

Different Communities in Bharata's journey

**Sundara Pravachanamani, Kum Shree Vayidehi, MS. Subbulakshmi
fellowship awardee,**

Abstract: This essay shows how the different communities of people in Ayodhya were involved in the journey to Chitrakoota with Bharata to bring Rama back to Ayodhya. This essay also highlights how that equilibrium and equality are repeated in the history previously (in the Vedas) and later too.

The different communities involved the journey of Bharata are described by Valmiki in Ayodhyakanda. Firstly, the royals are described:

अग्रतः प्रययुस्तस्य सर्वे मन्त्रिपुरोधसः। अधिरुह्य हयैः युक्तान् रथान् सूर्यरथोपमान् ।।

नवनागसहस्राणि कल्पितानि यथाविधि। अन्वयुर्भरतं यान्तमिक्ष्वाकुकुलनन्दनम्।।

षष्ठी रथसहस्राणि धन्विनो विविधायुधाः। अन्वयुर्भरतं यान्तं राजपुत्रं यशस्विनम्।।

शतं सहस्राण्यश्वानां समारूढानि राघवम्। अन्वयुर्भरतं यान्तं सत्यसन्धं जितेन्द्रियम्।।2.83.2-5।।

“All the ministers and priests get into the chariots yoked with horses, shining as the Sun and go ahead of Bharata. Nine thousand elephants accompany Bharata with sixty thousand chariots filled with archers, furnished with weapons of various kinds and with hundred thousand cavalries.”

Next, various communities of Ayodhya are described to be following Bharata in his journey:

मणिकाराश्च ये केचित्कुम्भकाराश्च शोभनाः। सूत्रकर्मकृतश्चैव ये च शस्त्रोपजीविनः।

मयूरकाः क्राकचिका रोचका वेधकास्तथा। दन्तकारा स्सुधाकारा स्तथा गन्धोपजीविनः।।

सुवर्णकाराः प्रख्यातास्तथा कम्बलधावकाः। स्नापकोष्णोदका वैद्याधूपकाश्शौण्डिकास्तथा।।

रजकास्तुन्नवायाश्च ग्रामघोषमहत्तराः। शैलूषाश्च सह स्त्रीभिर्ययुः कैवर्तकास्तथा।।

समाहिता वेदविदो ब्राह्मणा वृत्तसम्मताः। गोरथैर्भरतं यान्तमनुजग्मुः सहस्रशः।।2.83.12-16।।

“The people including merchants, lapidaries, skilled potters, those who live by manufacture of arms, carpenters, those who make various articles from peacock feather, sawyers, workers who make artificial ornaments, those who pierce gems and pearls, those who make articles of ivory,

those who live by perfumery, highly reputed goldsmiths, weavers of blankets and other woolen goods, those who provide hot-water baths for others, physicians, distillers and vendors of spiritous liquors, fumigators, washer-men, tailors, chiefs of villages and hamlets, dancers with their women-folk and fishermen journey to see Rama. Thousands of cultured Bramhins, Vedic pandits ride on bullock carts.”

It is also particularly mentioned that all the people involved in Bharata’s journey are travelling to see and bring Rama back voluntarily and that they are all happy.

परिष्वजानाश्चान्योन्यं ययुर्नागरिका जनाः।।2.83.10।।

“They happily hug each other and undertake the journey.”

Here different communities are mentioned based on their features and jobs like people who live by manufacturing arms, and people who make articles of ivory. We can see the same before and after the period of Ramayana too.

Before Ramayana’s period:

In the Taittiriya Samhita, these kinds of communities are given salutations seeing one god in all of them.

