



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Religious Epithet And The Royal Praise In The Inscription Of The Bhaumakaras

Sradhanjali Sahoo,
Research Scholar,
Department Of History
Pondicherry University

Abstract:

The epigraphic legacy of the Bhaumakara Dynasty is rich in socio-cultural practices. These inscription throws light on various socio-cultural , political, economic , and religious feature of the dynasty's history .Like the other dynasties of Early medieval period, the Bhauma inscription also has the the feature of using religious epithet by the rulers.This paper will focus on some of the eulogy and religious epithet found in Bhaumakara's inscription and how it affected the religious landscape in Orissan history. By looking into the accounts of royals who adopted the titles which associated with various religious sects like Buddhism , Saivism etc , this paper will examine how it reflected in the dynasty's religious tolerance and patronage .This study will contribute to outline a clear picture of how this titles are not only mere ornamental but also played a strategic role in legitimacy .

Key words - Prasasti , Bhaumakra dynasty , Religious Patronage ,Early Medieval Orissa.

I. INTRODUCTION

The epigraphical studies form a very crucial source for understanding and reconstructing the history of India. As a primary records , inscription provide us reliable data on a extensive range of historical aspects .By studying the epigraphical evidences we get a variety of information including socio-cultural condition , Political authority , Class and caste structure , Agrarian relationship , religious patronage and many more .We get the more clear idea and information about the historical events when it supported by the epigraphical evidences. With help of various methodologies the study of inscription developed the historiographical narratives and helps us to understand the Indian history in a more empirical approach.In the context of Orissan inscription, the same holds true. This inscription provides important details on all of Orissa's major and minor kingdoms. The Bhaumakaras dynasty's inscription is the sole topic of this essay. Its primary goal is to investigate all of the eulogies and religious epithets mentioned in these inscriptions and to analyse how they relate to the Bhauma dynasty in Odisha.

The Bhaumakars were basically ruling the coastal belt of Odisha in the first part of 8th century Ad.ⁱThey established their capital at Guhadevapataka or Guhesvarapataka which is situated at the modern day Jajpur District. However the origin of Bhaumakaras is still debatable among the scholars of Odisha. Some scholars trace the origin of Bhaumakaras to the Bhauma family of Kamarupa while others arguing that this dynasty was developed from the Bhuiyan tribe of Odisha.Scholars like Binayak Mishra propose that the dynasty is belong to the aboriginal tribe of Odisha.ⁱⁱ

To understand the history of this dynasty we have both literary and inscriptional data available to us .The rulers of Bhaumakaras have left us with a good number of Inscription which consist of both stone inscription and the copperplate inscriptions. Among all of those copperplate records which was composed

by their court poet are very reliable for our studies. Some of the inscription has also bears the eulogistic portion and mentioned about variety of religious epithet of queens and the kings.

Understanding Eulogy or Prasasti

In the early mediaeval era, the historical consciousness regarding kingship found its expression in the Prasasti section of inscriptions, which are mostly the preface to inscriptions. The prasasti portion of Inscription generally carry variety kinds of images like hero-ideal, divine connection, genealogy, myth, honorary badge etc. It is very important to study this kind of information and they became central to various interpretation. The early medieval dynasty's origin formed the part of the Prasasti. Sheldon Pollack mentioned in his work that the Prasastis are the poem which is mostly praise if ruling elites constitute some of our earliest extant Sanskrit and prakrit poetry and it became popular from the Gupta period onwards which became a major part of Sanskrit culture industries. Prasasti has its different genre and it most of the time mention about variety of topics. One of the most common Prasastis includes the political prasasti . sometimes the poem which normally royals in nature, praise the merchants guilds and also it writtens in the praise of other poets which is known as Kaviprasamsa or Kavistuti . Apart from all this the Prasasti also includes the autobiographical accounts . As per Pollack according to the observation of Danial Ingalls , praise was part of ritual of Indian kingship and the praise of the earthy kings was something of a magical practice.ⁱⁱⁱ

Religious epithet –A definition

Epithet is the part of Prasasti and particularly the religious epithet use by specific kings or queens gives us information not only the religious affair of the dynasty but also mosat of the time it talks about the religious toleration by the royals . These honorific titles, which are frequently bestowed upon the kings/queens, serve as tools of royal legitimacy in addition to reflecting the monarch's personal devotion. In order to strengthen their divine right to rule and establish their authority within different religious traditions of different period, the rulers mostly connect themselves with certain deities. By examining the recurrence and variance of such epithets across inscriptions scholars studies the pattern of religious patronage, shift in sectarian influence etc.

