, Ṣayecḍāmanī; and a Samavakāra, Samudramathana.

According to its editor 'In the entire Sanskrit literature no author excepting Bhūsa is heard whose so many dramas, all of a different variety, are known to us. Vyāyoga, Bhūna and Brahasana are types which are not rare, but Thāmṛga, Dīma and Samavakāra are very rare and are known only through the definitions given in rhetorical and dramaturgical works'.

1. Introduction to the *ES*. p. V.
Further, in Keith's opinion also 'Vatsarāja is interesting as a good specimen of the poet of decadence; we have from him six plays illustrating each a different type of drama'. Moreover there is possibility of some more literary works of Vatsarāja still to be found out. In this regard we are informed by Bühlcr that a manuscript of Bhojarābandha composed by Vatsarāja, and containing thirty-six leaves was possessed by Caturbhūja Bhatta in Navānagara (Gujarata).

It is regretted that in spite of our best efforts the manuscript could not be available so far. Further, one verse


See also Catalogue Catalogorum - Theodor Aufrecht. pt. I, p. 549.

4. I have seen many published catalogues of manuscripts, several manuscripts' libraries and corresponded with S.G. Kantawala, the Director, Oriental Institute, Baroda; R.V. Kaundinya Shastri, Principal, Shri Varatantu Sanskrit Mahāvidyālaya Shala (Ahmedabad) and K.J. Tibbi, Professor and Head of the Department of Sanskrit, D.V.K. Arts and Science College, Jamnagar (Gujarata), but still the manuscript could not be found out.
is quoted in Jalhana's Suktimuktāvali by the name of Vatsarēja.

The non-availability of this verse in the Kā. may also suggest the possibility of composition of some additional work by the same poet. Nothing can be said whether these manuscripts are destroyed or still existing somewhere. However, it appears beyond doubt that Vatsarēja must have composed several works; and thus he deserves an important place in Sanskrit Literature.

On account of non-availability of his works to the scholars Vatsarēja could not get as much attention as some other Sanskrit dramatists like Bhāsa, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti. As a matter of fact we must praise him for supplying us with the very rare types of Sanskrit drama even in that particular age of decline. The various aspects of his works should have been studied independently; only that could have brought some proper justification to the poet. In this connection L.N. Shukla's efforts are worth-mentioning who came forward for the first time to study the Vatsarēja's dramas, and took the Kā. for its critical evaluation. Later on some other scholars

5. Satkāyvanivyāgamudramadhye na vaiavārṇirna ca kālekutah.
   Tasyāvagāhena tathāni citraṁ khalasya tānāh paramo bhuvudeti.

like Sharada Jaiswal (A Critical Study of Unimportant Sanskrit Dramas with special reference to Vatsarāja - Jabalpur University); Ram Jiyawan Pandey (Vatsarājakta Karakafk Kā Pariśilana - Gorakhapur University); and Manjukaranī (Mahākavi Vatsarāja: Eka Adhyavāna - Kurukṣetra University) have studied them somewhat on the same line. However, a study of aspects other than those dealing with literary and general evaluation of the KS has still remained a desideratum.

(B) Scope of the work

It is significant to note that not only the dramas of Vatsarāja but all the Sanskrit dramas of medieval age have their own cultural importance which is rightly expressed by Ramji Upadhyaya. He states that the medieval Sanskrit dramas contain an apparent picture of the social, historical and cultural conditions of that age and they may be of great significance in gathering the authentic informations of history. Nevertheless, a close study of Vatsarāja's plays reveals that there is an ample scope of their study from the point of view of social and cultural aspects. The same is hinted at in the writings of various other scholars. The editor of the KS has stressed the social and cultural importance of these dramas remarking that 'the author has taken the plots of his dramas (= KarnPragarita-Bhāna and Mayacūdāmani-

7. MSN. pp. 481 - 82.
Prahasana) from the real life'. Ramji Upadhyaya also thinks that 'the medieval age of India was the age of socio-political destruction and riots. So Dima, Vyṣyogā and Samavakāra were composed in this age specially to inspire the youths for facing those elements who were responsible for destroying the socio-cultural values. From this point of view Vatsarāja's efforts are highly appreciable'. He further states that Vatsarāja's drama (Hāsavacandamanī-Prahasana) is successful in disclosure of the bad and dangerous tendencies of the contemporary society. Moreover, according to L.N. Shukla, Vatsarāja has deposited the Indian culture in his plays and consequently the then society, religion, politics and other socio-cultural conditions are reflected there. Ayodhya Prasad Dwivedi has also concluded that the cultural awareness has been specifically resonant in the dramas of Vatsarāja.

