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RĀVAṆA-BHĀṢYA

BY

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There is a tradition that a commentary called *Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya* on Kaṇāda’s Vaiśeṣika sūtras was written by an ancient philosopher called Rāvaṇa and that this work preceded the famous commentary by Praśastapāda on the same sūtras, which has been preserved under the name *Padārtha-dharma-saṅgraha* and generally accepted as one of the most important basic works of the Vaiśeṣika system. The tradition about Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya is supported by certain references which ought to carry considerable weight with all discerning critics.

In his commentary called *Kiraṇāvalī*, on Praśastapāda’s *Padārtha-dharma-saṅgraha*, Udayanācārya (circa 984 A. D.) annotates the phrase *Padārtha-dharma-saṅgraha* as follows :—

“पदार्थधर्मसङ्ग्रह इति ॥ पदार्था द्रव्यादयः; तेषां धर्माः साधर्म्यवैधर्म्य-
रूपाः । त एव परस्परं विशेषणीभूतास्तेऽनेन सङ्गृह्यन्ते, शास्त्रे नानास्थानेषु
वितता एकत्र सङ्कलय्य कथ्यन्ते इति सङ्ग्रहः ; स प्रकृत्यो वक्ष्यते ; प्रकरणशुद्धेः
सङ्ग्रहपदेनैव दर्शितत्वात् ; वैशद्यं लघुत्वं कृत्स्नत्वं च प्रकर्षः ; सूत्रेषु वैशद्या-
भावात्, भाष्यस्य च विस्तरत्वात् प्रकरणादीनां चैकदेशत्वात् ॥”

Benares Sanskrit Series, *Kiraṇāvalī*, page, 5.

Padmanābhamiśra, who flourished in the latter part of the 16th century, has the following note in his *Kiraṇāvalī-Bhāskara*, a commentary on Udayana’s *Kiraṇāvalī*, with reference to the concluding part of the extract given above.

“ग्रन्थान्तरेणान्यथासिद्धिमपाकरोति—सूत्र इति ।”

Padmanābhamiśra is an authority on the Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems, who cannot be easily brushed aside. According to him and according to Udayana’s *Kiraṇāvalī* as interpreted by him, Praśastapāda should be understood to have presupposed Rāvaṇa’s

Bhāṣya which was too big and extensive to be controlled by ordinary readers, and should therefore be taken to have designed his own work as a comprehensive treatise of an epitomical type (saṅgraha), though Udayana, Śrīdhara and later exponents of the Vaiśeṣika system would unhesitatingly apply the designation—Bhāṣya—to Praśastapāda's work as well, chiefly, perhaps, in view of Praśastapāda's rank as a ṛṣi.

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, in his Bhāṣya on 2-2-11 of the Brahma-sūtras, makes the following statements in the course of his exposition of Paramāṇu-Kāraṇa-vāda :—

“यदापि द्वे द्व्यणुके चतुरणुकमारभेते, तदापि समानं द्व्यणुकसमवायिनां शुक्लादीनामारम्भकत्वम् । अणुत्वहस्त्वत्वे तु द्व्यणुकसमवायिनी अपि नैवारभेते, चतुरणुकस्य महत्वदीर्घत्वपरिमाणयोगाभ्युपगमात् । यदापि ब्रह्मवः परमाणवः बहूनि वा द्व्यणुकानि द्व्यणुकसहितो वा परमाणुः कार्यमारभते तदापि समानैषा योजना ॥”

With reference to the first sentence in the above extract, Ratnaprabhā has the following note :—

“प्रकटार्थकारास्तु यद्वाभ्यां द्व्यणुकाभ्यामारब्धे कार्ये महत्त्वं दृश्यते तस्य हेतुः प्रचयो नाम प्रशिथिलावयवसंयोग इति रावणप्रणीते भाष्ये दृश्यते इति चिरंतनवैशेषिकदृष्टयेदं भाष्यमिल्लाहुः ।”

