Kubera : The Lord of Wealth

Dr. Nilachal Mishra*

Abstract

[Kubera is regarded as the lord of wealth. He is the king of Yakṣas and is called the half-brother of King Rāvaṇa, the hero of Laṅkā. Guhyakas are well known as the attendants of Lord Kubera. He is also called Dhanapati Kubera, meaning the lord of all wealth.

There is mention of countless Yakṣa attendants in different Kubera texts. Kubera is also surrounded by many divine beings who bring joy to their lord. The Ṛgveda describes him in various ways. A person can attain prosperity in life by following the procedures of Kubera's worship (*pūjā*) and meditation.

The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata also describe his qualities in detail. This paper reflects his extraordinary qualities and presents a moral and ideal understanding of Kubera and his virtues in brief.]

Keywords— Kubera, Wealth, Guhyaka, *Arthaśāstra, Uttarakuru*

Introduction

Kubera was known as the king of the Yakṣas as per the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, and that tradition is also continued in the Purāṇas and Epics. Although these texts say Rāvaṇa is the halfbrother of Kubera. In many places, Kubera was described as the King Rākṣasas. As per the tradition (*Mahābhārata* 1.60.7) the Rākṣasas are offspring of Pulastya. Another tradition says Kubera attendants are the Yakṣas and it is said he is the overlords of Rākṣasas, Apsarases, and Gandharvas. Kubera is called Yakṣādhipa, Yakṣendra, Yakṣādhīśa etc.

Guhyakas are the other attendants of Kubera. He is often narrated as the Company of Guhyakas in the epics

* Lecturer in Sanskrit, K. P. A. N jr. College, Bankoi, Dist. Khurda, Odisha, Email : nilachalmishra1@gmail.com

and Purāṇas like this "*guhyakaiḥ parivartanam*". The word *guhyaka* has not been described in the vedic literature beside the text named *Mānavagṛhyasūtra* (2.12.17). Guhyaka is described as a semi-divine being in the Amarakośa (1.1.11). The guardians of the Kubera's treasures are the Guhyakas, it is described in the Epics and Purāṇas. The country like Hāṭaka which produces gold and that is saved by the Guhyakas.

Taṃ jitvā Hāṭakaṃ nāma deśaṃ guhyakarakṣitam.
[*Mahābhārata* 3.25.3]

There is countless of *Yakṣa* attendants in the Kubera texts which are noted as following :

Dhanada, Keśaraka, Gajakarṇa, Varāhakarṇa, Phalodaka, Śikhāvrata, Pradyota, Kuṣṭumbura, Maṇibhadra, Sandroṣṭha, Aṅgacūḍa, Hemanetra, Piṅgalaka, Pravālaka, Pūrṇabhadra, Dīrghavāhu, Śoṇitoda, Puṣpānana, Vṛkṣavāsanīketa, Mahābāhu, Maṇidhara, Mahābāhu, Supārśva, Subhadra, and etc.[1]

Kubera, the lord of wealth , is surrounded by the many Apsarares who amuses him every time with music and dance. These apasaras are described in different vedic literatures clearly. And the Apsaras are closely associated with water, which is the main feature of them. In the Ṛgveda it says—

Samudriyāḥ apsarasaḥ manīṣiṇam
Āsīnā antaḥ abhi somam akṣaran.
[*Ṛgveda* 9.78.3]

It is said that, Gods have their own divine World (*loka*). Kubera also has their own divine World who gives to human beings all the desires.

Vasvaśvidhanadādyānāṃ ye lokāḥ sarvakāmadāḥ.
[*Matsyapurāṇa* 212.7]

[1] *Mahābhārata* 2.10.14—17, *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* 3.222.13—15

And also it is said that the person who gifts a big house and many various amenities and different types of corn to a Brāhmaṇa, and that person lives in the Kubera World which is a divine place, and after his death for one *manvantara*, he will be reborn as a wealthy person.[2]

Traditionally it is said that Kubera is the lord of the *Nidhis* (wealth). Kubera was given the boon by Brahmā as he is the Lord of *Nidhis* means Nidhīśvara, it is described in the Rāmāyaṇa of Vālmīki. There is a description of the fight between Rāvaṇa and Kubera. It is told that padma and śaṅkha which are presiding deities of two *Nidhis* accompanied the Lord Kubera who swooned in that field (*Rāmāyaṇa* 7.15.16).

