

CHAPTER VI.

DATE OF MĀGHA.

There is uncertainty regarding the date of most of Sanskrit writers and Māgha is no exception to it. The opinion of scholars is divided on this point and divergent views have been put forward. We summarise the several views and try to settle the date of the poet.

(1) R.C.Dutta¹ assigns Māgha to the 12th century A.D.

(2) Dr.F.Klatt² assigns Māgha to the beginning of the 10th century A.D. He bases his argument on the date of composition of the work called Upamitibhavaprapancakathā by Siddharsi in Sam. 962 i.e. 906 A.D. This author Siddharsi is mentioned in Prabhāvaka-carita (XIV, 10-16) as the first paternal cousin of our poet Māgha.

(3) Weber³ places Māgha prior to Halāyudha of the 10th century A.D.

(4) A.A.Macdonell⁴ remarks, "It (Śīśu.) probably dates from the ninth and must undoubtedly have been composed before the end of the tenth century".

(5) M.Duff⁵ puts Māgha in about 860 A.D.

(6) K.B.Pathak⁶ holds that Māgha flourished in the latter part of the 8th century A.D.

1. Cīv, Bk.V, chap.XII.

2. Vien.Or.J.Vol,p.236.

3. IL.196 note

4. SL.p.329

5. Chronology

6. JBTRAS, XX. pp.303-6.

Dr. Pathak takes his stand on the well-known verse¹ which, according to him distinctly alludes to the two grammatical treatises, the Kāśikāvṛtti and its commentary called Nyāsa. These two are composed by the eminent Buddhist authors.

Kāśikāvṛtti is a joint production of Jayāditya and Vāmana. The Chinese traveller I-tsing informs us that Jayāditya, the author of Kāśikā was a follower of Gautama Buddha and that he died about 661-662 A.D. The Kāśikā is explained by Jinendrabuddhi in his famous work called Nyāsa. But I-tsing is silent about Jinendrabuddhi. Both these works - Kāśikā and Nyāsa - are lasting monuments of Buddhist scholarship and as such any Buddhist may justly feel proud of them. And yet while I-tsing refers to Jayāditya, he does not mention his worthy commentator. I-tsing's silence is therefore significant.

From this silence, Dr. Pathak concludes that Jinendrabuddhi did not flourish during the interval of 44 years that elapsed between Jayāditya's death and that^{of} I-tsing's departure from India in 695 A.D. He therefore places the composition of Nyāsa by Jinendrabuddhi in the first half of the 8th century and consequently assigns Māgha to the latter part of it. Moreover, as Māgha is mentioned in 'Kavirājamārga' of Nṛpatunga (814 A.D.), he could^{not} have lived after the commencement of the ninth century.

1. Śiśu. II. 112.

(8) Aufrecht,¹ Bhandarkar² and F.Thomas³ agree with Dr.K.B. Pthak in placing Māgha in the latter part of the 8th century A.D.

(8) Ray assigns him the end of the 7th cent. A.D.

(9) Keith⁴, Krishnamachariar⁵ and Vedavyasa⁶ places Māgha in the middle of the 7th century A.D.

(10) Jacobi⁷ says, "We cannot, therefore, place Māgha later than about the middle of the sixth century."

(11) Pt.Durgaprasada⁸ and K.H.Dhruva⁹ agrees with Jacobi in placing Māgha in the middle of the 6th century A.D.

Over and above the views of these scholars, Bhojaprabandha, Prabandhacintāmaṇi and Prabhāvaka-carita make Māgha a contemporary of king Bhoja of Mālavā who flourished in the 11th century A.D. Thus we see that attempts have been made to put Māgha from the sixth century to the eleventh century A.D. Jacobi places him as early as the sixth century A.D. while the Prabandhas make him to flourish in the eleventh century A.D. We shall try to settle his date between these two extremes.

