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*Prabin Kumar Yadav*

## ABSTRACT

The early history of Nepal centers around the Kathmandu Valley, believed to have been covered by a water pond in ancient times. Over thousands of years, as the water receded, people settled here, starting with groups of migrants and cow herders known as 'Nepa.' The Gopal and Mahishapal rulers followed, associated with agricultural professions. The Kirata Period followed, marked by warrior Aryan Kiratas who ruled after defeating the Mahishapals. The origin of the Kiratas is debated, with various theories about their entry into Nepal. This period is mentioned in Hindu texts, and it's believed that Kiratas might have a connection with the Ancient Indus civilization. Despite uncertainties, it's agreed that Kiratas ruled Nepal after the Mahishapals. The Kirata era stood out for its egalitarian society, contrasting with later caste systems. Gautama Buddha's time saw the arrival of Shakya refugees. Afterward, various groups, including Licchavi, Koli, and Malla, entered Nepal due to political changes and the rise of Magadha in India. The Licchavi Period witnessed the development of confederations in the Terai region.

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# Evolution of Entering the Caste-Based Untouchability System in Nepal

Prabin Kumar Yadav

## ABSTRACT

*The early history of Nepal centers around the Kathmandu Valley, believed to have been covered by a water pond in ancient times. Over thousands of years, as the water receded, people settled here, starting with groups of migrants and cow herders known as 'Nepa.' The Gopal and Mahishapal rulers followed, associated with agricultural professions. The Kirata Period followed, marked by warrior Aryan Kiratas who ruled after defeating the Mahishapals. The origin of the Kiratas is debated, with various theories about their entry into Nepal. This period is mentioned in Hindu texts, and it's believed that Kiratas might have a connection with the Ancient Indus civilization. Despite uncertainties, it's agreed that Kiratas ruled Nepal after the Mahishapals. The Kirata era stood out for its egalitarian society, contrasting with later caste systems. Gautama Buddha's time saw the arrival of Shakyas refugees. Afterward, various groups, including Licchavi, Koli, and Malla, entered Nepal due to political changes and the rise of Magadha in India. The Licchavi Period witnessed the development of confederations in the Terai region. Licchavis eventually defeated the Kirata king, established a caste system, and declared themselves descendants of Surya, Raghu, and Rama. Licchavis followed Hinduism and enforced caste divisions, leading to a societal shift. This historical journey reveals a Nepal shaped by migrations, changing rulers, and evolving societal structures. The Kirata Period stands as a unique phase of equality, while the Licchavi Period introduced the caste system. Nepal's history is a complex tapestry, showcasing diverse influences that have contributed to its rich heritage.*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In the beginning, Nepal meant only the Kathmandu valley and almost all historians agree that there was a water pond in the pre-historic period in the Kathmandu valley and later it became habitable only after the water flowed away for some reason. There is no disagreement about the fact that the habitable land in the Kathmandu Valley became habitable only after thousands of years of human development on earth and that the settlement started here from the people who migrated from the end.

In Nepal (Kathmandu Valley), the settlement started with a group of people who came with their animals in search of habitable land. It is said that one of these groups entered the Kathmandu valley and that group was called 'Nepa'. In the Kathmandu Valley, around AD. And B.C. The settlement started in the fifteenth or fourteenth century or earlier. Thus, the first people who entered Kathmandu were cow herders (Gopala).

The first king of the Gopals was Bhuktaman. 8 Gopal kings including him ruled for 505 years and 3 months. After defeating the Gopal kings, the Mahishapalas ruled. It is known that three Mahishapal kings including Barsingh ruled for 161 years and 2 months.

This cannot be said as the relevant facts about the above Gopal - Mahishapal kings and their reign period have not yet come to hand. However, Gopal means cow breeders and Mahishpal means buffalo breeders by their name, nature, and instincts were castes associated with the

agricultural profession. *In the Vayu-Purana, the Ahir-Ahirs (Mahishapala) are called 'Mlechcha',* not even including the four-tone Shudra. Manu considered the Ahirs (Gopala - Mahishapala) to be a lower caste originating from the Brahmins. Early in the Bagmati region in the Barahpurana.