The Mahābhārata also describes the Kubera Sabhā which refers to *śaṅkha* and *padma* with other Nidhis which are catching on Kubera (*Mahābhārata* 2.10).

Kubera in *Sūtra* Literature

The *Sūtra* literature also follows the concept of Kubera, as found in the *Brāhmaṇa* and the Brāhmaṇic traditions.[3] Among the various *Sūtras*, many *Kalpasūtras* are the most important as they depict the picture of the cultural history of India.[4]

Dharmasūtra, Śrautasūtra, and *Gṛhyasūtras* are part of the *Kalpasūtras*, having great sacrifices, which include the *Śrauta Yajñas* , are described in the *Śrautasūtras*. The *Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra* (10.7.6) provides information about the knowledge of spells of Lord Kubera, which is related to *Piśācas* "*piśācavidyā vedaḥ so'yam*" (*Piśācavidyā* is needed so it relates to *Piśācas*).

---

[2] *Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa* 2.27.34—35

[3] Cf.*The Ritual Sutras ;* J. Gonda

[4] Cf. *India of Vedic Kalpasutras ;* Ram Gopal

The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* (1.1.10) mentions the science known as *Piśācaveda*, which stands along with *Asuravidyā* and *Sarpaveda*. The *Sāṃkhyāyana Śrautasūtra* also refers to the character of Kubera, which is described by the knowledge of spells and its connection with *Piśācas* and the *Rākṣasas*.

Rakṣovidyā vedaḥ so'yam

[*Sāṃkhyāyana Śrautasūtra* 1.11.7]

As per the description of the *Sāṃkhyāyana Gṛhyasūtra* (2.1.7), *vali* (sacrificial offerings) are presented at different places during the *Vaiśvadeva Pūjā*, and it is only meant for the presiding deities like Indra, Soma, Varuṇa, Yama, and Bṛhaspati, and others.

This *vali* is also offered to many unknown deities, and Dhanapati Kubera is honored in the north direction :

Arjitābhyāṃ devatābhyaḥ uttarato dhanapatye ca

[*Sāṃkhyāyana Gṛhyasūtra* 2.14.17]

Furthermore, this *Gṛhyasūtra* describes the *Vaiśvadeva* sacrifices, stating that a person who performs them in the morning and evening will attain more prosperity in his life and progeny.

"Vaiśvadevamimaṃ ye tu sāyaṃ prātaḥ prakurvate."

As per the opinion of Sūryakānta, *Dhanapati* Kubera is clearly mentioned as Lord Kubera.[5]

The *Baudhāyana Gṛhyasūtra* (2.8.20) mentions that the daily sacrifice of *Vaiśvadeva Vali* is mentioned as a sacrifice at the treasury with a formula. and also includes the *Aja* (goat) sacrifice at the doorway with a specific formula. The *Gṛhyasūtra* states :

"Dhanadhānyākāśe dhanadhanyābhyāṃ svāhā vaiśravaṇāya svāhā iti."

This is a clear description of the relationship between

5 *Vaidika Kosha*(Hindi), Suryakanta, p.213

Vaiśravaṇa (another name for Kubera) and prosperity, wealth, and etc.

Kubera in Hindu Śāstras

The *Brahma Purāṇa* (97.3 ff.) describes that Kubera and Rāvaṇa were two brothers, and Kubera was the eldest son of Viśravas. Kumbhakarṇa and Vibhīṣaṇa were also his stepbrothers. From the very beginning of his kingdom, Rāvaṇa attacked Kubera, who then went to Pulastya for help. And as per the suggestion of Pulastya, Kubera practiced penance there. By the blessings of Lord Śiva, Kubera gained the designation of *Dhanapati,* which means saver of wealth. Thus, that place became recognized as the *Pulastya Dhanada* and *Vaiśravaṇa*.

As per another description in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (4.1.36-37), *Havirbhūḥ*, the wife of Brahmā had two sons—the first son was Agastya, and the second was the sage Viśravas. And the later Kubera was born from his wife Idāvidā.