1. CC.I,p.446.

2. Rep.1897, pp. 18 and 32 39.

3. Int. to Kav. 69.

4. HSL, p. 124.

5. HSL,p.155

6. HSL, p. 82

7. Vien.Or.Jl.IV.p.61

8. Int. to Śiśu, NSP.

9. Int. to Mudrā, p.18, note 2.

But it is not difficult to find out that Māgha was not a contemporary of king Bhoja of Dhārā who flourished in the eleventh century A.D. The reasons for this are as follows:-

(1) Māgha is mentioned in a Kanarese inscription¹ dated Saka 1102:1180 A.D.

(2) A verse² from Śīśu is quoted by Bhoja in his Sarasvatī-kanthābharana.

(3) Māgha is mentioned in Yaśastilaka-campū of Somadeva³ who finished his work in Saka 881:959 A.D. when the Rāstrakūṭa king Kṛṣṇarāja III was reigning. This reference can prove that Māgha was not a contemporary of Bhoja, as the latter's uncle Munja was taken prisoner by Tailapa II who defeated Kakkal, the last of the⁴ Rāstrakūṭas and revived the Chalukya empire.

(4) Rājasekhara (900A.D) in the ninth chapter of his Kāvya-mīmāṃsā quotes one verse (I.1) from Māgha's Śīśupālavadha.

(5) Moreover, Ānandavardhana, a Kashmirian writer on poetics, who lived in the latter half of the 9th century A.D. quotes, in his Dhvanyāloka, Uddyota II, two verses (V.26 and III.53) of Śīśupālavadha as illustrations. Ānandavardhana lived under⁵ the king of Kashmir, Avantivarman (855-883 A.D.).

(6) A little earlier Vāmana (end of 8th century A.D.) quotes from Śīśu in his Kāvya-lamkāra.

1. IA, V. 46

2. Śīśu.IX.6 (CC,I.446).

3. PR, 1883-84, p. 45.

4. Dynasties of the Kanarese country.

5. Early Hist. Ind. by V.Smith, p.344 and Rāja Taranginī, VI.34.

(Śīśu.I.12,15 : Kāvyaḷ.V.1.10; V.2,10;

Śīśu.XX. 21 : Kāvyaḷ.V. 1. 13;

Śīśu. XIV. 14: Kāvyaḷ. IV.3.8.)

(7) Mukulabhatta in his 'Abhidhā-vṛtti-mātrkā similarly¹
quotes Śīśu. III. 33 anonymously.

(8) But the earliest reference to Māgha is found in²
Kavirājamārga of Nrpatunga. He is also known by the name of
Amoghavarṣa I and was the king of Rāstrakūṭa. He composed his work
Kavirājamārga shortly after his accession to the throne in 814 A.D.
It is evident that in the first half of the 9th century Māgha was
regarded by Nrpatunga and his literary contemporaries as a classical
author of established reputation and excellence as he is ranked in
the work mentioned above^{3 2} with Kālidāsa and this judgement is
accepted by succeeding ages.

(9) The attempts have been made to prove that Māgha was³
a contemporary of the poet Siddha (about 906 A.D.).

These references clearly prove that there is no iota of
truth in the legend of Māgha-Bhoja association. Hence the tradition
of Māgha being a contemporary of King Bhoja who flourished in the
11th century A.D. cannot be true. These references serve one more
purpose. They clearly show that Māgha certainly flourished before the

1. Abhidhā-vṛtti-mātrkā, P.11, NSP., B8bay, 1916.

2. K.B.Pathak: Int. to his ed. of Kavirājamārga and His article on
Nrpatunga and the authorship of Kavirājamārga- JBBRAS., Vol.XXII.

3. Dasgupta: HSL. p.189.

9th century A.D. or more particularly before 814 A.D. (as he is referred to in Nrpatunga's Kavirājamārga). Hence we have to look for his age somewhere between 600 A.D. (assigned by Dr.Jacobi) and 814 A.D. In other words the terminus ad quem is furnished by Nrpatunga while the terminus a quo is furnished by Dr.Jacobi.

