

## On Viśâkhadatta.

By

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In connection with the preceding paper<sup>1</sup> it may be remarked that the argument which I adduced for settling the age of Rudraṭa, also holds good with reference to Viśâkhadatta, the author of the Mudrârâkshasa. For the opening stanza of that play contains a *vak-rokti* on the same subject and in the spirit as those of Ratnâkara's Pañchâśikâ. Of course, I do not mean to contend that *no* poet could have described Śiva as playfully evading Pârvatî's jealous questions by ambiguous answers *before* Ratnâkara had made such descriptions popular; but after he had done so, many a poet would imitate him. Thus Kâlidâsa's Meghadûta has set poets by the dozen to work out the same idea in their poems. Hence if collateral evidence renders it probable that a poet lived about Ratnâkara's time or later, the fact that his work contains a stanza in seeming imitation of Ratnâkara has a great weight to convince us that the imitation is real and not merely a seeming one.

Now the collateral proof we want in the present case is furnished by the closing stanza of the Mudrârâkshasa:

वाराहीमात्मयो नेस्तनुमवनविधावास्थितस्नानरूपां  
यस्य प्राग्दन्तकोटिं प्रलयपरिगता शिश्रिये भूतधात्री ॥  
म्लेच्छैर्द्विज्यमाना भुजयुगमधुना संश्रिता राजमूर्तेः  
स श्रीमद्वन्धुभृत्यश्चिरमवतु महीं पार्थिवोवन्तिवर्मा ॥

<sup>1</sup> *Ante*, p. 151 ff.

Instead of **विवन्निवर्मा** some MSS. read **वञ्जद्रुगुप्तः**. This is palpably a change of the original text. The general reader having no idea who Avantivarman was, the name of the hero of the play itself was substituted in its place. The question for us is who this Avantivarman was. Mr. TELANG thinks that he was the father of the Maukhari king Grahavarman, the husband of the sister of Rājyavardhana of Kanoj. Professor HILLEBRANDT, *ZDMG.*, xxxix. Bd., p. 131, coincides with Mr. TELANG and further suggests that Viśākhadatta who in a Paris MS. of the *Mudrārākshasa* is called the son of Bhāskara-datta, was perhaps a prince of Kāmarūpa, because Rājyavardhana's ally from that country had the name Bhāskaravarman. Against this view militates the style of the *Mudrārākshasa* which is most decidedly not written in the Eastern style or Gaudiyā Rīti. From the style which 'does not lay much claim to sweetness or beauty, but is always business-like and often vigorous' (Mr. TELANG, introduction p. ix) I would infer that the author was a Western poet. For, as Bāṇa has it, the poets of the West mind the substance of the poem only *prā-tīchyeshv arthamātrakam* (Harshach., verse 8). There is still an other indication that our poet was a native of North Western India. For he mentions among Chandragupta's enemies the king of Kulūta. This district, the modern Kullū lies in the Panjab, to the south east of Chambā (see CUNNINGHAM, *Ancient Geography of India*, i, 142, and KIELHORN in *Indian Antiquary* 1888, p. 9). It is not probable that a native of the East would single out a chief of a small principality in the Panjāb to represent him as an enemy of the hero of his play. But a native of the West might have done so.

Following the direction thus indicated it becomes obvious that Avantivarman, king of Kashmir, whom on insufficient grounds Mr. TELANG thought to be out of the question, must be seriously taken into consideration. As the scanty evidence we must rely on is contained in the stanza quoted above from the end of the *Mudrārākshasa*, we must omit no point to make out our case. First Avantivarman of Kashmir is well known as a patron of arts and science which received a fresh impulse during his reign. Secondly the king and his scarcely

less famous minister Śūra furnish a striking analogy to Chandragupta and Chāṇakya as described in our play. Śl. 4 of the fifth chapter of the Rājatarāṅgiṇī runs thus in the edited text:

आसतां चित्तिपामात्वौ तौ द्वावपि परस्परम् ।  
आज्ञादाने परिवृढौ भृत्यावाज्ञापरिग्रहे ॥