The *Agni Purāṇa* (11.2) describes that sage Viśravas married two wives like Puṣpotkaṭā and Kaikasī. Puṣpotkaṭā gave birth to Kubera, who was also known as *Dhaneśvara*. Another description of the *Padma Purāṇa* (5.6.17-19) explains that Viśravas had two wives named Mandākinī and Kaikasī. Kubera was the son of his first wife, Mandākinī. In different texts, the name of Kubera's mother is described differently, such as Idāvidā, Puṣpotkaṭā, Ilavilā, Devavarṇinī, and Mandākinī. However, all the Purāṇic texts agree that Viśravas was the father of *Dhanapati* Kubera.[6]

Kubera in Buddhist Literature

After the *Sūtra* literature, scholars such as Kauṭilya, Patañjali, and Pāṇini included Kubera in historical documents, describing him as the Lord of Wealth.

[6] *Kubera : Origin And Development*, p. 99

Pāṇini, the great grammarian of the 6th century BCE, in his Aṣṭādhyāyī, reveals some spoken language elements. His text defines some religious beliefs expressed in the *Bhakti* cult. Pāṇini describes the word *Bhakti* twice (4.3.95, 3.2.95) and the word *Bhakta* also.

During the time of Patañjali, Kubera *Pūjā* was widely spread. He also mentioned the musical instruments used in the temples of Dhanapati Kubera, Keśava, and Rāma. The description of Patañjali is like this.

Mṛdaṅgaśaṅkhatūṇavāḥ pṛthaṅ nadanti saṃsadi
Prāsāde dhanapatirāmakeśavānām

[*Mahābhāṣya* 2.2.34]

Kubera in the Nāṭyaśāstra

Bharata's Nāṭyaśāstra also gives a significant role to Kubera. The availability of the Nāṭyaśāstra is believed to date back to the second century A D. The Nāṭyaśāstra narrates the first drama ever staged, in which performances pleased the gods, who then gave gifts as a sign of pleasure.

Brahmā granted Kuṭilaka, Sūrya gave an umbrella, Viṣṇu provided a lion seat, and Indra offered a banner, Śiva was given success Similarly, Vāgdevī Sarasvatī offered wisdom, and Kubera was given a Crown.

Viṣṇuḥ siṃhāsanaṃ caiva kubero mukuṭaṃ tathā
Śrāvyatvaṃ prekṣaṇīyasya dadau devī sarasvatī.

[*Nāṭyaśāstra* 1.61]

The Nāṭyaśāstra also narrates a *Pūjā* of deities, which holds controlling power over saints [*Nāṭyaśāstra* 3.20 ff]. As per the text, Kubera is regarded as the Mother of *Nāṭya*—

Namo'stu nāṭyamātṛbhyo
brāhmyādyābhyo namonamaḥ.

[*Nāṭyaśāstra* 3.67]

In the northern side, Kubera is also placed and worshipped

as the mother of *Nāṭya*. Alongside, *Guhyakas* and *Yakṣas* are also placed—

Uttarasyāṃ diśi tathā dhanadaṃ saṃnivieśayet
Nāṭyasya mātṝśca tathā yakṣānatha saguhyakān
[*Nāṭyaśāstra* 3.30]

The *Arthaśāstra* further states the offerings of different gods, which included various *mantras*. The *Pūjā* of Kubera and the mothers of *Nāṭya* should be performed with some edible items such as *lājikā* and cakes also.

Mātṝrnāṭyasya sarvāstā dhanadaṃ ca sahānugaiḥ
Apūpairlājikāmiśrairbhakṣyabhojyaiśca pūjayet.
[*Nāṭyaśāstra* 3.45]

The offering mantra for Kubera is prescribed as follows—

dhanādhyakṣo yakṣapatirlokapālo dhaneśvaraḥ
saguhyakassayakṣaśca pratigṛhṇātu me balim.
[*Nāṭyaśāstra* 3.66]

Kubera is described as *Dhanada* in the *Nātyaśāstra* and is regarded as the guardian god in the northern direction, as per the same text.[7]

Genesis of Kubera

Vessavaṇa, which is the spirit of the institution, was not an individual. Sakka or Śakra prefers another Vessavaṇa while the present one is dead. In many other texts, the past history of Kubera has been described.

As per *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*[8] and *Jātaka*[9], in a previous birth, he was born as a *Brāhmaṇa* and named Kubera. He was also a cultivator of a field of sugarcane and owned seven mills, which were managed by him.

---

7 *Kubera : Origin and Development*, p. 99
8 Vol. I, p. 650
9 Vol. 6, p. 201

He gave one mil in charity, and at that time, his profits were greatly developed. He performed alms for a long period, approximately twenty thousand years. After his death, due to his generosity and piety, he was reborn as a god of *Cāturmahārājika*.