When dynasties are mentioned, the sequence of Suryavanshis is seen only after 'Mlechcha'. Since the Kiratas are a separate race from the Aryans, *the Kiratas (Mongols) are referred to as 'Mlechcha'.* Thus, there is no doubt that the primitive race of the Nepal Valley was the Mongols from the Himalayas. Because the source of ethnicity and religion seems to have come from the north of Nepal since the beginning.<sup>1</sup>

## II. KIRATA PERIOD

Who were the Kiratas? There is a dispute about where, when, and how he entered Nepal and how long he ruled. However, everyone agrees that the Kiratas ruled Nepal after defeating the Mahishapals. Some say that the Kiratas came from the western direction and are going to attack Nepal and rule, while some say that the Kiratas came from North-Eastern India.

It is said that this caste was spread over the entire territory of the Ganga plains and was later defeated by the Aryans and forced to move towards the hills." Someone has said that Raithane is tribal here. But there is a lot of things about the 'Kirata' Caste in Hindu texts like Yajurveda, Rigveda, Mahabharata and Arya's hero Indra fought with Kiratas for many years, so there are some guesses that Kiratas may be related to the *Ancient Indus civilization. According to Hindu scriptures, the Kiratas are believed to be a warrior Aryan race.*

<sup>1</sup> Tulsiram Vaidh and Triratna Manandhar, *Crime and Punishment in Nepal a Historical Perspective*, (Kathmandu Vini Vaidh and Poornadevi Manandhar, 1985), p. 17, Krishna Bahadur Thapa, *Main Aspects of Social Economy and Administrative History of Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Ambika Thapa, 1988), p. 2, Balachandra Sharma, *Historical Outline of Nepal* (Varanasi Krishna Kumari Devi, 2035), p. 44, Aizen, Pu. 63, Basu Baral, *Forms of Hindu Social Organization*, (Kathmandu: Common Publications, 2050), p. 236, Vayupurana 45.115, Manusmriti: 10|15

There is also a dispute regarding Kirata Period, Dr. Kasi Prasad Jaiswal Kirata Period from B.S. 508 to 110 AD. Narada muni Thulung in the early period of Kirata in Nepal. Balchandra Sharma, expressed the opinion that it may be 15-16 hundred years, Kirata Period 906 A.D. to B.C. 350 years are considered, thus there is still a difference of opinion about the Kirata period.

It is said that Gautama Buddha came to Kathmandu during the 6th Kirata King Humtika period and Mauryan Emperor Ashoka came to Nepal during the 14th Kirat King Sthun period. According to Balchandra Sharma, Ashoka B.C. He came to Kathmandu in 250. From this the Kirats are nothing more than Gautama Buddha.

It is found that he ruled Nepal since before the century and also ruled for a few centuries after Isha. It is known that many visitors from the north and south of Nepal entered Nepal during the Kirat period. Meanwhile, during Gautama Buddha's lifetime, a group of Shakyas escaped from there to escape the attack of the king of Kosala on the Shakyas of Kapilavastu and arrived in the Kathmandu Valley.

Similarly, after the increase of power of *Magadha in India, Licchavi, Koli, Malla and other groups of people entered Nepal*, as well as due to the political upheaval in the northern part of Nepal, newcomers also entered Nepal.

Thus, even though there was a wave of immigrants in Nepal throughout the Kirata Period,<sup>2</sup> there was no caste system and Caste untouchability at that time, because there is no

<sup>2</sup> Baraha Purana 215.43-44, Sharma, *ibid*, p. 8, Aizen, p. 57, Pt. Ambika Prasad Upadhyay, *History of Nepal*, (Second Edition, 1986), p. 21, Dr. Dilliraman Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, Volume-I, (Calcutta Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), p. 15 Dr. Swami Prapannacharya, *Ancient Kirat History*, (Varanasi Kirateshwar Prakashan, 2051), p. 231, Durgahang Yakharai, *Tribes + Oppressed Classes Against Brahminism*, (Lalitpur: Dhanrani Yakharai, 2053), p. 214, 214, Naradamuni Thulung, *Kiratko Nalibeli*, (...), Angur Kandangava, 2042), p. 16, Sharma, *ibid*, p. 73, Dnyaneshwar Bhattarai, *Brihat Gyankosh*, (Kathmandu: Vidyarthi Book Store, 2054), p. 109, Sharma, *ibid*, p. 68

evidence of untouchability during the Kirata Period. According to the books written about the current Kathmandu valley as 'Nepal', there was not even a hint of a Hindu untouchable caste system here 'throughout the Kirata Period'.

