

The Study of Social and Economic Structure of Nasir Khusraw' Itinerary

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ABSTRACT

Studying and analyzing the itineraries is one of the best ways that lead to subtle understanding of societies. Itineraries are as mirrors that are reflecting all social, economic, political, cultural, religious and military realities in society. Nasir Khusraw's itinerary is a rational evidence of fundamental elements of Islamic, Eastern and Western societies in different historical periods which present an appealing, honest and accurate reportage of livelihood, governing, schools and convents conditions, military traditions etc. of those societies. Socially accepted values find their meanings within the frame of the ceremonies and traditions existing in that society. However, this itinerary as one of the most important sources of cultural, social and economic studies can help us with understanding the cultural conditions in author's time. The author has tried to first extract the social and economic elements from the itinerary and then study the curious expression of Nasir Khusraw as example and evidence.

KEYWORDS: Itinerary, Social-economic Structure, Traditions, Nasir Khusraw

1. INTRODUCTION

Our bright culture represents a lot of literary works that are amongst the richest and the most eloquent literatures in the world. The authors of these literary works try to express their thoughts and emotions in the form of the most proper and eloquent sentences and expressions which are sayings and writings kept and maintained by people along the history which enjoy reading and listening to them.

Itinerary as one type of the literary works is the mirror of thoughts, beliefs, arts and spiritual and moral greatness of a nation which has passed the incident passages and get to the present time flourishing and blossoming [1]. Itinerary is a reportage which author describe his observations from the cities and lands he traveled to in its frame and present information about religious, political, economic, military and social structure to the reader [2]. In fact itineraries are treasury of information which guide humanity in understanding of different dimensions of history and civilizations of nations, information that are not available in historical, geography and sociology books [3, 4, 5]. It is only through the study of itineraries that every nation can see its position from the view point of others and know how it was judged by the others. Studying and analyzing the characteristics of works entitled as itineraries is in fact a scene from different aspect of social life in countries that they have traveled to and reveal the goodness, evilness, beauties and obscenity of the society [3].

One of the most important aspect of studying the itineraries is the focus on social and cultural issues, with studying these itineraries we realize that the writing style of itinerary writers was special the way that they were writing down along with the trip and temporary accommodation in any environment or place and were not restricted to have conclusions. For this reason it must be mentioned about the importance of these books and their position in the field of study that lots of historians, biographers and geographers need these writings as a proof of their speeches because the traveler has witnessed the mentioned subject his own or has heard from a witness so these reportages and news are credible. The most important issues which has taken into consideration in study of Nasir Khusraw's Itinerary are the study of the social and economic structure of societies that the author has traveled to:

1-Social structure that studies the specific traditions of each regions, geographical position of cities, description of specific ceremonies of each region etc.

2-Economic structure that describe topics such as tax, trade and commercial system, types of occupation, importance of agricultural studies and also introducing the mines, metals and currencies etc.

The author describe everything which has come to his mind freely from his viewpoint without worrying about the consequences of his words and does not care about like or dislike of the others specially those of the society and environment that he is describing. Motivation, freshness, recording the differences and also considering interesting and new points which hasn't been mentioned or experienced before, this personal viewpoint has made the itineraries very diverse. It must be mentioned that the amount of information and culture of the author, political awareness, occupation, social level, beliefs, personal preferences and also religious beliefs of the traveler plus his information about economic condition, occupations and world politics is effective in determining his view point with what is presented in his writing.

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Personality of Nasir Khusraw

“Hakim Abu Moin Hamid Al-din Naser ibne Hareth Ghobadiani Marvazi Yagmani” known as Nasir Khusraw was born in a governmental family in 1015 A.D [6] We express the expressions of two great literary characters about the characteristics of Nasir Khusraw.

In an introduction to Nasir Khusraw’s Itinerary written by Dabir Siyaghi [1] Nasir Khusraw’s capability is described as: a traveler named Nasir Khusraw, has a deep knowledge of common science and in a noble family is familiar with lots of terms, secretary techniques and letter writing, became famous because of his grace and courtesy, is aware of people’s social communication in every level, has an eloquent language, able to recount what he has seen or heard and pours the content into the expressions.

