

The Historical Development of Settlement by Aryan People in Terai of Nepal

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Abstract

This research article is related to the development of settlement by Aryan people in the Terai region of Nepal. Aryan people had entered the Terai region of Nepal during the Vedic period. In ancient times, various states were developed in the region of Nepal. The Mithila state of the Eastern Terai, the Ramgram state western part of the Gandaki River and the Kapilvastu state west of the present Butwal region were developed in before the Christian era. Most of the people in those states also migrated from India. Even in the middle Age, a state called Tirahoot or Doya was developed in the eastern Terai region of Nepal. Although this kingdom came to an end in the 14th century AD. After the conquest of the eastern Terai region by the Sen Dynasty the king of Palpa, the three kingdoms of Makwanpur, Chaudandi and Vijaypur remained in that region till the time of unification by Prithvi Narayan Shah, the king of Gorkha. After the unification of Nepal, the ancient and medieval independent Terai regions were automatically included in the Kingdom of Nepal. The article clarifies that there has been continuous settlement in the Terai region of Nepal from ancient period to the present.

Keywords: Kosh, abundant, wheat-Broun, prehistoric, Kichakadesha, Kochila.

Introduction

Terai is the flat land in the southern part of Nepal, extending from Mechi in the east to the Mahakali River in the west. The word Terai comes from the Persian language which means 'land with wet soft soil' (Gage, 2009: 2). At present there are twenty districts of Nepal in this region. In terms of provinces, all the seven provinces of Nepal have touched this Terai region. Madhesh Pradesh is in the entire Terai region. Due to the flat land in the Terai, settlement here is considered to be very easy.

Very famous as the granary and green zone of Nepal, the Terai region is bounded on three sides east, west and south by India. The east-west length of the Terai region of Nepal is 885 km and the north-south width is 40 to 56 km (Regmi, 1978: 1). This area occupies 17 percent of the total land of Nepal. At present, the plain land north of the Chure Mountains and south of the Mahabharata mountain range is called inner Terai. Surkhet, Dang, Deukhuri, Nawalparasi, Chitwan, Kamala basin of Sindhuli, Udaipur, Kankai area are in the Inner Terai. The Terai region occupies 57 percent of Nepal's total arable land (Hagen, 1970: 74). At present most of the industries in Nepal are located in this area. Due to the abundant availability of essential raw materials, this sector has proved to be a milestone in the economic development of Nepal.

In terms of species, the Terai region of Nepal is inhabited by pre-Aryan indigenous peoples which look like Aryans, Mongols and Dravidians. Among such species, the Aryan people have been living in the Terai region of Nepal since ancient period. The Aryans, who entered India from the Caucasus region in ancient period, were tall, brown-haired, pointed-nosed, Sanskrit-speaking people, and were upper class Hindus (Srivastava, 1992: 35). The word Arya means connected with religion. In ancient India, words like Aryaputra, Aryakanya, etc. were used after the expansion of Aryan settlements (Singh, 2010: 1). According to Mac Mueller, the word Arya is derived from the word 'R', which means to cultivate or plow (Singh et.al. 2010: 3). In some other places, the word Arya is also used in the sense of supreme, high, respectable, master, worthy, etc. The castes that developed Hinduism and civilization in India were the Aryans. The Aryans who entered India from the western region in prehistoric period were developed Vedic civilization and succeeded in maintaining their existence (Narita, 2006: 23). Based on various evidences, the Aryan people who developed Hindu civilization in ancient India seem to have spread to the Terai region of Nepal in the course of time.