There was no caste system even in the Kirata region (Wallo-Majh-Pallo Kiranta), which was defeated by the Lichchavi of the Kirata a tribe from Kathmandu valley around the first century AD, and settled in the eastern hills and established small kingdoms.

After a long time B.S. Around 1831, even after Kiratbhoomi Gorkha-Nepal was merged into the kingdom of the Hindu king, the tasks of sewing clothes, sewing leather shoes, and earning iron-gold-silver, which are considered to be the work of today's Shudras, are still in their ethnic lineage. Those skills and artistic works were traditionally adopted.

But those Arya Hindu rulers said that "Shudriyas" and "Untouchables" castes that do not run water, said, "You too should either live in a Caste that does not run water or leave this job." During the Kirata era, this country had an egalitarian society that was run according to the Kirata Adi Shastra 'Mundhum'.

At that time, there were no such things as Varna and caste. The fact that they did not follow the caste system from ancient times until recently, but later on, the Kiratas had to follow it after the expansion of the Gorkha Empire, comes out.

### III. LICHCHAVI PERIOD (AD 200-879)

During the reign of the Kiratas in the hilly parts of Nepal, several confederations like Lichchavi, Vrijji, Shakya, Koli, Malla, etc. had developed in the Terai region. But after a strong empire started to rise in North India, it became difficult for them to stay here and they started entering the hilly part of Nepal. In this way, castes including Licchhavi who entered Nepal as refugees in the beginning were also able to reach high positions in the administration.

Later, the Lichchavis defeated the Kirata king and took over the reins of government. In 110

AD, the fall of the Kiratas and the rise of the Lichchavis. It is these Lichchavis who have done the work of establishing the caste system in Nepal. But the Lichchavis do not have an address for their own caste. In the beginning, the Lichchavis were considered inferior to the superior regional or 'Avaidic, Vratya regional.

But since they were able to enjoy the royal power for a long time, they later declared themselves as descendants of Surya, Raghu, and Rama. Swami Prapannacharya calls Lichchavi a species of Kirata" while MS Thapa Magar calls them 'crocodile'.

According to the Chinese traveler Yuwan Chuang, they were regional. Irrespective of their caste, during the Mughal invasion of India, among those who entered Nepal like them, there were Hindu rulers and Brahmin regionals belonging to the upper castes of the Hindu caste.<sup>3</sup>

Lichchavis were Aryans. But the first to enter Nepal under the Arya blood group are Khasas. The first batch of these Khas migrated from the hilly regions of India like Kashmir, Kangra, Garhwal, Kumaon, Kulu, etc. to the mountainous regions of Karnali, Seti and Mahakali of present Nepal and these Khas were there as sheep shepherds when the Lichchavi rule began and they established the independent 'Kantipur'.

The establishment of the state is also found. In this way, by the time of Lichchavi Period, Nepal had become a confluence of many races of blood groups including Arya-Mongol. Thus of all religions and blood groups.

<sup>3</sup> Vaidya and Manandhar, erstwhile, p. 18, Dr. Vidyanath Koirala, Schooling and Dalits of Nepal: A Case Study of Buykot Dalit Community, 1996, (unpublished thesis), p. 193, Rye, ibid, p. 132, Thulung, ibid, p. 170 – 180, M. S. Thapa Magar, Legal provisions about Dalits in Nepal and its implementation aspects, (Review Weekly, 2051, Baisakh 9th), Dor Bahadur Bista, Fatalism and Development (Calcutta Orient Longman Ltd., 1994), p. 35

Although the people were settled, the Lichchavis practiced Hinduism and the caste system. The caste system was synonymous with the caste system during Lichchavi Period. In this way, Lichchavi King Supushpa *was the first to implement the Hindu caste system in Nepal.*

The Nepalese society of the Lichchavi Period was divided into different classes and castes just like the Indian society at that time. "The Shudra caste was called 'Chandala' in those days and Brahmins were highly respected in the society. During the Lichchavi Period, the basic half of the caste system was the profession and the idea that doing the profession according to one's caste would make the people happy was at that time. There was also a difference in food, dress, and lifestyle on the basis of caste. Shudras were prohibited from wearing gold and silver ornaments.