Nasir Khusraw’s Itinerary

Based on the available evidences Nasir Khusraw was the first Persian author who traveled and wrote a book based on events he has witnesses and named it is Itinerary as Nasir Khusraw. His itinerary is significance from two general aspect; first the literal aspect of itinerary. Since Nasir Khusraw was a poet at first hand, the content of the itinerary could be considered as a credible evidence in literary text to achieve the nuances in Persian literature and also could be looked upon as one of the masterpieces in the history of Persian literature. Nasir Khusraw’s Itinerary is the first itinerary in Dari-Persian language which in style is simple prose that is a prominent example of Khorasani style [7].

The second aspect of importance of itinerary is its social-cultural aspect. From this point of view, itinerary is one of the most important sources of studying social, political, economic and cultural condition of past communities. By studying the Nasir Khusraw’s Itinerary we realize that with a deep and accurate description of cities, buildings, political, social and cultural condition of societies, he has doubled the value of his work among the other literary work of fifth century and can be of help for the researchers of other sciences.

Nasir Khusraw is one of the top authors and poets of Persian literature which was involved in philosophy and also was one of the elders of Ismaili religion [8-10]. His works are amongst the extremely valuable elements of Persian literature.

Studying the Nasir Khusraw’s Itinerary from the Social Structure and Tradition Point of View

For better understanding of a society and presenting a bright and live picture that is able to reflect the realities of that society, every building block of that society must be studied. From the smallest to the most important one must be identified and ambiguities existing in building blocks must be clarified. It is obvious that knowing a society without knowing its fundamental elements is not easy if not possible which leads to individual study of these fundamental elements of the society. One of these elements is the ceremonies and traditions of that society that is accepted by collective belief and is considered as social value and is tried to be implemented without any defect. Accepted social values of a society become meaningful through the ceremonies and traditions existing in that society which has a direct relation with the culture of that society. By studying the Nasir Khusraw’s Itinerary it can be inferred that he has presented a complete view of the structure of the Islamic countries, beside another evident issue in Nasir Khusraw’s Itinerary is the analysis of the urban life in Islamic countries that is considered as useful and important in the field of urban geography and sociology including the description of the developments of Egypt, mentioning traditions as conquest of the gulf, customs of opening the Kaaba’s door, customs of circumcision, customs of welcoming the guests etc. which in all these descriptions, he has mentioned some nuances which attract the readers’ attention including the part that is about opening the Kaaba’s door, his description of the house and mosque is different in comparison to other holy places as if describing a special ring starting from its jewel: “we have told that Kaaba is in the sacred mosque and sacred mosque in the Mecca” (itinerary, 87) [2] such a beautiful description from Kaaba from a wise sage is so pleasant and invite the reader to a spiritual trip in his observations with its brief description and can be even a good guide to the pilgrims regardless of its meticulous attention to the statistics and Islamic architecture. Or about the conquest of the gulf which is well defined with Special delicate attention to details “as the season come, a great tent is made on the raceway for the king’s rest, sewn of roman silk and gold, garnished with jewels with all the equipment there as hundred rider could stand in the shadows which beside is a colorful tent’ (Itinerary, 15-16-17) [2].

Hence to achieve a clear picture of the society, traditions of the society must be studied which the itinerary is a complete example of these pictures.

Studying Different Kind of Clothing That Is Used in Islamic Societies

Clothing is an important part of human life which is a function of society’s culture and Nasir Khusraw was well aware of that and analyzed different kind of clothing such as: turban, shoes, clothing, silk etc. based on their production region. Since in Islamic societies there are similarities in clothing due to the religious commonalities which leads to the growth of exports and imports of products to different cities.

Stating That How Cities Are Emerged in Different Geographical Positions

Urban society considers three criteria for the emergence, promotion and growth of the cities which are:

a) The help of natural environment

b) Degree of completion of technical knowledge

c) Social organization based on division of labor

Nasir Khusraw was aware of the triple criteria of the emergence of cities in the Middle East and mentioned them in different aspects.