The history of the Terai region of Nepal is very old and ancient in terms of human settlement. Countries like Kichkadesh, Virat, Kochila, Kapilvastu, comprising the Terai region of present day Nepal and the territories of Northern India, have existed for a long time before Isha (Thakur, 1956: 2). In addition to this, the ancient Vajji, Ugra, Bhog, Kauran, Jyatri, Licchavi and other rulers of different dynasties ruled over such kingdoms. Many of these rulers and states had relations with the Terai region of Nepal. Various excavations in the Terai region of Nepal have also confirmed the existence of human settlement in that region in ancient times (Pandey and Regmi, 1997:60). In addition to various religious texts, even on the basis of archeological sources, human settlement seems to have developed in the Terai region of Nepal since ancient times. The purpose of this article is to introduce the Terai region of Nepal and to confirm the development of Aryan settlements in this region since ancient times.

Methodology

As this article deals with historical issues, the method of research for history is based on historical research design. Since this article is based on qualitative methods, the resources used in it are also related to the same way. The article is based on secondary sources. Such supporting resources have been used from various libraries and private collections. While discussing the expansion of Aryan settlements in the Terai region of Nepal since ancient period, the general information of the Aryan people has been given along with the introduction of the Terai region is its objective. Based on compiled sources, the article is based on descriptive and analytical methods.

Settlement in Ancient Period

In the ancient period, the Terai region of Nepal, which was settled by the formation of states like Videha, Ramgram and Kapilvastu was depopulated towards the early Vedic period. At that time, the whole area was covered with forest. It is believed that the Aryan

race of people entered the Terai region in the post-Vedic period. At that time, from the banks of the river Saraswati in the Brahmavarta of north-western India, the ambitious Videha Mathav (Gana Pramukh) was wearing a fiery mouth and was advancing towards the northeast with the priest Gautam Rahugan to expand the empire. During the time, most of the land in the Eastern Terai region of Nepal was in swampy condition. Videha Mathav, who set out for the expansion of the state, crossed the then Sadanira (Gandaki) river from the west and set fire to the area east of the present Gandaki river through 'Agni Vaishwanar' and made the place habitable (Thakur, 1997: 1). The fire in the swampy land made the land hard and suitable for human settlement.

Human is a dynamic creature. For this reason, since ancient period, travel, pilgrimage, hunting, business-trade, search for precious gems, favorable climate, etc. have reached various places in the world in search of suitable settlements (Nepal, 2012: 4). Immediately after that, a state was established in Janakpurdam area, the capital of present Madhesh province state of Nepal. In the same state, Hindu people of Aryan races were entering from the south and expanding their settlements. As the settlement expanded, a state was formed. Gradually, after the same state, known as Videha or Mithila. Shortly after that, the state of Mithila became the center of Hindu civilization. The then east-west length of the Mithila state was 96 kosh and the north-south width was 64 kosh (Sharan, Nd: 8). Ancient kingdom of Mithila was ruled by 56 kings from Nimi to Kritakshana or Karal Janak. At that time, the states in the Terai region of northern India and Nepal had joined various unions for their security. By the sixth century BCE, Mithila had become a part of the Licchavi Ganasangha, one of the small kingdoms established in northern India (Khanal, 1999: 8). Shortly after that, the state of Mithila also joined the Vrijji Sangh.

Nepal has been considered a place of human settlement even in the Stone Age. Located in the foothills of the Himalayas, this place is believed to have undergone human development millions of years ago. Nepal's climate is considered to be a very good for the development of life. Due to this, Nepal has been considered as a place of human origin and development since time immemorial. J. Howard Hutchins found the teeth of a human ancestor in 1980 on the banks of the Tinau River near Siddhababa and Butwal in the Dobhan VDC of western Nepal of Palpa district (Chaudhary, 2007: 58). Based on the human remains found near Butwal, Nepal has been a place of human settlement since time immemorial. Inspired by that human quality which is considered to be the oldest in Asia named Ramapithecus. At present, it is also known as Butwal Manab. That Pithecoïd was somewhat different from ancient humans, but some of its qualities were similar to those of humans (Dahal, 2006: 16). That human remains are thought to be 11 million years old. The stone and Neolithic tools used by the later human ancestors have been found in places like Dang, Deukhuri, Nawalparasi, Chitwan, Jhapa, Morang, etc. in the Terai region of Nepal (Sharma, 1989: 88). Based on such descriptions, it is understood that there is a continuous settlement in the Terai region of Nepal from the time of Ramapithecus to the present day.