The subjects of Vatsarāja's plays may be mainly classified into two - legendary and imaginary. The Kīrtāranīvi-Vyṣyogā, Rukminiharana-Thāmṛga, Tripuradāha-Dima and Samudra-

8. Introduction to the RS, pr. V-VI.
9. MSN. p. 481.
10. MSN. p. 255.
11. RV. P. 329.
mathana-samavakāra are mythical in nature while the subject of KarmDracarita-Bhūna and Hāsyacūdāmani-Prāhasana are purely imaginary. It is but natural that the imaginary dramas in general give sufficient liberty to the author for maximum depictions of the real social life. The descriptions may imply almost all aspects of the contemporary society. Vatsarāja's imaginary plays - KarmDracarita-Bhūna and Hāsyacūdāmani-Prāhasana are also quite valuable to get some indications of the social life of that time. It is well known that the Sanskrit dramas in general are famous for their noble characterisation and amorous descriptions. But as far as the question of illustration of general public life is concerned, the material in Sanskrit dramas is limited. Almost all Sanskrit dramas are based on the love-stories of kings and high rank personages; and, excepting a few dramas like Mrochakatika of Śūdraka, they depict other characters also in a conventional style. The types of plays like Bhūnas and Prāhasana only depict the life of common people to some extent. It is interesting to note that Vatsarāja's Bhūna and Prāhasana are full of the very common and ordinary people of the society like dhūrtas, (wicked persons), Vītās (Parasites), Kirātās, servants, female servants, gamblers, prostitutes, mean students and teachers etc. These dramatic characters are the species of living society of that time and they represent numerous aspects of the social life. In this way the ES contains good and bad, weak and strong, gentlemen and wicked men, masters and servants, moral and immoral, rich and poor, wise violent and non-violent,
benevolent and malevolent, quarrelsome and peace-loving, and almost all types of people which may be found in any society.

Disclosing the social importance of *Bhānas* and *Prahasanās* Motichandra rightly mentions that 'in Sanskrit *Bhānas* and *Prahasanās* there can be a good scope for manifestation of the concerned society. These plays are to be composed in a wonderful ridiculous style. It is well known that satire is the strongest and most successful weapon through which a bigger social evil can be fought easily and successfully. It is difficult to stay any longer for the evils after being beaten by sarcasm*. Vatsarāja also seems to be successful in applying the sneer while depicting the social conditions of that age in his *Karmārācarita-Bhāna* and *Kavyacūdamani-Prahasana*. In his other mythical dramas also Vatsarāja appears to have tried not to leave any possible occasion for depicting the socio-cultural conditions. *Rāmī Uraṇḍhyāve* aptly thinks that 'most of the poets take the plots generally from the legends but while doing so the principal question to be faced by them is as to among countless mythical heroes who will be useful for the present society or who will suit the circumstances of the existing society. Having given due consideration to all these things the poet selects a society suitable hero and then composes his works. The changes into

the legendary stories are also to be introduced by the author from the point of view of their social usefulness'. It may be further corroborated by the following views of Upadhyaya himself - 'the narratives of confederated gods' combat against demons (Dānavas) in Tripurādāka-Dime and Samudramathana-Sama-vakāra of Vatsarāja have their own significance. For, in that age Dānava was a synonym of Mohammadan and thus these plays indicate India's common political phenomenon of that period.'

Moreover, Vatsarāja was not merely a poet but possessed a very valuable administrative office of Amūtya (minister) also during the regime of the candella ruler Faramardideva. Thus, being a shrewd high rank officer in the Candellas' administrative machinery he must have mastered the politics also, and might have got ample opportunities to witness the various imperial and social activities. It is, therefore, but natural to find some details on the socio-political life of that period in his dramas.

It is worth mentioning that Vatsarāja's period lay between 12th-13th century A.D., a period which is regarded as connecting link between the ancient and medieval ages. Thus, Vatsarāja's

15. MG. p. 250.
works can be useful by the dehali-dīpaka-nyāya (maxim of the lamp on the threshold) in giving some accounts of the social life of medieval period in tune with ancient cultural heritage also.

Some of our predecessors have already studied a few works from the point of view of cultural history. Most of those works belong to the ancient period. But the dramas of Vatsarāja belong to that part of medieval age which is considered to be the most crucial age of Indian history, their cultural study may be taken as a rudimentary attempt in this line.

