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Picture of an ideal king: a critical view of kalidas

A short view to the greatness and idealness of the kings of raghu dynasty illustrated by kalidas in raghuvansham

Abstract

Scholarship and kingship can never be equated. A king is respected in his own kingdom whereas a scholar is respected everywhere. The scholar king can make the nation scholar in every term. The nation needs wise king. One who craves for the qualities can be an ideal leader or king while the fool has only faults. If one needs to be an ideal leader or king of one's own life, need to refer Indian classical literature. Many of the Indian classical scholars have written wonderful thought provoking literature with their powerful pens. One of such classical literary figure is Kalidas. In spite of having many dispute of his age and time, he has been an eminent Sanskrit writer. This particular paper presents the picture of an ideal king by narrating the virtues and qualities of the kings of Raghu dynasty with special reference to Raghuvansham by Kalidas. The matter will help to solve the problems of one's own life. As the given description will change the outlook towards life of the person who wants to rule the life in the best way.

Key Words: *Raghu Dynasty, kingship, ideal life style, patron, chaste, vigor, spirituality, justice, sacrifice, impersonal wealth, Nobel heir*

Introduction:

क इह रघुकारे न रमते?

Who in this world will not take delight from him who wrote the Raghuvansha? In ancient time when an author of extraordinary genius rose to eminence, and stood so brilliant before the eyes of all. There was a controversy for a long time about its authorship. This poem is so stiff, bombastic and composed in Anushtup meters. He has described the life and achievements of the kings of Raghu Dynasty only through four verses of the Canto-I. In the very first Canto of Raghuvamsa with exquisite humility he says in his introduction to the Raghuvamsa, "Where, on one hand, is the dynasty that traced its descent from the sun and where, on the other hand, is my intellect of limited range! Aspiring to encompass with such a mind the achievements of so illustrious a family, I feel as if I am attempting to cross the vast ocean with a remarkable shaft."¹ Though Kautilya in his Arthshashtra has given an elaborate description of the king's daily routine. The royal Heroes of Kalidasa seem to follow this very timetable, as is evident from the following account of king Atithi. The meaning of God and Truth is honesty. The kings of Raghu dynasty were honest. Whatever is prescribed to be done by the riders of the earth in the different divisions of day and night, he observed without hesitancy and with firm determination.

Kalidasa has recited the spirit of life and the principles of life of the kings of Raghu dynasty who are famous all over the world for their glorious and pious character. The glory of such Raghu dynasty will be up to यावचन्द्र दिवाकरो। Kalidasa has prescribed timeless and placeless guideline for human society. Lord Rama whom India believes to be incarnation as Maryada Purshottama has born in the king Dashrath's family. In Raghuvamsa we see that the royal family members had a different aim in the life and have sacrificed everything for the same aim. Lord Rama is the heir not only of the empire of Ayodhya, but the very precious tradition of life of five generations.

If we try to study the history of Indian culture rationally, the kings of ikshvaku dynasty have demonstrated most civilized life and the way how to protect the principles of life against any odds. Kalidasa has described their greatness only with four verses. To make any principle stable, it needs tremendous effort by a number of generations. The kings of Raghu dynasty have shown such commitment and austerity. They were true kshatriya as mentioned in the Gita, शौचं तेजो धृतिर्दक्ष्यं युद्धेचाप्यपलायनम्² (Ch- 18/43) They are the ideal models for the leaders of contemporary era. and so is their subject as we say यथा राजा तथा प्रजा। As Rev. Vyasa writes in the Mahabharata, कालो वा कारणं राग्नो राजा वा काल कारणं। इति ते संशयो मा भूत राजा कालस्य कारणम्।।³ (38)

The King as Hero and Patron:

As Barbera Stoler Miller observes,

“The high qualities of kingship that Kalidasa's heroes possess qualify them to be called royal sages. The epithet "royal sage" (Rajarsi) signifies that the kings' spiritual power is equal to his material strength and moral superiority. He is a sage (rishi) by virtue of his discipline (Yoga), austerity (Tapas), and knowledge of sacred law (Dharma). It is his religious duty to keep order in the cosmos by guarding his kingdom; in this he is like a sage guarding the realm of holly sacrifice. His responsibility to guide and protect those beneath him involves him in acts of penance that place him in the highest position of the temporal and spiritual hierarchy.”⁴

The ideal royal sage is believed to have capacity to control his senses. He is victorious in conflict between desire (kama) and duty (dharma). According to Kalidasa there are a few particular characteristics of an ideal King which he has revealed in Raghuvamsa especially in four verses of the first canto. In the very first verse of those four, Kalidasa narrates,

सोहमाजन्मशुद्धानामफलोदयकर्मणाम्।

आसमुद्र क्षितीशानामनाकरथवत्सर्मात्।।⁵ (01)

“I (Kalidasa), describes the dynasty of the Kings of Raghu dynasty, who were pure by birth, till the result comes they worked, winner of the ocean, the Kings of the earth and whose chariot had the direct way for going towards heaven.”