नमः सहमानाय निव्याधिन आव्याधिनीनां पतये नमो नमः ककुभाय निषङ्गिणे स्तेनानां पतये नमो नमो निषङ्गिण इषुधिमते तस्कराणां पतये नमो नमो वञ्चते परिवञ्चते स्तायूनां पतये नमो नमो निचेरवे परिचरायारण्यानां पतये नमो नमः सूकाविभ्यो जिघांसुश्चो मुष्णतां पतये नमो नमोऽसिमञ्चो नक्तं चरञ्चः प्रकृन्तानां पतये नमो नम उष्णीषिणे गिरिचराय कुलुञ्चानां पतये नमो नम इषुमञ्चो धन्वाविभ्यश्च वो नमो नम आतन्वानेभ्यः प्रतिदधानेभ्यश्च वो नमो नम आयच्छञ्चो विसृजञ्चश्च वो नमो नमोऽस्यञ्चो विध्यञ्चश्च वो नमो नम आसीनेभ्यः शयानेभ्यश्च वो नमो नमः स्वपञ्चो जाग्रञ्चश्च वो नमो नमस्तिष्ठञ्चो धावञ्चश्च वो नमो नमः सभाभ्यः सभापतिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो अश्वेभ्योऽश्वपतिभ्यश्च वो नमः कुलुञ्चानां पतये नमो नमोऽश्वपतिभ्यस्त्रीणि च ॥ ४। ५। ३॥ नम आव्याधिनीभ्यो विविध्यन्तीभ्यश्च वो नमो नम उगणाभ्यस्तृहतीभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो गृथसेभ्यो गृथसपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो व्रातेभ्यो व्रातपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो गणेभ्यो गणपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो विरूपेभ्यो विश्वरूपेभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो महञ्चः, क्षुल्लकेभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो रथिभ्योऽरथेभ्यश्च वो नमो नमो रथेभ्यो रथपतिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमः सेनाभ्यः सेनानिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमः, क्षत्तृभ्यः संग्रहीतृभ्यश्च वो नमो नमस्तक्ष्मभ्यो रथकारेभ्यश्च वो नमो नमः कुलालेभ्यः कमरिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमः पुञ्जिष्टेभ्यो निषादेभ्यश्च वो नमो नम इषुकृञ्चो धन्वकृञ्चश्च वो नमो नमो मृगयुभ्यः श्वनिभ्यश्च वो नमो नमः श्वभ्यः श्वपतिभ्यश्च वो नमः रथेभ्यः श्वपतिभ्यश्च द्वे च ॥ ४। ५। ४॥

“Salutations to carpenters. Salutations to car makers. Salutations to potters. Salutations to smiths. Salutations to bird keepers. Salutations to foresters. Salutations to bow and arrow makers. Salutations to hunters. Salutations to hound keepers. Salutations to dogs. Salutations to lord of dogs.” (Only a part of the mantras has been given the English translation).

Thus, the Veda acknowledges and salutes the different communities.

After the period of Ramayana:

1. The writers of Rama’s story are not categorized just to be from one community. For example:
 - Kamban (author of Ramavatharam in Tamil, 9th century) was of weaver’s community.
 - Balramdas (author of Jagmohan Ramayanam in Telugu, 15th century) was a farmer.
 - Ezhuttechan (author of Kilipattu Ramayanam in Malayalam, 16th century) was of fishermen’s community.
 - Buddha Gonna Reddy Garu (author of Ranganatha Ramayanam in Telugu, 13th century) was a warrior (commander in chief of Rani Rudrama Devi).
 - Bhoja (author of Bhoja Champu in Sanskrit) was a king (kshatriya’s clan).
2. The writers of the story of Rama were also beyond religions. For example:
 - Rama’s story comes in Tripitaka, the primary text of Buddhism
 - Guru Gobind Singh has authored Ramavatharacharitam.
 - Indonesian Ramayana or the Kakawin Ramayana of the Indonesian muslims
3. The writers of the story of Rama were also beyond regions. For example:
 - Ramavatharam of Kamban from Tamil Nadu
 - Ranganatha Ramayana of Buddha Gonna Reddy Garu from Telangana
 - Saptakanda Ramayana of Madhava Kandali from Assam
 - Jagmohan Ramayana of Balramdas from Odissa
 - Molla Ramayanam of Molla from Andhra Pradesh
 - Sriram Pacali of Krittibas from Bengal
 - Thorave Ramayanam of Narahari from Karnataka
 - Kilipattu Ramayana of Ezhittechan from Kerala
 - Ram charita manas of Tulsi Das from Chitrakoot
 - Bhavartha Ramayana of Eknath from Maharashtra
 - Girdhar Ramayana of Girdhar from Gujarat
 - Kashur Ramayan of Prakash Ram Kurigami from Kashmir
 - Maithili Ramayan of Shri Chanda Jha from Nepal
 - Mapilla Ramayana of Mapilla muslim
 - Indonesian Ramayana of Indonesian Muslim
 - Ramakien compiled by King Rama I from Thailand

In Periya Purana (A Shaivite hagiography) and Bhakta Mal and Bhakta Vijaya (Vaishnavite hagiographies) each chapter is dedicated to the story of several devotional saints belonging to different communities.

Examples

Kannappa Nayanar- hunter

Appar- Velaalar

Sundara Murti Nayanar- Adi Shaivar

Kora Kumhar- pot maker

Ravidas- Cobbler

Sena- barber

Choka Mela- carpenter, etc.

Though they belong to different communities they become the contents of the chapters of Hindu hagiographies, by which equality is established.

Summary:

Various communities of Ayodhya people follow Bharata in his journey towards bringing Rama back. These were the people who also cheered that Rama should be their king while Dasharatha made his decision. They are described equally in the same magnitude in the 83rd chapter of Ayodhyakanda. Before Ramayana's period too, the Vedas talk about seeing one god in different communities and offering salutations to all of them. The same way, the followers of Rama and writers of Rama's story later in the history are also of different communities. Though devotional saints belong to different communities they become the contents of the chapters of Hindu hagiographies, by which equality is established.