At first the environmental and ecologic factors that brings itinerary closer to the urban geography issues states that most of the cities started to develop beside the fountains “and when you move south around half a league and get to a downhill, the water comes out of the rock that is called “Solvan”. A lot of people has done it over the fountain (Itinerary, 37) [2].

Second is the amount of technical knowledge which is mentioned briefly in the itinerary, and the third is the social organization of labor division which regarding the previous discussions about occupational and trade system that is well defining the labor division in cities. “Taef is a region on the mountain which was sold cold in May-June which you have to sit under the sun. Taef is a borough with strong wall and small bazaar and mosque with flowing water and a lot of pomegranate and fig trees (Itinerary 40) [2].

Studying the Economic Structure in Nasir Khusraw's Itinerary

One of the major criteria in understanding a society and introducing it to the others is having a clear picture of the activity of economic, scientific, social, cultural and political activist in that society. So the economic and social growth lead to other advancements in the society, Nasir Khusraw has implied different aspects of economy, development of trade, export and import, improvements in trading and transaction system elegantly and in details. Like the developments of trade in port cities, introducing the trade and measurement units such as Gaz, Zaraa, Arsh, Mablagh, Dirham, Ghantar. Introducing materials for trade such as honey, grape, fish, lead and pearl. He has looked curiously into the matter of trading based on covenant. A

Collecting Tax from Different Parts of the Countries

One of the major political structure was collecting tax from different parts of the countries which was and will be the basis for the advancements and developments of the countries. Nasir Khusraw has implied different examples of this fact and use some of its common terminology such as tax, contract, ownership, treasury etc. “ I heard Thoghat that thousands of western dinares come to the treasury of thinking every day, that is a certain amount every day, its total weight is one Ton that is gathered from city people in a certain day, delivered to the treasury without any wane, nothing is token from anyone with harshness.(Itinerary 22) [2].

Development of Business in Port Cities

The unique characteristics of every port city is its role in trading the products of land and sea. Knowing the lines of communications between these two and also the role of port in development of the city from the economic and social aspect could be important. So Nasir Khusraw did not oversee the importance of the cities and talks about them specially about the port cities of Izab, Gholzam, Mehruban, Sour, Seyda which was thriving with high number of shipping and trade. “ We came to a city called Asghalan, beside the sea, a large city with bazaar and a fine mosque with ships, oil and curd (itinerary 2010:64) there are ships belong to the King sailing to Rome and West for trade (Itinerary 21) [2].

Export and Import in Different Regions

The major function of political system is developing and reinforcing trade system, developing the exporters and import, strengthening the trade and transaction system which is implied by Nasir Khusraw delicately and in detail like developing the trade in port cities “we are told that Soghliye is 80 leagues in 80 leagues belongs to the King of Egypt with a ship coming every year taking merchandise to Egypt and brings back linen with ten western dinaries value in Egypt (Itinerary 73) [2] stating a list goods fo export and import to different regions such as great, honey, fish, lead and pearl: “groceries i.e. are taken to the cities and there is nothing except fish. (Itinerary 163) [2].

Introducing trade and measurements unit like Gaz, Zaraa, Arsh, Mablagh, Dirham, Ghantar. “When the Nile River be faithful”. From the beginning of September to 11th of November- water will be abundant with 18 m increased depth in comparison to winter (itinerary 81) [2] and also the description of the importance of political security in trade system especially in Egypt and introducing the material used in trade. The matter of covenant in trade is well defined as Sejel in itinerary.

Bazaar as a Trade Center

Bazaar was one of the important part of city life and merchants at a major part in the city structure which wasn't overlooked by the travelers and unanimously stated that the bazaar and trade is the most active part of city life. Economic and social function. When Nasir Khusraw traveled to a city, he had described the trade center well especially in his idea, Egypt had a prosperous bazaars in all of its cities.”we got to a city called Salehiye which was a prosperous village.building lots of ships load them with 6Tons of merchandise and take them to the Egypt (Itinerary 67) [2].