During the Lichchavi period, although there was freedom to follow one's favorite religion, there was no freedom to follow the profession of one's own caste, leaving the religion of one's own profession and going to another one would be 'Dharmashank' and it would destroy the people, so Anshuvarma and other Lichchavi rulers also maintained the varna system. That he considered his ideal in many inscriptions of the Kura Lichchavi Period, the king makes it clear that the titles of 'following the Varnasrama system, not crossing the boundaries of the Varnasrama', etc. are taken as adjectives.

The Lichchavi kings were Hindus, so they adopted a policy of building a society based on the Hindu varna system and were proud of the fact that the Varna system was established.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Baral, *ibid*, p. 240, Baidya and Manandhar, *earlier*, p. 19, Goel, *ibid*, p. 161, Bhattarai, *ibid*, p. 111, Dr. Prem Kumar Khatri, *Nepalese Society and Culture (Ancient Medieval Period)*, (Kathmandu: Shared Publications, 2050), p. 71, Dhanavajra Bajracharya, *Lichchhavik inscriptions*, (Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, 2030), p. 298, Bhattarai, *ibid*, p. 111, Bajracharya, *earlier*, p. 298, Khatri, *ibid*, p. 76, Medini Prasad Sharma, *Status of women during the Licchavi period* (Tribhuvan University, Institute of Humanities and Social Science Studies, Vidyavaridhi Sodapatra presented in History Teaching Committee, 2040), P.50, Bajracharya, *earlier*, p. 105, 47. Vaidya and Manandhar, *erstwhile*, p. 19

From this basis, the Lichchavi rulers were staunch supporters of the caste system. Since the Kirata period before the Lichchavi Period, there were people who believed in a system different from the caste system. It is referred to as 'Ashdashaprakriti'.

From this, it follows that they were in favor of the Hindu Varna system and ruled on the basis of Hindu scriptures, Sruti, and Smriti. In Nepali society during the Lichchavi period, if someone did not follow the prevailing caste norms in matters related to caste, such a person was considered to be casteless.

A system where people who go against the rules can be punished and atonement was But as much as possible, a separate station was established to ensure that the people work without being distracted from their caste and that the society does not become religious, which was called 'Bhattadhikaran'. "Thus, since Lichchavi Period, the system of caste and caste untouchability has been introduced in Nepal and it has been established in Nepali society.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In Conclusion, Nepal's history from the start in the Kathmandu Valley to the Kirata Period is like a cool mix of people moving around, cultures changing, and society shifting. When the Kiratas, who were warrior Aryans, were in charge, things were pretty different. They didn't have a strict rule about who was more important based on caste, which was unusual.

In the Kirata era, people lived together without caring too much about where they stood in society. This was not the same as in later times. We might not know everything about that time, but we all agree that they didn't have the same way of separating people into groups as we see later on.

This time shows us a hint of how Nepal used to be. It's like a picture of people getting along and sharing their lives. The Kirata Period tells us that history is full of different stories that shape

Nepal's traditions. It helps us understand that Nepal's past is a mix of different things, and that's something really interesting to know.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Vishal Khanal, Administration of Justice in Nepal: A Historical Overview, (Kathmandu: Ram Prasad Khanal, 2044), p.57 Bajracharya, earlier, p. 105, Baral ibid, p. 239, Aizen, P. 273, Aizen, p. 282, Dor Bahadur Bisht, Sabai Jatko Phoolbari, (Kathmandu: Shared Publications, 2052), p. 18, Aizen, p. 19