

A Fundamental Discussion About The Commentaries On Bhāṣāvṛtti

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Received Oct. 12, 2017

Accepted Nov. 19, 2017

ABSTRACT

Puruṣottamadeva is a distinguished name in the Bengal school of Panini. unfortunately several scholars of the same name flourished about the same time and the problem of their identity is difficult of solution. puruṣottamadeva was the noted grammarian from Eastern region. His contribution to the history of Sanskrit Grammar is interesting though small. During his life time he has studied almost all the aspects of Sanskrit Grammar and had written his own commentaries on those works. He has recorded an interpretation of the Mathuri vṛtti (in Bhāṣāvṛtti), the oldest commentary on Panini preceding Patanjali, and another of the Nairluri Vṛtti (in the Jñāpakasamuccaya), which again preceded the Kāśikā. He has moreover preserved the names of many unknown scholars like Avalokopādhyāya and Śāśadhara. Puruṣottamadeva also has flourished the name of Śrutapāla, writer of a commentary on the Mahābhāṣya long before Kaiyaṭa. Unfortunately neither Puruṣottamadeva himself nor his contemporary scholars have mentioned the exact date or year of composition of the works ascribed to him. So it creates problems for determining his exact date. But on the basis of literary evidences gathered from his works it may be said that Puruṣottamadeva flourished during the first half of 12th century A.D. Puruṣottamadeva is credited with eight independent Sanskrit grammatical works. He is famous for his grammatical works like the Bhāṣāvṛtti or Laghuvṛtti, the Paribhāṣāvṛtti or sometimes styled as Lalitavṛtti, the Jñāpakasamuccaya, the Kāṛakacakra, the Gaṇavṛtti, the Daśavalakārikā, the Uṇādivṛtti and the Prāṇapāṇāṭikā, an unfinished work on the Mahābhāṣya. Though Puruṣottamadeva is credited with these works, still his prominent works are the Bhāṣāvṛtti, the Paribhāṣāvṛtti, the Jñāpakasamuccaya, and the Kāṛakacakra. In this paper we shall discuss not about the Bhāṣāvṛtti but about the commentaries written on it. They are still neglected and in the darkness of ignorance.

Bhāṣāvṛtti :

The Bhāṣāvṛtti from the author's own statement at the end of his treatise¹, may justify be presumed to have been based on the Kāśikāvṛtti and the the Bhāṅavṛti as models but with the omission of the sūtras relating to the Vedic accents (Svaraprakriyā) and Vedic Prakriyā. In Bhāṣāvṛtti, Puruṣottamadeva has commented only on those sūtras of Pāṇini which are connected with the classical language. It is an easy and popular manual of Pāṇini's grammar on the Laukika Sanskrit mainly for the use of the young learners of Bengal as a junior course of Pāṇinian system.

Formation of Sūtras in the Bhāṣāvṛtti :

It is a short commentary without the complexities. Here the sūtras are written according to the Aṣṭādhyāyī order. Like the Aṣṭādhyāyī, The Bhāṣāvṛtti is also divided into eight chapters (Adhyāya) and each chapter is sub-divided into four sub-chapters (Pāda). In all total, there are 3470 sūtras in this treatise. S. C. Chakraborty, in his edition of the Bhāṣāvṛtti has given a list of 383 Vedic sūtras in his foot-notes. Besides, there are 14 Śivasūtras and thus, the total number of sūtras seems to be 3867. From this information Narendra Kumar Dash in his book "Puruṣottamadeva As Grammarian" has concluded that may be at the time of Puruṣottamadeva threr were existed 3867 sūtras in the Pāṇinian tradition as against 3983 sūtras in that of the Kāśikāvṛtti's.

Some Important Characteristics of the Bhāṣāvṛtti :

Sṛṣṭidhara wrote in his book, composed nearly three hundred years after Puruṣottamadeva, that he composed the Bhāṣāvṛtti on the request of the king Lakṣmaṇasena of Bengal² omitting the Vedic (Chāndas) matters of the Aṣṭādhyāyī and deals with remaining portions pertaining to the classical language. Thus it totally ignores the second sub-chapter of the sixth chapter, for it exclusively deals with the vedic sūtras. It may be termed as a partial commentary and a light and practical book of grammar for Sanskrit language and literature. It was a gate-way to the Kāśikāvṛtti of Vāmana and Jayāditya. The Bhāṣāvṛtti bristles with quotations as illustrations, from the vast Sanskrit literature. In a very few cases, they have been cited by the author himself. Besides, it contains references to Śrutapāla, Keśava, Māthurivṛtti³ and Vyoṣa -- names rarely known in the grammatical literature.