With this background in view, and being gratefully inspired by Pt. Kopinatha Kaviraja's encouraging statement that 'the young scholars of India should step into the field and take up the cultural study of Sanskrit literature in different branches with great zeal and interest,' I propose to study

Agrawal, V.S.; *India as known to Pāṇini*, Lucknow, 1953;
Puri, B.N.; *India in the time of Patañjali*, Bombay, 1957.

the Vatsarāja’s dramas and to interpret them for reconstructing picture of the social life of neet's age under the title "The Bhāgavatam of Vatsarāja : A Cultural Study".

(6) Cultural Background

It should be specially mentioned that Vatsarāja is closely related to the Candella dynasty which is well known in Indian history for its artistic and cultural activities. According to A.L. Basham, 'Candella dynasty has survived with varying fortunes for three hundred years, and has played a very significant part in the life of medieval India, not only in the realm of war and politics but also in those of literature, art and architecture'. V.V. Mirashi has also expressed the same opinion - 'the Candellas are renowned in history not only for their political achievements but also for the patronage they extended to religion, literature, art and architecture. The magnificent temples which they erected at Khajurāho have been unrivalled in respect of beauty of architecture and sculpture'. Further, Raijval Pandes also shares the view. The poet who belongs to such a royal dynasty might be an amateur himself and might have displayed his interest and acquaintance with arts in his works.

18. Foreword to the H.C.J. p. V.
19. Foreword to the G.J. p. III.
20. Foreword to the G.E.J. pp. 5-6.
Further, it is also noteworthy that the author of the KS belongs to Bundelakhanda region of northern India (as will be presently discussed) about which history tells us that the people of this region were wonderful and they kept under tension even the foreign imperialists - earlier the Muslims and later the English. Not only so, in the ancient age also the kings and rulers are told to have been in troubles by the earnest love for independence and self-rule of the people of this region. That's why Gānakya had suggested his master Candragupta not to stir up these people because they are known to be dangerous (dusta) and strong (dusta) also. Such type of glory has ever been a source of inspiration for the masses. That's why what to speak of men, even women like Rānī Durgā- vati and Lākṣāmbī of this region itself took part outstandingly in battles with Muslims and the English respectively.

Moreover, this region has played a significant role in the political and cultural history of India in the past ages. Traditionally it is told to have contained the hermitages of various eminent sages like Vālmīki, Vedavyāsa, Atri and


22. C.W. p. 179.

Agastya. In literary field also it has earned a name by producing various Sanskrit poets like Kṛṣṇamīra, Vatsarāja, and Hindi poets like Tulasidāsa and Keśavadāsa. Further, in its glorious political history numerous soldiers like Uhlā, Udala and Chaturasāla, several kings and statesmen like Dhaṅga, Vidyādhara, Kirtivarman and Viरasimha are famous. Kālanjara fort and Bhajurūho temples are renowned for the science of architecture and sculpture. Citrakūṭa and Kālanjara are the holy tīrthas of this region. Sonagiri, Ahāra, Papaura and Devagarh towns are well known for their Jain temples.

But still it is a matter of regret that the royal cultural history of this region is not known properly so far to the people. Regretting it Vṛṇgavṛga states - 'what to speak of ordinary people, even graduates and well educated persons of this region itself are not well acquainted with the history and cultural heritage of this area which is keenly awaiting for the further researches. By means of the present study our humble efforts are to bring to light some socio-cultural conditions of the area as found in the area.

(D) Society, Culture and Literature

It is well known that society, culture and literature


25. Foreword to the Bundelakhand ki Sanskriti aur Sāhitya, p. IX.
are very closely related. However, it will be worthwhile to take a bird's eye view of these terms in order to understand their proper sense in relation to each other.

Society is the widest and the most inclusive term used for the whole tissue of human relations. Though society is not limited only to human beings, and various social organisations even of animals, birds and insects are seen on the earth, our concern in the present context is with the society which consists of human species.

Further, human beings have always regarded themselves as a unique species. They have been keenly aware of a great gulf between themselves and the rest of the animals. The principal factor responsible for the man's uniqueness is culture. The Sanskrit word for culture is साम्स्कृति derived from कृ 'to act' being prefixed by सम which generally means 'fair', and affixed by क्ति. Thus, if the word साम्स्कृति is taken in the sense of 'fair conducts or fair activities' it is broadly concerned with the actions of body, brain, breath, mind and heart of human beings. The same is expressed by various other thinkers also. According to Tylor - "Culture or civilisation is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, act, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society".