Chaste by birth: (सोहमाजन्मशुद्धानाम्)

Here सोहमाजन्मशुद्धानाम् means the kings of Raghu dynasty were pure and virtuous by birth. Our great-learned religious people explain that the causes of birth include - Parents, Deeds and God. Their Parents were chaste by their deeds. Their actions were pious and glorious. Maharshi Valmiki points out the greatness of Dashratha and his Queens as,

पितायस्य सूचिर्भूतो मातायस्य पतिव्रता।

उभाभ्यामेव संभूतो तस्यनो चलते मनः।।⁶ (89)

Howsoever great parents are that much great the children can be. The kings of Raghu dynasty followed the eternal law of universe that nothing can be gained without Karma. Every individual needs to perform duties and deeds entitled to him or her until the fruit is obtained. The five generations of the Raghu

dynasty were devoted to actions and effort and due to incessant effort they had created welfare state. So whose deeds are chaste, they are chaste by birth. So, the Kings of Raghu dynasty were pure by their deeds. So according to Kalidasa they are chaste by birth.

Vigorous and dynamic: (आफलोदयकर्मणाम्।)

Till the fruit comes one has to work. The kings of Raghu dynasty were working vigorously till the result comes. The **seven** generations of Raghu dynasty have worked with the whole heartedly and created a "Ram Rajya ". If one does the work for getting the material wealth then, it is called labour and if one works for getting divine wealth then it is called effort. They were not ready or willing to accept anything which is not the fruit of their efforts. This is the principle they had established. They rejected the very idea of dependence but at the time they were much confident about their capacity to produce. As Vivekananda believes, उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान् निबोधत।⁷ (152). Being confident themselves they use to utilize the wealth of heritage for the social and cultural evolution. How contradictory it is that today's leaders utilize the state's wealth for their personal motif and the kings of Raghu dynasty, not for their personal but for the sake of society. The progress does not stop only by doing this much things, but to maintain it for lifelong one has to become strong in determination. As Yogadarshankara says, स तु दीर्घकालं नैरंतयं सत्कारासेवितो दृढभूमि।⁸ (447) Kalidasa narrates that the work for culture and society, these kings have maintained from the very first generation of the Raghu dynasty.

Victor of the ocean: (आसमुद्र क्षितीशानाम्)

There are so many types of victory and authority. Such as over land, people, himself, even over god. But today nobody has ruled over the ocean. Kalidasa reveals in Raghuvansha that the ideal kings must rule over all the entities, even over the ocean and the kings of Raghu dynasty ruled over all such. They had ruled over the ocean of people's heart and the ocean of life. If we throw a glance with long vision, we would find the rule of Ikshavaku kings till the large horizon. They ruled over people not by making them slaves but by winning their hearts. Not a single king of Ikshavaku dynasty has become the slave of glory, authority, money and woman. To cross the ocean of life one needs, support of some other. With the attraction of ego and wealth the life starts. One must have control over ego. And the kings of Raghu dynasty had it. There is a description in The Mahabharata, When the war broken out between Devas (Gods) and Asuras (evils), Dushyant went for help of Indra and won the war, at that time he gives the reason of victory to lord. As God was behind him, he won every event. Such egoless life should be of the ideal kings.

Having mysterious chariot: (आनाकरथवर्त्मनाम्)

Kalidasa narrates here that an ideal king's chariots must have the power to go everywhere means they should have mysterious chariot. The chariot of the kings of Raghu dynasty had direct way for going towards the heaven. But the question arises in one's mind is was there any direct roads of heaven at that time? No, but the kings of Raghu dynasty had the art of create heaven on the earth. Ishabhilasha means the desire of god and Jivanabhilasha means the desire of life never dies he is god. They are immortal. Wherever we find these types of people it is called the heaven. And god always has attraction for such kings.

In the second verse Kalidasa narrates the more precious characteristics of an ideal king.