Vedic Aryans had developed settlements in the ancient state of Mithila in the eastern Terai region of present Nepal. Similarly, human settlement had developed in the Terai

region west of Gandaki (Sadanira) river since then. In that region also three kingdoms were established in ancient period. Among them, Kapilvastu state was established with the capital at Tilaurakot, 3 km north of the Toulhawa, the present Kapilvastu district headquarter. The kingdom was named after the ancient sage Kapil. Until the post-Vedic period, the present Kapilvastu district was completely covered with forest and depopulated. At that time, King Okak of a famous Kosala kingdom in northern India had a son named Jayatu from the youngest queen who got married after the death of his eldest queen. The queen then pressured King Okak to expel the four brothers and five sisters born to the eldest queen and to make her son king. After that, when the princes and princesses reached the present Badganga or the bank of the Banganga river in the north-west, they saw that there was hermitage of a sage named Kapil and rested there (Poudel and Malla, 1997: 2). Based on the suggestion of sage Kapil, who had built a hut in the middle of a dense forest, the princes and princesses had established a new settlement there. Over time, human settlements continued to grow. While the sage Kapil was alive, the eldest of them, Prince Alkamukh became the king of the Kapilvastu kingdom (Rijal, 1979:1-2). Thus, settlement development in the Western Terai region of Nepal seems to have progressed gradually since the post-Vedic period.

The western Terai region of present-day Nepal, where human settlements were developed in ancient period on the advice of sage Kapil, had a very famous king named Suddhodhan around the fifth century AD. Siddhartha Gautama was the son of Suddhodhana. Shortly after Siddhartha Gautama's conversion to Buddhism, the kingdom came under his rule after an invasion and massacre by the king of the Kosala kingdom (Fuhrer, 1972: 42). Some of the people who escaped to the western Terai region after saving their lives in that war later developed new settlements in the Dang region. By the time the Mauryan emperor Ashok built a pillar in the Lumbini area around 245 BC, human settlement in the area had dwindled. At that time, Kapilavastu was under the rule of the Mauryan emperor (Lendon, 2001, 13). Based on such facts, human settlement seems to have developed in the Western Terai of Nepal even before the time of Buddha or about 3000 years before.

Princess Priya, the eldest of the princes and princesses of the Koshal kingdom who established the state in the Kapilvastu region, was expelled from the state and kept in seclusion in the area around Devadaha in the present West Nawalparasi district after contracting a contagious disease called white corpus callosum. At that time people were kept in solitary confinement in case of any dreaded disease. At the same time, King Ram, who was ruling in the Benaras region, was also kept in solitary confinement in the same forest area due to the same disease. The king and the princess of Kapilvastu, who were kept in solitude, met while walking in the jungle. After the two patients met, they were sitting under a tree called Colon and gradually their disease was cured. After the disease was cured, the two married each other and inspired the people of the south to settle in the area. Shortly thereafter, a small city-state was established there (Rijal, 1979: 1-2). After the disease was cured by the shade of a plant called Colon, they named the place 'Koliya Nagar'. As King Rama established a settlement state in the area, the state was later called Ramgram, and the

tribes living there were called Koliyas (Pradhan, 1978: 8). In this way, human settlement seems to have developed well in the Terai region up to the bank of Gandaki River just east of Kapilvastu.