Kesava Velluthatan in his work The political structure of early medieval south India discuss about the political legitimation and self image of royalty in south india and regarding relation of comparing kings and god he mentioned *“that by equitating the kings with one of the gods by certain figures of speech by adopting certain titles which are synonyms of the Gods by linking the king in kinship with the God or heroes of the puranic accounts , by stating in so many words that the king is God himself , by employing a pun on certain words so that descriptions of the kings can deliberately sound like descriptions of Gods ,by Identifying the role of Gods in king and so on and so forth.”*^{iv}

One often encounters phrases like Parama-Māheśvara, Parama-Bhāgavata, Parama-Vaiṣṇava, Parama-Saugata, Parama-Brahmaṇya, Parama-Daivata, and others among the kings' religious titles. These titles can be broadly classified into two groups: non-Brahmanical which mostly are the Buddhist epithet and Brahmanical title.^v There are variety of brahmanical epithet for instance Parama mahesvara ,Vaisnava epithet like Parama Vaisnavi ,parama brahmaneya which indicates highly devoted to Brahmanas ,Pararam suryadenotes to highly devoted to surya etc. Apart from this Buddhist epithet like Parama Upasaka , Parama Saugata ,Parama Tathagata etc denotes to the Buddhist traditions .^{vi} The name of the deity or religious figure to whom the person who issued the inscriptions felt a connection is prefixed with the word parama. occasionally the word s like Atyanta Bhagavatabhakta , Atyanta-Mahesvara used insted of the word Parama.^{vii}

The Bhaumakara's religious Faith

Under the Bhaumakara dynasty the religious landscape is characterised by various degree of pluralism and royal donations to different religious tradition. This period saw the remarkable toleration and diversity. With the support of the the Royal patronage religious sects like Buddhism , Vaisnavism , Saktism , Tantrism ,Saivasim developed during this period. Variety of sources including epigraphical sources and archaeological remains gives us a good amount of data regading the religious faith of the kings and the queens .A number of religious institution including the Buddhist monasteries and stupas flourished during this period .The copperplate grants and temple inscriptions of the Bhaumakaras are the evidences which speak about the religious inclusivity of the royas through their grants.

During the Bhaumakaras, the Mahayanic form of Buddhism was dominant in the region and we are getting the evidences from the Yuan Chwang, who mentioned about the Buddhist establishment in Odisha^{viii}. The Mahayanic form of Buddhism flourished in Odisha during the early Bhaumakara regime, as evidenced by the numerous Dhyani Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and other deities of the Buddhist Mahayanic pantheon that have been found in locations such as Khadipada, Ratnagiri, Udayagiri, and Lalitagiri and are dated to the eighth-ninth century AD century.^{ix} Tantric Buddhism flourished in a great extent in this period. The Bhauma king supported Vajrayana Buddhism, and as a result the sakti cult evolved in the region. During the Bhauma era, the Mahayana Buddhist Monasteries on Assia Hill became a renowned centre for tantric Buddhist study and yoga.^x We also learn from the epigraphical evidence that Saktism underwent significant evolution during the Bhauma period. Some queen of this period like Tribhubana Mahadevi and Dharmamadevi are compared with goddess like Katayani and Laxmi respectively.^{xi}

Apart from this Saivism and Vaisnavism also flourished during the Bhaumakara period. Couple of Saiva shrines were built by the rulers to show their faith on the sect. The Bhauma dynasty's records mention several Saiva sanctuaries, including the temples of Madhaveswara, Pulindeswara, and Nanneswara, which are dedicated to the gods Madhaveswara, Baidyanathbhataraka, and Umamaheswara, respectively.^{xii} However, there is no information that a Vishnu temple was built during the Bhauma period, which suggests that Vaishnavism was not very common at the time.

Epithet and Divinity in Bhauma Inscription

We have already defined how the religious epithet helps us to know the religious landscape during different dynasties this same goes with the Odishan context. The sources which are available to us regarding the Bhauma period mentioned variety of epithets used by the royals. The Bhaumakaras as we discussed above were the devout Buddhist and they used many Buddhist epithet like *Paramaupasaka*, *Paramsaugat*, *Pramatathagata* etc. Titles such as *Paramopasaka* Kshemarikaradeva, *Pramatathagatha* Sivakaradeva I, and *Paramasaugata* Subhakaradeva I were used by the first three monarchs of the Bhaumakara dynasty according to the Neulpur copper plate of Subhakaradeva I.^{xiii} Subhakaradeva II described himself as *Parama Saugat* and we get the information from the Terundia Copperplate inscription while Sivakaradeva known as the *Parama Opasaka*^{xiv}. However Subhakaradeva despite being a devotee of Buddha he also known from his inscription for his grant of two village to two hundreds Brahmanas who were bearing the Saivaites names.^{xv} Subhakaradeva's son Sivakara II is known as *Srisugatasrayah* which denotes as 'having the venerable Buddha as his refuge'^{xvi}.