यथाविधिहुताग्नीनां यथाकामार्चितार्थिनाम्।

यथापराधदण्डानां यथाकालप्रबोधिनाम्।। १ (05)

“I (kalidasa) narrates the dynasty of those kings who perform Havan with the apt method of mythology, one who fulfils the desire of the seeker, one who gives apt punishment to the criminal and who becomes aware at the right time.”

Havan in true sense: (यथाविधिहुताग्नीनां ।)

The kings of Raghu dynasty were performing Havan in true sense with appropriate religious way. Not only with fire in the altar and throws Samidha in it. But they used to throw their personal ego and pray for utilizing their wealth for pious and cultural works. Kalidasa narrates here that the kings of Raghu dynasty had strong words, i.e. which wealth I have not gained that I'll gain, which I have gained that I'll protect, which is protected that I'll increased and which is increased that I'll use for the works of god and culture. Each drop of blood created in the body should be used for cultural and pious work of god.

Great Donner: (यथाकामार्चितार्थिनाम्।)

Here Kalidasa says that the kings of Raghu dynasty used to fulfill the desire of anyone in a significant way. Indian culture does not say that “Don't desire”. Before they provide the things to seeker one should observe that which type of desire one has. The desire must be standard and it must be authentic in a view to God and society. Lots of wealth those kings had gained but they had never used it for eat, drink and being merry. Once king Raghu had performed Vishvajit Yagna and had donated whole wealth for the work of culture. Not a single penny he had. At that time the disciple of Vartantu comes to him and seeks fourteen crore guineas of gold. Even that person was not gone with empty handed. So in this way the kings of Raghu dynasty have proved यथाकामार्चितार्थिनाम्।

Appropriate Justice: (यथापराधदण्डानां ।)

Everyone can get justice in the court of an ideal king. Kalidasa explains here according to crime one gets punishment in the court of the kings of Raghu dynasty. According to Indian scripture one's invisible sins are punished by Yam (God of Death). But the king punished the visible sin at that time. Unlike modern judicial system, the king was not free to do injustice, keeping his personal interest. But impartial saintly people controlled them. As a result, despite deep love for Laxmana, king Rama had to punish him.

Awake at the right time: (यथाकालप्रबोधिनाम्।)

An ideal king must awake at the proper time, at the time of crisis and difficulties. And awaking people at the right time for cultural deeds is a duty of the king of an ideal nation, it was the belief of kings of Raghu dynasty. The concealed meaning behind it is the timely awakening of them for their(kings) duty. Kalidasa emphasizes that they were good managers because they knew the importance of time. The need of time to spend for God and the people of the nation for their welfare and development in every aspects of life. That's why despite limited life they are immortal. It was the prime duty for them to protect cultural values. In this sense they use to be conscious about the performance of the duties at right time.

Further, in the third verse kalidasa explains more important characteristics of an ideal king. He writes,

त्यागाय संभृतार्थानां सत्याय मितभाषिणाम् ।

यशसे विजिगीषूणां प्रजायै गृहमेधिनाम् ॥¹⁰ (13)

“I (kalidasa) narrate the dynasty of Raghu who are always ready to sacrifice their wealth, for the truth so perfect, who have the desire of victory and those who had married life for the sake of noble child.”

Ready to sacrifice wealth for culture: (त्यागाय संभृतार्थानां ।)

Kalidasa explains here that in terms of sacrifice of physical, mental, and material wealth they stood foremost. Unlike ordinary man whose chief aim is to earn money which fulfills sensual pleasure. They procure wealth for the sake of charity. They were large hearted in terms of charity. They believed that wealth power should remain in the hands of noble people. As described in shri suktam, लक्ष्मीं अनपगामिनीम् । अश्वपूर्वां रथमध्यां हस्तिनाद्प्रबोधिनीम् ।¹¹

Kalidasa has given description of king Aja that he had Shri and Sarsvati. In Raghu dynasty the wealth had not moved from them for ten generations. How can it move? It is believed that the wealth cannot be permanent in one's life if not maintained properly. If one's wealth is not used for cultural work, the wealth does not have much value. The kings of Raghu dynasty said to God with courage to enter into their home in the form of Shree, once entered, not allowed to go back. Such wealth will stay forever.