In the course of his exposition of the Vaiśeṣika doctrine, Śaṅkara relies upon Kaṇāda's sūtras and Praśastapāda's Bhāṣya. As the author of the Prakaṭārtha-vivarāṇa rightly points out, Śaṅkara seems to utilise also the theories of older Vaiśeṣikas like Rāvaṇa. The first sentence in the above extract from Śaṅkara's Bhāṣya would present an insuperable difficulty, if one should proceed to interpret it in the light of what Praśastapāda has said about the formation of *dvyanukas*, *tryanukas* and *caturanukas* from *paramāṇus*. According to Praśastapāda, Udayana, Śrīdhara and all the later Vaiśeṣikas, two *paramāṇus* or atoms combine to form a binary product (*dvyanuka*); three *dvyanukas* or *anus* combine to form a ternary product (*tryanuka*); and four *tryanukas* or *truṭis* combine to form a quaternary product

1. The passage in the Prakaṭārtha runs as follows :—

परिमामाणादेशिपि तत्तदासाधारण्यात् व्यभिचारप्रदर्शनायैव चिरन्तनवैशेषिकाणामुदाहरणान्तरमाह—यदा द्वे इति । तथा हि—रावणप्रणीते भाष्ये दृश्यते “यद्वाभ्यां द्व्यणुकाभ्यामारब्धे कार्ये यन्महत्त्वमुत्पद्यते तस्य प्रचयोऽसमवायिकारणम्” इति.

P. 278 of the Madras Manuscript of the Prakaṭārtha

(*caturanuka*). According to the Vaiśeṣika authorities, it is only in this way that the difference in the *parimāṇa* or size of a *dvyanuka* and a *tryanuka* may be accounted for, though the size in both of these cases is the result of the *saṅkhyā* of the component parts. Śaṅkara, however, says that two *dvyanukas* form the component parts of a *caturanuka*. This remark is not consistent with the atomic theory as set forth by Praśastapāda and his followers. Vācaspatimiśra, in his Bhāmatī, seeks to forcibly drag Śaṅkara's text into Praśastapāda's mould, by suggesting an emendation to the effect that “यदापि द्वे द्व्यणुके” in the text of Śaṅkara quoted above ought to be read as “यदापि द्वे द्वे द्व्यणुके”. The alternative explanation which Vācaspatimiśra suggests in his Bhāmatī on the text of Śaṅkara under consideration is in no sense less strained than the emendation referred to. Vācaspatimiśra must have reconciled himself to the idea of doing so much violence to Śaṅkara's text in this connection, either because he was not familiar with the views of earlier Vaiśeṣikas like Rāvaṇa or because he deliberately sought to ignore those views perhaps for the reason that he considered them quite untenable. It is difficult to accept the former of these two alternatives, having due regard to the fact that Vācaspatimiśra was a polymathic philosopher of encyclopaedic knowledge. What Ratnaprabhā has said in explaining of the text of Śaṅkara under consideration has been verified by me and found correct, after consulting the manuscript of the Prakaṭārtha-vivarāṇa, which was acquired by me several years ago for the Govt. Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, through a peripatetic party working under me. It may be useful to note here that the author of the commentary called Prakaṭārtha-vivarāṇa on Śaṅkara's Brahma-sūtra-Bhāṣya, generally maintains the view of Sureśvara and Prakāśātman and differs from Maṇḍana and Vācaspatimiśra, not hesitating to expose, wherever possible, the weak points in Vācaspati's Bhāmatī. The tradition regarding Rāvaṇa's Bhāṣya on the Vaiśeṣika sūtras, which the author of the Prakaṭārtha-vivarāṇa relies upon, must be fairly earlier than the 13th century A. D., when Ānandagiri who used the Prakaṭārtha-vivarāṇa in one of his works, flourished.¹

1. Vide page xiv of the late Mr. Tripathi's introduction to Ānandagiri's *Tarkasaṅgraha* published as No. iii of the Gaekward's Oriental Series.

An interesting confirmation of the tradition about Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya comes from a rather unexpected quarter. In the latter part of the somewhat lengthy viṣkambha of the fifth act of the Anargharāghava, the following passage deserves attention :—

[नेपथ्ये—एकतः]

“भो भो लक्ष्मण, वैशेषिककटन्दीपण्डितः जगद्विजयमानः पर्यटामि ।
कासौ रामः? तेन सह विवदिष्ये ।

[अन्यतः]

भो भोः परित्राजक, कालसर्पखलीकारखर्जूलता न खलु सुखाकरी
वृश्चिकमन्त्रतान्त्रिकस्य । जाम्बवान्—कथं लक्ष्मणपरित्राजकौ संलपतः ।
श्रुणोमि तावत् (इत्यवधत्ते)

(नेपथ्ये—पुनरेकतः)

आः लक्ष्मण, सर्वविद्रावणः खल्वहम् ; को मया जनितमानभङ्गो न
पराजीयते ।”

(Anargharāghava, Nirnayasagar Edition, page, 161.)