And the narrative of the events in Avantivarman's reign shows how intimately the king and his minister were related. It is evident that the play if acted before Śūra, must have been appreciated by him as a continuous compliment to himself if I may thus express it. In that case the play would appear as if written for this very purpose. Thirdly Avantivarman in the above stanza is likened to Viṣṇu in the boar Avatâr who saved Earth from primeval deluge. This comparison is not without meaning if applied to the king of Kashmir whose most famous deed told at length in the Chronicle, was the preservation of his country from inundations of the Vitastâ by constructing dykes and canals. Fourthly, an attentive reader will have remarked that in the last stanza Viṣṇu is mentioned though Śiva is the *ishṭadevatâ* of the poet. This will cease to appear strange on our assumption that by Avantivarman the king of Kashmir is meant. For he was a Vaishṇava, though he gave countenance to Śaivism: आ बाल्याद्विष्णवोऽयासीच्छैवतामुपदर्शयन् Rāj., v, 48. Fifthly, it is said in the stanza under consideration that the Earth terrified by the Mlechchhas took refuge in the king's arms. Well deserved is this compliment by the king of Kashmir. For he was a powerful and renowned Hindu monarch while the provinces on the Indus were under the sway of the Arabs. May be that Avantivarman's reducing to obedience rebellious tribes which must have preceded the establishment of his power as may be inferred from the Rājatarāṅgiṇī, is also alluded to. Sixthly, Avantivarman is styled, in the last line of the above stanza: श्रीमद्बन्धुभृत्यः This expression curiously agrees with the words of Kalhaṇa विभज्य बन्धुभृत्येषु बुभुजे पार्थिवः त्रियम् Rājat., v, 21.

To all these indications in favour of our assumption that by Avantivarman the Kashmirian king of that name is to be understood,

we may now add the argument adduced in the beginning of this paper, viz that the opening stanza of the *Mudrârākshasa* looks like an imitation of Ratnākara, who lived under Avantivarman and his predecessors. It therefore becomes as probable as anything can be made in want of direct evidence, that Viśākhadatta lived during the reign of Avantivarman (857—884 A. D.) whose, or whose minister's, patronage he coveted. Perhaps he did not enjoy it for a long time, and he is therefore not mentioned in the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* or rather the sources from which Kalhaṇa drew his work. Perhaps his name was not recorded because he may not have been a native of Kashmir. But for whatever reason his name is omitted in the chronicle of Kashmir, this fact alone cannot upset the result of our inquiry that Viśākhadatta in all probability lived in the second half of the ninth century A. D.

An other objection may be raised against my conclusion. For the king of Kashmir, that of Kulūta, and three more are styled, in the *Mudrârākshasa*, *mlechchha*. Now if this word had its primary denotation, viz. *barbarian*, it would be, at least, misapplied to the king of Kashmir; but it would also be misapplied to those of Malaya and Sindh. In fact, however, *mleccha* is also an abusive term for enemy, and, in this meaning, it is used throughout the play. That the king of Kashmir is made an enemy of the hero of the play, and is therein cruelly put to death together with the other inimical kings, need not astonish us. For the story on which Viśākhadatta based his play, may already have contained these details. And besides, as Avantivarman had made his way to the throne by vanquishing other pretenders, the hearers of the play, even if Kashmirians, would take no umbrage at the cruel fate of king Pushkarāksha, at a time when the horrors of the civil wars were still fresh in the memory of all. I therefore think that the objection just raised does not invalidate our arguments for making Viśākhadatta a contemporary of Avantivarman of Kashmir.

If the conclusion we have arrived at is correct, I undertake now to point out the very year in which the *Mudârākshasa* was first represented on the stage. In the prelude of that play a particular

constellation is alluded to, of which more details are given in 4<sup>th</sup> act. I think it highly probable that the said constellation is not a mere fiction of the poet for the purpose of connecting the play itself with the prelude, but that it occurred at the time when the play was acted. For 1) the prelude always refers to the time when the play was acted 2) if the constellation alluded to, actually occurred at that time, the spectators must have been aware of its astronomical detail and astrological purport, which knowledge the poet presupposes. He does not expressly say that the month meant was Mârgaśira, but it may safely be inferred to be intended; nor does he name the sign which is presided over by Mercurius but we know that it is Gemini. All this only a Joshî would have guessed, but the general spectator would not have understood the poet's allusions, if he did not know the horoscope beforehand. Assuming therefore that the poet describes the constellation at the time of the representation of the play, it is a matter of an easy calculation to find the day on which, during Avantivarman's reign, that constellation actually occurred.

The facts of that constellation which our calculation must take into account are the following: the full-moon of Mârgaśira occurred near noon (p. 175, TELANG's edition); there was no eclipse of the moon (p. 21); the moon stood in the sign presided over by Mercurius i. e. Gemini. I have calculated the moment of the full-moon of Mârgaśira for all the years of Avantivarman's reign, according to the elements of the Sûryasiddhânta, and have found that only in 860 A. D. it answers the proposition. In that year the full-moon of Mârgaśira occurred, in Kashmir, on the 2<sup>d</sup> December 21 minutes before noon; there was no lunar eclipse on that day, and the moon had entered the sign of Gemini. I therefore feel satisfied that Viśākhadatta composed the Mudrârâkshasa in 860 A. D. and that the play was acted on the 2<sup>d</sup> December.

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