Settlement in Medieval and Modern Period

By the second half of antiquity, the three states of Mithila, Ramgram and Kapilvastu, which had developed in the Terai region before Crist era had collapsed. At the beginning of the middle Ages, a separate state called Doya or Tirahoot was established in eastern Nepal and the Western Terai region came under the rule of Khas State of Jumla. The settlement in the Terai region of Nepal, which was well developed around 1000 BC, was not safe due to epidemics and invasions of various states. Due to such various disasters, people used to migrate to hilly areas in search of safe settlements. Most of the people who migrated to the Kathmandu Valley in ancient times are from the Terai region. Although the ancient Terai states collapsed but human settlements remained. By the time King Prithvi Narayan Shah of Gorkha launched his unification campaign in the middle ages, there were three Sen kingdoms in the eastern Terai of Nepal. From Morang to Jhapa in eastern area of Koshi River is called Vijaypur State. The area of western Koshi like Siraha, Saptari Amberpur, ect. is called Chaudandi State and to the west, Makwanpur were ruled by Sena Dynasty ruled (Pradhan et.al.1978, 8). The western part of Gandaki River like Nawalparasi, Kapilvastu, Dang, Banke, Bardia, Kailali, Kanchanpur were under Khas state in medieval period. The kingdom was extended to the Trisuli River in the east, the Terai region in the south, the Garhwal region in the west, and the Mansarovar region in the north. The main reason for the expansion of the Khas kingdom in this Terai region was the presence of human settlements in that region (Vaidya, Manandhar and Joshi, 1993: 11). After the Khas kingdom weakened and disintegrated in the post-middle period, the Butwal region came under the control of Palpa, the Dang region under the Dang state, Banke, Bardia region under Dailekh state and the western region under Doti state (Adhikari, 2003: 241). Areas under the ancient state of Kapilvastu, west of the ancient Sadanira (Gandaki) and present Gandaki rivers, or up to the eastern boundary of the present Dang district, remained parts under the state of Ribdikot and later it became under the state of Palpa (Khanal, 2004: 12-13). Thus the competition for control of the Western Terai region of Nepal seems to be due to the fertile land in that region and the people there providing a large amount of tax to the hill state.

Looking at the pattern of migration in Nepal, it is seem that people used to move from the Terai region to the hilly areas and Kathmandu valleys even in the ancient, middle and pre-modern period. However, during the Rana period, people were encouraged to settle in the Terai to some extent and especially after the fall of the Rana regime or after the implementation of malaria eradication program in the Terai in 2007 VS, the number of people migrating from the hilly areas to the Terai increased rapidly. The main reasons for this were employment in the Terai as ample agricultural labor, ease of living and eating etc. (Gurung, 1995: 143–150). The flat land, ease of livelihood, open border for migration from India, lack of population density, and cultural proximity between Nepal's Terai region and northern India seem to have played a significant role in modern settlement expansion in the

Terai region of Nepal (Regmi, 1999: 43–44). Based on such diverse sources or studies, it is seen that there is continuous settlement in the Terai region of Nepal from 1000 BC to the present era. But such settlements were once very dense and at times thinned due to adverse conditions.

Conclusion

The fact that human settlements have been developing in the Terai region of Nepal since the development of Aryan civilization in India is confirmed on the basis of archeological sources in addition to various religious texts. Various mythological accounts of ancient Mithila kingdom, King Janak and Janaki Sita are also shown. Many later historical accounts show that developed of human settlements in the Terai region of Nepal three to five thousand years ago. Most of the people living in the hilly areas of present Nepal also migrated from the Terai region in ancient and medieval period. In particular, there are facts that people living in the Kathmandu Valley migrated from the Terai to the valley in large numbers after the fall of Doya or Tirahoot state or before and after the middle Ages. Based on such diverse evidence, human settlements seem to have existed in the Terai region of Nepal for centuries. Even after the development of Aryan civilization in India, the people of those Aryan race of people have spread to the Terai region of Nepal and in this region they had developed a fundamental civilization. That civilization seems to have had a great impact on the hilly region of Nepal as well. In this sense, the Terai region of Nepal is the development center of Aryan civilization and the fact that they have contributed to the development and continuity of human settlement is clear.

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