In the Bhāṣāvṛtti while explaining the sūras with suitable examples, Puruṣottamadeva, in a number of places refers to the culture, social customs and topography of mediaeval Bengal. The

Bhāṣāvr̥tti was taught in the traditional Pāṭhaśālās in mediaeval Bengal (Present West Bengal and Bangladesh) till the end of the last century. Thus it may be said that the Bhāṣāvr̥tti was confined within Bengal.

Commentaries on the Bhāṣāvr̥tti :

Bhāṣāvr̥tti had attracted the notice of a large number of scholars on Sanskrit grammar. Gradually scholars began to write commentaries on the Bhāṣāvr̥tti. But it is very sad to say that all those commentaries are not available at present. Here we shall discuss about the four commentaries those we have found and are existing till now.

The Bhāṣāvr̥ttyarthavivṛtti :

The most popular commentary on the Bhāṣāvr̥tti was the Bhāṣāvr̥ttyarthavivṛtti of Sṛṣṭidharācārya (14th century A. D.) who was known in the seminaries as 'Śarmā' because At the end of each pāda of this commentary we find a suitable verse as colophon with the line : 'श्रीसृष्टिधरशर्मन्'⁴.

This commentary, as stated by Adam in his report, was still studied in the traditional Sanskrit Pāṭhaśālās in the last century. This work of Sṛṣṭidhara is very important. Here he has referred to many unknown and ancient writers like, Dṛṭidāsa and Umāpatidāsa's commentaries on the Baṭṭi⁵, Tathāgatācārya on the Vāsavadattā⁶ and Vallabhācārya on Māgha⁷. the book is replete with valuable quotations from previous writers. D. C. Bhattacharya in his book 'परिभाषावृत्ति, ज्ञापकसमुच्चय, कारकचक्रम्' has given an alphabetical list of the authorities cited by Sṛṣṭidhara. Sṛṣṭidhara, moreover, quotes many poetic lines from unnamed authors. His commentary is on the whole illuminating and there are many bright passages. He has consulted the commentary of Subhuti⁸ on Amarakoṣa. These are very notable sign of his early authorship and his excellence in grammatical literature. His date can be fixed in the last half of the 15th century A. D. As the circulation of his book appears to have been confined only in North Bengal, he was undoubtedly a Bengali Brahmin from this part of our country.

The Phakkikāvr̥tti :

The Phakkikāvr̥tti of Sanātana Tarkācārya is also a learned and discursive gloss on the few knotty passages of the Bhāṣāvr̥tti. The exposition of the compound 'शब्दानुशासनम्', for instance, takes up more than four pages at the very beginning. He refers to the views of many previous commentators on the Bhāṣāvr̥tti without naming them. He was a contemporary and close relative of the great Vāsudeva Sārvabhauma and flourished therefore in about 1500 A. D. The nature of the Phakkikāvr̥tti suggests that the studies on the Bhāṣāvr̥tti were in a most flourishing condition in Bengal during this time.

The Bhāṣāvr̥tti-pañjikā :

The Bhāṣāvr̥tti-pañjikā of Viśvarūpa of which a fragment exists⁹ is much smaller in extent than the work of Sṛṣṭidhara and is probably the earliest commentary so far discovered. But the scholars are unable to discover any reference to his views. Viśvarūpa stated at the beginning of his work that there were many previous commentaries on the Bhāṣāvr̥tti.