As per Buddhist mythology, he is not a God of immortality, and as per the ideology of Buddhist canons, this is based on the cycle of rebirth and past karmas.

He is well known as Vessavaṇa, named after his capital, which is *Visāṇa*.

visāna nāma rajdhani.

[*Dīgha Nikāya* Vol. 3, 9.27]

Uttarakuru—The Kingdom of Kubera

Uttarakuru was known as the kingdom of Kubera. The name of Uttarakuru was famous beyond the Himalayas, as per the assumption of *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (8.2.3).

And as per R.K. Mukherjee, in his text *Hindu Civilization* [10], defines Uttarakuru as a place situated on the northern side of the Himalayas. The *Uttarakurus* are considered to have lived in the region of Kashmir and the northern part of the Kurukshetra.[11]

Dhāriṇī was the lotus lake of Kubera, and Bhāgalavatī or Śālavātī was also well-known as the assembly hall. And a description of the Jātaka defines Nalinī as the Palace of Vessavaṇa.

Yatthacchati nacca gītehi nāgo,
raja yatha vessavano nalininam.

[*Jātaka* Vol. II, p. 315]

The attendant of Kubera and his family is mentioned in

[10] p.110

[11] See *Vedic Age,* R.C. Majumdar, p. 262 ; and *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects,* Vol. I, Macdonell Keith, p. 84.

Buddhist mythology. The *Sutta Piṭaka* gives details about this. It is known that *Bhuñjati* was described as the consort of Vessavaṇa [*Dīgha Nikāya* Vol. 2, 8.2.9].

The same text describes the sons of Kubera, who were many in number, and Indra was one of them.

Putthapi tassa vahavo...indanama mahabaka.

[*Dīgha Nikāya*, Vol. 3, 9.27]

Kubera had five daughters named Sujjā, Acchimati, Sutā, Pavarā, and Latā, and they were assigned to dance in front of Sakka, and gradually, he married them also.[12]

As per Buddhist mythology, Kubera had a magical mango tree called *Atulamba*, and the *Ābhantara Jātaka* describes its significance. This mango tree, which was located in the Himalayas, bore different-colored mangoes, but the tree was nearly impossible to approach as it was guarded by evil spirits.

The fruit of this tree was believed to be beneficial for childless women. As per Buddhist mythology, a woman who touched it would be blessed with a child.

Kubera had a great faith in Buddha. This is reflected in *Khuddaka Nikāya* as follows :

Rājā pi taṃ Vessavaṇo Kubero
upeti, dhammaṃ paripucchamāno.
Tesaṃ pitvāna pucchito ...
so cāpi sutvāna patitarūpo.

[*Khuddaka Nikāya* 2.4.160]

Kubera's Heavenly World

It is believed that Kubera has another world known as the Heavenly World, which grants every want of human beings.

Vasavidhānādādyānām ye lokaḥ sarvakāmadaḥ.

[*Matsya Purāṇa* 212.7]

It is said that a person who offers a big house with many

[12] See *Early Buddhist Mythology,* J.R. Heward ; p. 81.Vimānavatthu ; p. 4

amenities and worships a Brāhmaṇa by giving various corns is granted access to Kubera's heavenly world after death. He stays there for a cycle of one *Manvantara* and, after its completion, He would be reborn as a rich person.[13]

It is well known that the beautiful world of Lord Kubera became a resting place for those who lost his mortal bodies after death. According to the *Mahābhārata* (11.26.14), warriors who left the battlefield were given a second chance in Kubera's world.

The Description of Kubera's *Nidhi*

As per the *Paurāṇika* tradition, Kubera is described as the Lord of Wealth (*Nidhi*). Brahmā, the creator of the universe, offered a boon to Kubera, making him the Lord of Wealth (*Nidhīśvara*).

According to the description in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, after losing a battle, Rāvaṇa took away the hoarded wealth of Kubera and later had to return it to the garden of *Citraratha*—which included divine treasures like *Padma* (lotus) and *Śaṅkha* (conch).[14]

The Ṛgveda describes the original meaning of *Nidhi* as a place of deposit.[15] It is also described as a treasure.[16]

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad mentions *Nidhi* in the context of science and chronology.[17]

The word Nidhi means hidden wealth, as evident from the commentary of Sāyaṇa in the *Ṛgveda*—

Nidhim asuraih nihitan dhanasamuhan

[Ṛgveda 10.138.4]

---

[13] *Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa* 2.27.34-35

[14] *Rāmāyaṇa* 7.15.16

[15] *Ṛgveda* 1.183.4, 5.438, 6.7.7, 6.9.3, etc.