With reference to the above extract, Rucipatyupādhyāya has the following note :—

“नेपथ्ये रावणवचनम् । कटन्दी वैशेषिकशास्त्रव्याख्याग्रन्थः, कटन्द
इति यस्य प्रसिद्धिः । सा च रावणेन कृतेति छलतो ज्ञापयति । ‘कन्दली’
इति पाठे कन्दली वैशेषिकटीका सापि रावणेनैव कृता ॥”

It may be inferred from the above extract that the tradition about Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya on the Vaiśeṣika-sūtras must be much earlier than the Anargharāghava and that this Bhāṣya might have been known by the designation of Kaṇḍī or Kandalī. If the latter of these two names should be correct, Śrīdhara’s Kandalī a commentary on Praśastapāda’s Bhāṣya, should be taken to have borrowed the name that was given to Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya. It would scarcely be difficult to see that, in the days of Murāri, the tradition about Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya must have become sufficiently old to admit of that Vaiśeṣika work being ascribed to the notorious Pratināyaka of the Rāmāyaṇa, in the same mytho-poetic vein that is responsible for the author of the Nyāyasūtras being equated with the saintly husband of Ahalyā. From the reference to Murāri, the dramatist, in verse 67 of canto 38 of the Haravijaya by Ratnākara, a Kashmirian poet belonging to the middle of the 9th century A. D., it may be made out that the author of the Anargharāghava should be

assigned to a date not later than that of Ratnākara. These evidences might well support the belief that Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya on the Vaiśeṣika-sūtras might have been earlier than Praśastapāda’s *Padārtha-dharma-saṅgraha*. It would be thus quite reasonable to suggest that Praśastapāda did not proceed to write a Bhāṣya in the usual style but wrote only an epitomical treatise, perhaps because he felt the pre-existing Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya would render another Vaiśeṣika-Bhāṣya superfluous. Though the fact that there was a Vaiśeṣika-Bhāṣya ascribed to Rāvaṇa can no longer be doubted, still the name *Kaṇḍī* occurring in the Anargharāghava requires further confirmation before it could be accepted as the original name which Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya bore.

In this connection, it may not be out of place to invite attention to the manner in which Buddhist tradition connects the name of Rāvaṇa, the Lord of Laṅkā, with one of the oldest texts of the Buddhists, called the Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra. The following quotation is given in the footnote 35 to page 252 of Vol. ii of Beal’s Buddhist Records of the Western Countries:—“The second treatise or sūtra in the fifth volume of the *Mdo* is entitled in Sanskrit ‘Ārya-Laṅkāvatāra-mahāyāna-sūtra’, a venerable sūtra of high principles on the visiting of Laṅkā. This was delivered at the request of the Lord of Laṅkā by Śākya, when he was in the city of Laṅkā on the top of the Malay mountain on the seashore, together with many priests and Bodhisattvas.” This association, legendary as it may be, of Rāvaṇa’s name with Buddhism and the similar association of the same name with the oldest Vaiśeṣika-Bhāṣya may be considered together with the way in which Praśastapāda’s Bhāṣya came to completely supersede the earlier Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya. Such considerations may lend support to the conjecture that the earlier Rāvaṇa-Bhāṣya was perhaps dominated by atheistic and pro-Buddhist proclivities, such as might have been quite in keeping with the text of the Vaiśeṣika sūtras, and with the spirit of the tradition characterising the Vaiśeṣikas as *ardha-vaināśikas*, while the work of Praśastapāda gave the Vaiśeṣika system a theistic turn and presented its doctrines in an anti-Buddhist Āstika setting.

When I was at Lahore in November, 1928, in connection with the Fifth All-India Oriental Conference, I happened to see in the Lalchand Library there a manuscript of the *R̥g-Veda-pada-pāṭha* attributed to Rāvaṇa. It is not at present possible to connect the author of this Vedic work with the author of the Vaiśeṣika-Bhāṣya attributed to Rāvaṇa.