Sweet in speaking truth: (सत्याय मितभाषिणाम् ।)

Kalidas narrates that the kings of Raghu were perfect. They were uttering too less words. one must speak truth with sweetness. But what can be the definition of truth? सतेहितं इति सत्यः। The truth always leads to God. For this instance, only few matters few matters can be truth and that will lead the individual as well as society to the path of God. They were very honest for their thoughts. Whatever excellent thoughts comes to their minds, they endeavored to practice it in life. So, whichever speech enlightens the truth that should be uttered by the kings.

Desire to be victorious: (यशसे विजिगीषूणां ।)

An ideal king must have the strong desire of victory. The kings of Raghu dynasty had the desire of victory over all. They desired victory of glorious life. Therefore, they used to fight to make the life glorious but not by snatching other's kingdom and to make them their subordinate. One who fights for wealth and selfishness is not the real follower of Indian governing system. The kings of Raghu dynasty preferred death instead of so called glorious life. They had win and ruled over the hearts of the people.

Married for the sake of noble heir: (प्रजायै गृहमेधिनाम् ।)

One who marries for his sensual and sexual pleasure, he cannot be an ideal king. Kalidasa describes here that the kings of Raghu dynasty married only for the sake of noble and heir. Their Family life was ideal. They did not indulge in sensual and sexual pleasure but made their marriage life instrumental to achieve noble goals. They produced extraordinary child, who sustained the tradition of their father.

In the fourth verse kalidasa depicts almost final few features of an ideal king. He says,

शैशवेभ्यस्तविद्यानां यौवने विषयैषिणाम्।

वार्द्धके मुनिवृत्तिनां योगेनान्ते तनुत्यजाम्॥¹² (03)

"I (kalidasa) narrates the dynasty of Raghu, the dynasty which is learned by birth. In their young age the kings were taking interest in all the subjects, in old age they were living simple life and relieve their soul through the path of yoga."

Expert in all erudition in childhood and in youth interested in all the elements: (शैशवेभ्यस्तविद्यानां यौवने विषयैषिणाम्।)

According to kalidasa, an ideal king must be expert in all types of erudition. In the young age they should take interest in all the subjects. In the case of kings of Raghu dynasty, they were busy with the study in the childhood. During their childhood and youth, they fully concentrated education. They were always in quest of knowledge. For them the aim of education was to mold life not merely to earn money to acquire good material life but to achieve spiritual life. They had not only powerful memory but great wisdom also. Their family life was based upon sacrifice, struggle, devotion and co-operation. They accepted independent happiness in their youth but never crossed the limit of material pleasure.

Saintly life in old age: (वार्द्धके मुनिवृत्तिनां)

Kalidasa here tries to explain that an ideal king lives a simple and saintly life in the last years of the life. The kings of Raghu dynasty passed their lives sharing their experiences about the enhancement of the soul and passed most of the time in introspection. They were very alert about the success of life in terms of virtues. They used to bring changes in life without hesitation if needed and lived aesthetic life. Towards the end of life, they achieved complete control over their all senses.

Died with spirituality: (योगेनान्ते तनुत्यजाम्।)

An ideal king dies not with the richness of material wealth but with the wealth of glorious spiritual deeds. one who dies for cultural work and tries to turn people to the godly path, he is called an ideal king. He tries to join everyone to God and enhance spirit of self-confidence. One must join oneself with god in the last years of life. As god does not work for us but he works with us. The kings of Raghu dynasty believed that God is everywhere. In the final phase of life, the kings completely attached themselves with god and in this attachment they ended their lives.

Some critic has mentioned a high dignity for Kalidasa, i.e. Formerly on the occasion of counting the number of poets, the little finger happened to be bent first with the mention of Kalidasa's name as number one. Thereafter, as none else was found to equal him in merit, the next finger remained unbent for want of a suitable name and thus, though arbitrarily called nameless(anamika) in Sanskrit, it has significantly become so now in point of fact. Summing up the point one can clearly get the greatness of Kalidasa because only through four verses he has given the ideal picture of the king. The narration is really inspiring for modern governing system. In a way everybody is a king of one's own soul. That very king reigns over the body and soul of one's life. Despite the introduction of Raghuvamsha has the economy of words, it is profound and ample. Kalidasa has pointed out perhaps every aspect of the kings of Raghu dynasty and positive narration can be subjective as everyone is a king of one's own life. In the great heights of such characters, he could not find even a single flaw which Shakespeare has portrayed in his characters powerfully and brings them at height. Against the force of Nature, the power declines of so

called powerful characters. While on the other hand Kalidasa's characters remain great till the end and have the courage to face the power of Nature.

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