[16] *Ṛgveda* 2.4.6, 10.6.6 ; *Atharvaveda* 10.7.7.3, etc.

[17] *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects,* Vol. 1, p. 450 ; *Vaidik Kosa,* Suryakant, p. 216

The *Atharvaveda* also describes Agni as the concealed of wealth (*Nidhi*) :

Sa veda nihitān nidhīn pitṝn parāvato gatān
[*Atharvaveda* 18.4.41]

It is also described in another context :

Nidhipo devaḥ agniḥ
[*Vedārambha Saṃskāra* 8.17]

Kubera's Description in the Later Upaniṣads

The earlier Upaniṣads are silent about Kubera. However, the later Upaniṣads recognize him as a God and one of the rulers of the place. He is regarded as the presiding God of the northern sides.[18]

The *Vāmanopaniṣad* distinctly defines that Kubera is the god of the northern direction—

Kauberyāṃ diśi Kubero devatā.

Some human-like features of Kubera are also described in this text. The yellow complexion of Kubera is narrated in this Upaniṣad, where he is described as riding a horse and holding a mace in hand and a hook also.

Aśvārūḍhaḥ pītavarṇaḥ gadāṅkuśa-hastaḥ Kubero vadhātu Kuberaṃ mandakam.[19]

In another place of this same Upanishad describes Kubera implored to save man the same Upaniṣad describes Kubera as a protector against the *Aṣṭaloka*.

Taddikṣu asvalako nama raksasah.
Sarvato mam raksha raksha.

His womanly power is Kauberī.[20] His consort is Kauberī, as mentioned in *Kubera : Origin and Development*.[21]

---

[18] *The Vidya ;* Desai ; Vol. XXVII ; p. 29
[19] *Upaniṣat Saṅgraha ;* J.L. Sastri (Editor) ; Pt. 11 ; p. 491
[20] *Kubera : Origin and Development*, p. 65
[21] *Kubera : Origin and Development*, p. 65

She possesses the same weapon by her own husband.

Kauberyāṃ diśi... bhagavati Kauberī... sahastābhyām.[22]

The *Rādhopaniṣad* describes the cities of different gods, and Kuberapura is one of them.[23]

Kubera as the sponsor Deity of Trade and Commerce

It is said that great success in trade and commerce depends on divine grace of God. The merchants worship various deities before starting any business.

Agni is regarded as the supporter of the trades as per Ṛgveda.[24]

The *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā* (16.19) states that Rudra is the protective deity of trade. The *Atharvaveda* also mentions a *Vāṇij Sūkta*, which is mentioned to gain good progress in trade and commerce.[25]

A sacrifice called panyasidhi was performed during the Sūtra period for getting success in business in which the deities like Soma, Agni Bṛhaspati, Indra and Īśāna were worshipped.[26]

Conclusion

From the above discussions it is concluded that Kubera is well-known as the giver of wealth and as per the Epics and Puranas He was praised and elevated to the post like the God of protector and Wealth. Without Kubera's blessing man cannot get success to gain plenty of wealth and power in this World. So He is regarded as the God of wealth undoubtedly.

✶✶✶

[22] *Upaniṣat Saṅgraha,* Pt. II, p. 451
[23] *Upaniṣat Saṅgraha,* Pt. II, p. 212
[24] *Ṛgveda* 10.156.3
[25] *Kubera : Origin and Development*, p. 133
[26] *Hārṣanyaka Gṛhyasūtra* 1.15.1

Bibliography

1. *Kubera : Origin And Development ;* Chaturbhuja Satapathy ; Classical Publishing Company ; New Delhi ; 2002.
2. *Goddess Lakshmi : origin And Development ;* U. N. Dhal ; Eastern Book Linkers ; New Delhi.
3. *Mahābhārata ;* Gita Press ; Gorakhpur.
4. *Ramayana ;* Gita Press ; Gorakhpur.
5. *The Mahābhārata : A Criticism ;* C. V. Vidya ; Delhi ; 1966.
6. *Sketch of the Religious Sects Of Hindus ;* H. H. Wilson ; London ; 1861.
7. *South Indian Images of Gods and Goddess ;* H. Krishna Sastri ; Madras ; 1916.

✳ ✳ ✳