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One point may arise from the above definition whether culture and civilisation mean the same thing or whether there is some difference between the two. Scholars hold different views on this issue. As is clear from the above definition, the famous anthropologist Tylor does not indicate any difference between the two (he has used both these terms in the same sense). While Bronislaw Malinowski think somewhat otherwise - "the word culture is at times used synonymously with civilisation, but it is better to use the two terms distinctively reserving civilisation for a special aspect of more advanced cultures. Culture comprises inherited artifacts, goods, technical processes, ideas, habits and values". 

In fact, it is very difficult to make any specific difference between culture and civilization. Rather there is such a close connection between the two that the one can hardly be imagined without the other. If the original sense of both terms is analysed, it seems that culture is mainly based on rites or conducts (sāras) and civilization on thoughts (viśāras). In other words rites produce culture and thoughts create civilization. From this point of view the same relation may be understood between culture and civilisation as it is between rites and thoughts. Practically a licentious person can not be expected to possess good

thoughts and similarly a scatter-brain may hardly be expected to be virtuous. This proves that rites and thoughts are inseparably related. Therefore, culture and civilization are also interdependent.

Now, an important question may arise in this context as to what extent literature may be related to the society and culture. On the basis of definitions of कौया given by various rhetoricians it may be argued that literature has no social base because the rhetoricians consider it as supraworldly (अलोकिका) which also may be further interpreted as suprahuman or unearthly, and thus it is beyond society or world. But such type of assumption may not be justifiable. For, all types of Indian literature have the rules scattered in various contexts through which the social base of the literature can be explained.

Patañjali mentions that 'the use of words being determined by the sense current in popular speech (of the world or society), the science of grammar enjoins restrictions'.

28. cf. Cairola, Vīcāspati; Bhāratīya Sanskriti aur Kālā. p. 82.
29. Kavyaprakāśa of Māmata I.1; Dhyavāloka of Anandavardhana (Nagendra edn.) p. 312; Vakroktīvīta of Kuntaka. I.5.
30. Lokato'rthatrayukta ābdaprayoga āgātra na dharmanivamah
   Patañjali's Mahābhāṣya. p. 71. (K.C. Chatterji edn.)
Further, according to Bhartrhari also - 'in order to decide what is good and what is bad, all men including the lowest have very little use of scripture. One who has recourse to tradition which shines uninterruptedly like the 'I' consciousness can not be diverted therefrom by mere reasoning'. Moreover, Sri Harsa also admits that society has the final power to sanction or not to sanction a rule of grammar.

It is also known that while describing the causes and purposes of poetry the preceptors have duly acknowledged the 'world'. According to Vāmana - 'world, learning and miscellaneous are the causes of poetry'. Here he himself explains the term world (loka) in the sense of worldly customs (loka-vrttah lokah). Mamata also mentions that 'proficiency resulting from a study of the world is one of the causes of poetry'. Thus, naturally literature is highly based on the world or society.

It should be specially added here that drama, among all types of literature, is highly related with the social life. According to Milton Marx - 'of all the arts drama is

32. No. XXII. 84. (Handicui trans.)
34. Kāvyaprakāśa of Mamata. I. 3.
the closest to the people. No other art depends that much on the human element ........ Artists have always had a message for the world. The drama of every age reveals what entertained the people of that age; it also reflects what they were thinking about.' Baldeva Upadhyaya also holds the similar views.

Bharatamuni, the earliest preceptor of dramaturgy seems to be quite cautious towards indicating the social base of drama. A plenty of references may be collected in this regard from his Nāṭyaśāstra which tend to show to what extent the drama is society-oriented in Bharata's opinion. According to him drama is a mimicry of actions and conducts of people. Further, while introducing the two types of practices (dharma) he has recorded a great social significance of the realistic practice (loka-dharma). He defines the realistic practice as follows: 'If a play depends on natural behaviour (in its characters) and is simple and not artificial and has in its (plot) profession and activities of the people and has (simple acting and ) no playful flourish of limbs and depends on men and women of

35. Milton Marx; The Enjoyment of Drama, p. 1, 7, 16.
36. Upadhyaya, Baldeva; Sanskrit Sāhitva ka Itihāsa. p. 5.
37. Nā. I.111. (N.M. Ghosh edn.)
different types, it is called realistic practice (loka-dharma). Explaining the pravrtil (report) also he mentions that pravrtil is called so because it gives us proper information regarding customs, languages and manners in different countries of the world. Further, in the whole chapter regarding rules on the use of languages also Bharata has explicitly instructed as to what type of language should be spoken by various dramatic characters according to their caste, sect and social status. These conditions may be kept under three heads:

i) According to their socio-cultural status:

Bharata states that 'to itinerant recluses, sages, Buddhists, pure śrottriyas, kings, courtizans and female artists should be assigned Sanskritic recitation, and people belonging to the lower class of society should speak in Prakrit'.

ii) According to their characters:

In case of the self-controlled (dhīra) heroes of the vehement (udchata), the light hearted (lalita), the exalted (udātta) and the calm (prāṣānta) types, the

38. NS XIV. 52-53.
39. NS XIV. 35.
40. NS XVIII. 36.
41. NS XVIII. 35.
recitation should be in Sanskrit.

iii) **According to the circumstances:**

Heroes of all these classes can speak in Prakrit when the occasion demands. Even in case of a superior character intoxicated with the kingship (or wealth) or overwhelmed with poverty Sanskrit should not be used. To person in disguise, Jain monks, ascetics, religious mendicants and jugglers should be assigned the Prakrit recitation.

Moreover, Bharata has also instructed various local dialects suitable for the people of different localities. He says that 'to the regions of India that lie between the Ganges and the sea should be applied a dialect abounding in 'ś' (श). To the regions that lie between the Vindhyas and the sea should be assigned a language abounding in 'na'. Regions like Saurāstra and Avanti lying on the north of the Vetravati one should assign a language abounding in 'ū'. To people who live in the Himalayas, Sindhu and Sauvīra a language abounding in 'ū' should attribute. To those who live on the bank of the Carmanavati river and around the Arvuda mountain a language abounding in 'o' should be ascribed. At last Bharata mentions that these are the rules regarding

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42. NS XVIII. 31.

43. NS XVIII. 32-34.
the assignment of dialects in plays. Whatever has been
omitted here should be gathered by the wise from the popu-
lar usage.

Thus, literature in general and drama in particular
is highly and intimately based on society and it (= drama)
may be treated as a vast ocean containing innumerable gems
of society and culture.

(E) Line of approach

A student of Indian history and culture has at his
disposal the three types of sources-

(i) Literary;
(ii) archaeological - inscriptions, numismatics,
    monuments; and
(iii) foreign accounts.

The vast material on Vatsarāja's contemporary society
also lies scattered in a variety of contemporary literature -
whistles, poems, anthologies, and other miscellaneous works in-
cluding those on arts; accounts of the foreign travellers,
inscriptions as well as other archaeological sources of the
Candellas regime. While studying the socio-cultural conditions

44. NS, XVIII. 56-51.
46. L.N. Shukla has discussed a few details of cultural life as
reflected in the Rg. I have made adequate use of his book.
in the H S I have adequately made use of such sources also to elucidate and corroborate the facts and inferences. Above all, it is also necessary because of the fact that a literary work has its own limitations in providing the historical informations. Further, a poet is not expected to be a pure historian and thus it may be risky to take all of his literary depictions as sound socio-historical informations. Rather it will be proper to examine them with a judicious and constructive spirit discounting their poetic conventions and exaggerations, and recounting their socio-historical recapitulations. So I have paid sufficient amount of caution and critical observation while drawing the cultural conditions from the literary works under study. Each idea has been relied upon only after critically examining all possible corroborative as well as contradictory evidences gleaned from the other contemporary historical sources.

Besides, some of the semi-contemporary sources also belonging to a period slightly earlier or later than that of our poet have been utilized according to the requirement. Moreover, it should also be made clear that it is not possible for an author to get occasions for the depiction of all aspects of social life. So wherever it is felt that if some essential social feature of that age could not avail of the occasion for its disclosure by the poet's pen, it is briefly indicated there along with the mention of requisite evidence.
So that an all round picture of the social life of that period may be delineated through this study. We have tried to avoid repetitions. However, they had to be allowed sometimes for the sake of continuity of the narrative whenever time demanded.

A brief plan of the present study is as follows:

After discussing, in introductory chapter, some general objectives of the research problem, I have presented Vatsarāja's plan of existence and introduced all the dramas with their characteristics in the second chapter. The third chapter deals with the structure of the society including the discussion on Vānas, Kārmanas, domestic life and women's position etc. In the fourth chapter the economic life and worldly enjoyments are discussed at length. Fifth chapter contains material on the condition of religion and philosophy reflected in the plays of Vatsarāja. The political structure is described in the sixth chapter along with the discussion on the seven constituent parts of the state - king, minister, territory, fortified city, treasury, army and friends or allies. Seventh chapter deals with fine arts viz. poetry, music, painting, sculpture and architecture. The position of education, learning and literature is narrated in the eighth chapter. The ninth and the last chapter consists of the resume and conclusions of the thesis.