The Brahmanical faith was associated with the latter Bhaumakaras monarchs. Some royals identify as devoted followers of both Siva and Vishnu. The Dhenkanal Charter of Tribhubanamahadevi(I) described as *Parama Bhattarika*, *Maharajadhiraja*, *Paramesvari*, *Goswamini*,. In her prasasti, she is compared to the goddesses Sri and Katayani. Also she is mentioned as *Paramavaishnavi* which suggest as the worshipper of Vishnu in her Dhenkanal copper plate grants. As per the Baud copper plate inscription queen prithvimahadevi mentioned as *Paramavaishnavi*. The queen Tribhuvana Mahadevi is described in the Talcherplate of Subhakaradeva as having a head sanctified by the dust of Hari's lotus feet and as having achieved the feet of Hari, whom she had worshipped with unparalleled devotion during her existence, upon her death.^{xvii}

According to the Talcher plate, the Bhauma king Kusumahara was an incarnation (avatara) of Bharata, Bhagadatta, and Bhagiratha and possessed a bravery that was unusual among rulers from other countries. *Parama Mahesvari* is the description of Dandi Mahadevi. She is defined as the pillar of virtue suffering from Kali age sin. The Talcher plates mentioned about Dharma mahadevi who is known as *paramamahesvari* and she is compared with Goddess Laxmi.^{xviii} One of the copper plate grants of Vakulamahadevi of Bhauma family which mentioned about the grant of a village to a brahman describe the queen as *Paramamahesvari* which is basically the feminine form of *Paramamahesvara*^{xix}. The queen Hiramahadevi of Bhauma Family assumed the title *Paramesvari* as per Talcher copper plate inscription^{xx}. We also found epithet like *Mahamandalesvara* and *paramaguru* which denotes as 'the teacher of great division and the supreme perceptor' and we get this epithet in the Khadipada inscription of Subhakaradeva's period.^{xxi}

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has sought to demonstrate that like the other early medieval dynasties of India, the Bhaumakaras also used the Prasasti and their religious epithet to hold on the political authority along with spiritual legitimacy. The religious epithet of Bhauma ruler often intertwined with their divine association. By taking up various epithet and aligning it with different manifestation of God and goddess, they maintained diverse religious sentiments. As some inscriptions reflect the religious toleration of the Bhauma ruler for instance when the early Bhauma kings were following the Buddhist tradition and used the Buddhist epithet they were still patronising Brahmans who followed the Saiva traditions. It is very evident from all this epigraphical evidences of Bhauma ruler that they very evidently used their religious faith and identity to navigate in the socio-cultural landscape of Odisha. Therefore it is very important to interpret all those inscriptions and study the Prasastis and look into it beyond just mere glorifications of the royals.

ⁱ Pradhan, A. C. A Study of History Of Orissa, Panchashila, Bhubaneswar, 2002, P-51.

ⁱⁱ Subudhi, Umakanta (1978), The Bhaumakaras of Odisha, Punthi Pustak, Calcutta, p-29.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pollack, Sheldon. Prasasti and its Congeners; A small note on a Big Topic, in N. K. Sundareswaran (ed) *Rajamahima*, No. 51, Calicut University. PP-24-33.

^{iv} Veluthat, Kesavan. (2012). The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India, Oriental Blackswan Private limited, New Delhi, PP-71-72.

^v Acharya, Kaushik. (2020) Impact of Vedic Culture on Society, Jadavpur University, Department of Sanskrit, P- 288.

^{vi} *Ibid.*

^{vii} *Ibid.*

^{viii} Subudhi, Umakanta. *Op.cit.*

^{ix} *Ibid*, P-119.

^x Brighenti, Francesco. (2001), Śakti Cult in Orissa, D.K. Printworld, P-94.

^{xi} Pal, Bharati (2013), Shaktism During Bhaumakaras Period: An Epigraphical Study, Orissa Review, PP-84-85.

^{xii} Umakanta Subudhi. *Op.cit.*, P-122.

^{xiii} Acharya, Kaushik. *Op.cit.*

^{xiv} Pal, Bharati. Religious epithet in Orissan Inscription, OHRJ, Vol. XLVII, No. 2, P-104.

^{xv} Satyendra Patnaik (1979), Saivism as reflected in Bhaumakaras epigraphs, Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, Vol. 40 (1979), PP. 1109-1116.

^{xvi} Einno, Shingo. (2009), Genesis and Development of Tantrism, Institute of Oriental culture, University of Tokyo, P-81.

^{xvii} *Ibid.*

^{xviii} *Ibid.*

^{xix} Acharya, Kaushik. *Op.cit.* P-344.

^{xx} Rangachari, D. (2020). From Obscurity to Light: Women in Early Medieval Orissa (Seventh to Twelfth Centuries AD). United Kingdom: Manohar, P-116.

^{xxi} Subudhi, Umakanta. *Op.cit.*, P-120.