Tattvārthasandīpanī :

In the collection of the Manuscripts of the Baṅgīya Sāhitya Pariṣad, Calcutta¹⁰, only the first three folios of another commentary on the Bhāṣāvr̥tti have been preserved. The title of the work is the Tattvārthasandīpanī and the work is ascribed to the name Saṣṭhidāsa Mishrācārya (16th century A. D.). This work begins with the introductory verse as :

“नत्वा हैमवतीं गुरुं गणपतिं षष्ठीवराख्यः सुधी-
र्मिश्राचार्यपराभिदः (पदाभिदः) प्रकुरुते तत्त्वार्थसन्दीपनीं।
वृत्तिं न्यासमथेन्दुमित्ररचितं तन्त्रप्रदीपन्तथा
संसेव्यामलभाषितानथ गुरुन् भाषादिवृत्तेर्मुदा॥”

He is of opinion that Puruṣottama's title 'Deva' points to his Brahmanic origin 'अथ देवशब्दोपादानादात्मनो ब्राह्मण्यमाह।'

In his later life he might have adopted Buddhism. He has a long note on the compound word 'शब्दानुशासनम्', but Sanātana's exposition is much longer and more advanced. On the derivation of the word 'बुद्ध' he writes : 'केचित्तु बुद्धिशब्दादर्शआद्यचि बुद्धशब्दं साधयन्ति, तदसङ्गतं.।'.

This view refuted here is found both in Sṛṣṭidhara and Viśvarūpa and implied in the Bhāṣyavyākhyāprapañca. Saṣṭhidāsa is evidently identical with a foremost Kulīna of his days

Mishrācārya of the Maitreya family. He had a social alliance with Hari Bhaṭṭa, a son of the famous Naiyāyika Pragalbhācārya and was thus living about 1500 A.D.¹¹.

Conclusion :

All the four scholiasts discussed here were more or less contemporaries and marked the most glorious period of the Paninian studies in Bengal. So it may be said that the Bhāṣārṭṭi of Puruṣottamadeva attained the popularity at that time and many commentaries were written on it. Out of them these four discussed here have come to the eyes and exists in manuscript forms till now. These commentaries are very valuable from grammatical aspects and also from historical aspects to know about the education-system of Bengal at that time. So they still now seek the attention of the scholars and with the help of this paper these things will come to the light from darkness of ignorance.

Reference

1. Cf., काशिकाभागवृत्योश्चेत् सिद्धान्तं बोद्धुमस्ति धीः। तदा विचिन्त्यतां भ्रातर्भाषावृत्तिरियं मम॥ Bhāṣārṭṭi, Tara Publications, Varanasi, 1971, at the last page of the book.
2. Cf., 'वैदिकप्रयोगानर्थिनो लक्ष्मणसेनस्य राज्ञ आज्ञया प्रकृते कर्मणि प्रसज्जन् वृत्तेर्लघुतायां हेतुमाह -- भाषायामिति'। The Bhāṣārṭṭi of Puruṣottamadeva with The Commentary Of Śrīṣṭidharācārya, BIBLIOTHECA INDICA, Pub : Asiatic Society Of Bengal, New Series, No. 1318, Year, 1912, P. 2.
3. Māthurivṛtti, a gloss is referred to in the Mahābhāṣya on P. IV, 3,101 Vart. 3. See The Dictionary of Sanskrit Grammar, 1986, P. 306.
4. See the introduction to the Bhāṣārṭṭi, 1918, P. 19.
5. See the Bhāṣārṭṭyarthavivṛtti on Bhāṣārṭṭi. 1-3-12 and 1-4-96.
6. Ibid. on Bhāṣārṭṭi. III-2-4 and III-3-132.
7. Ibid. on Bhāṣārṭṭi. V-2-83.
8. Ibid. on Bhāṣārṭṭi. V-2-83.
9. See the Manuscript no. 3798 of GOVT. collection, R.A.S.B.
10. See the Manuscript no. 2108 of Vaṅgiya Sāhitya Pariṣad, Calcutta, as referred to in the introduction of D.C. Bhattacharya's 'परिभाषावृत्ति, ज्ञापकसमुच्चय, कारकचक्रम्'.
11. Sāhitya Pariṣat-Patrikā, 1347 B.E., P. 73.

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2. Dash, Narendra Kumar., Puruṣottamadeva As Grammarian, Pub : Agam Kala Prakashan, Delhi, 1991.
3. Bhāṣārṭṭi, Tara Publications, Varanasi, 1971.
4. The Bhāṣārṭṭi with the Commentary of Śrīṣṭidharācārya, BIBLIOTHECA INDICA, Pub : Asiatic Society Of Bengal, New Series, No. 1318, Year, 1912,