Introducing Different Occupations

One of the criteria of understanding a society and introducing it to the others is having a clear picture of the activities of economic activists of that society. Regarding the variety of occupations in different cities Nasir Khusraw has introduced different occupations and the social status of those who work. In Nasir Khusraw's Itinerary occupations such as mercer, retailer, grocer, bathroom, tonsorial, jewelry, apothecary, diving, bathroom keeper, ship Maker, shoemaker, chamber owners and exchangers have been mentioned. He said that attars also buy and say that a worm in the dugs is called silver" (itinerary 30) [2] "half of what divers brings out of water belongs to the kings of Bahrain (Itinerary 151) [2]. there was a small bag I was putting books in it and selling them , from its income I paid a few Dirham to the bath keeper, maybe he let us stay a little longer in the bath so we could wash off dirt of our bodies (Itinerary 155) [2].

Introducing the Minerals

Nasir Khusraw in his itinerary name minerals that was playing a significant role in the industry or economy of the city or country that it was extracted. Minerals such as: ammonium, crystal, brass, arzyr and magnet etc. some stones are also named in itinerary which are used in to build palaces, minarets, pillars of sacred Mosque and prophet's mosque and Friday mosque. They are also used in to build weaponry or garnishing furniture, each of them extracted in a certain city or country and importing or extracting them lead to economic prosperity of the time. Names of these films are listed below: marble, alabaster, green alabaster, stained alabaster, black rock and red onyx.

There are a lot of alabaster and most of the houses are made of it and are engraved, I saw different types of alabaster there like green, red, black and white (Itinerary 33) [2].

Farming and Agriculture System

Since the past (especially in Nasir Khusraw's period) there was a special attention to the farming and agricultural activities. In a lot of cases he deeply introduced types of cultivation, the quality of agriculture and different products that is acquired in different regions and also about their transport and the quality of farming lands which enhanced the economic value of the itinerary.

The mentioned agricultural products are itinerary are: poppy, wheat, barley, nuts, sugar, olive, palm and tropical trees, with their special growth climate. So it can be said that Nasir Khusraw's itinerary contains accurate and valuable information in which he observes neutrality, honesty, trusteeship in drafting and writing and like a skilled engineer, a sophisticated architect, a conversant scientist in economy and sociology in the condition of the cities did not overlook the nuances and has stated them.

Attention to details is a major point which is significant in Nasir Khusraw's Itinerary as he is being mentioned by others as: there are a lot of people that interesting facts passes in front of their eyes but it seems that you don't see it and it doesn't leave any effect on their mind but there are various people which do not overlook anything, sees and evaluates everything in their norm (although fast and short) and represented to the others as it is. Nasir Khusraw is one of these unique peoples [11, 12].

CONCLUSION

Writing itinerary is of extreme value which other books do not. The notes of the traveler which has written the itinerary talks about the traditions which has similarities and contrasts with the culture of the author. Itinerary writers are also a kind of objective researcher and both writer and researcher; in fact they are like ambassadors between two nations or countries. Hence the itinerary writer is the representative of his nation in the country which he is traveling to, at first look it seems that he is just bringing his itinerary as a gift to his people, while using itinerary is not just limited to the writer of that nation, as the writer writes his own hearing and observation about an unfamiliar country or nation, there is no bias toward that nation or country so that he may overload flaws and record advantages. Which leads to superiority of itinerary to the history.

Historians believe that the most famous and the most prestigious historians do not write down the events of their country in their language except a few. The other point is that it historian often addressing the major issues in the history of their country or world's, wildly itinerary writer address issues in details which is very important because the connection among cultures and is not limited to political and official relations between government but all people of the society are effective in culture, civilization of their country, any changes and improvements both negative and positive. Itinerary can be introduced as the basics of anthropology because it provides information such as celebrations, festival, traditions, marriage and occupation for the readers. Generally from amongst the fans of trips for the purposes of both trade and knowledge or is simple government job or even a Pilgrim, they are all prophets specially to wise ones that write down the observation and experiences of the trip to the benefits of others, both for those who think about the depth of the problems recorded by tourists or those who look to the itinerary as an interesting and entertaining source. Nasir Khusraw's Itinerary can be named as a helpful work to the researchers in the field of sociology, geography and anthropology.

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