The autobiographical stanzas at the close of our poem give us the name of the king whom Māgha's grandfather Suprabhad¹eva served as the minister. Though this name variously given by different Mss. of the work, it appears that the correct reading is Varmalāta as given by Prabhāvaka-carita.² An inscription³ from Vasantagadh dated Sam. 682 (625 A.D.) has brought to light the name of a king agreeing with the variant (Varmalāta) mentioned by Prabhāvaka-carita and most of the scholars have proposed a happy identity of the two kings. Relying on this epigraphic record, Māgha has been placed between 650-700 A.D. Thus the upper terminus is brought to 650 A.D. But there is one difficulty. It is the well-known verse of Śīsu.(II.112) which reads as follows.

अनुत्सृज्य न पद-न्यासा सद्वृत्तिः सन्निबन्धना ।
शब्दविद्येव नो भाति राजनीतिरयस्पर्शा ॥

where the words 'Vrtti' and 'nyāsa', according to Mallinātha and Vallabhadeva, convey a covert allusion to the Kāśikā and its commentary Nyāsa. Kāśikā is a grammatical treatise and is a joint production of Jayāditya and Vāmana while Nyāsa is a commentary on

1. Vide Chap.V. p.109 of the present thesis.

2. Krisnamachariar: HSL. p.155.

3. JRAS, 1906, 728.

Kāśikā by Jinendrabuddhi. Dr.K.B.Pathak maintains that Jayāditya, one of the authors of the Kāśikā died, according to the famous Chinese traveller I-tsing, in 661 A.D. and Nyāsa is not even mentioned by the Chinese traveller. This silence is significant. Dr.Pathak concludes from this, as shown above, that Jinendrabuddhi did not flourish during the interval of 44 years that elapsed between Jayāditya's death and that of I-tsing's departure from India in 695 A.D. He therefore places the composition of Nyāsa by Jinendrabuddhi in the first half of the 8th century and consequently assigns Māgha to the latter part of the same century. This makes the proposed identification of Varmalāta impossible. The learned editor of the inscription, following his collaborator Dr.Konow, has tried to reconcile the two conflicting evidences by making Māgha, with some stretch, a contemporary of Jinendra, and placing both¹ early in the 8th century.

But, as is rightly pointed by Dr.C.Bhattacharya,² Mallinātha's explanation may not be accepted in face of a weighty epigraphic evidence. For even though Mallinātha's interpretation of the passage be admitted, a different meaning has certainly to be sought for the words 'Vrtti' and 'Nyāsa' as they occur in a strikingly similar passage of Bāṇa's Harsacarita which, not unlikely, might have been the original from which Māgha drew: "प्रसन्नवृत्तयो

गृहीतवाक्या कृतगुरुपद-न्यासा लोक इव व्याकरणेपि ।

"3

1. Ep.Indica, Vol.IX, p.190.

2. 'Māgha and His Patrons', IA, August 1917, p.191.

3. NSP. Ed. p.96.

Evidence of earlier 'Vrttis' and earlier 'Nyāsas' is available in this connection. The ancient commentator Śankara, without referring to particular works, explains "वृत्तिः सूत्रविवरणं.... न्यासो वृत्तिविवरणं" ¹. Kielhorn also rejects Mallinātha's explanation. The word 'Vrtti' itself occurs in an introductory verse of Kāśikā and Haradatta and Jinendra in their comments thereon have preserved to us the names of no less than four earlier Vrttikāras, viz., Kuni, Chūlli, Bhatti and Nallūra. ² There were earlier Nyāsas along with these earlier Vrttis. This led both Bāna and Māgha to form their respective conceits.

Hence relying on this inscription and the identity of both the kings, Māgha can safely be placed between 650 -700 A.D.

The acceptance ³ of the existence of Bhojadeva of 665 A.D. Mālavā removes the chronological absurdity of Māgha's association with Bhojadeva who flourished in the eleventh century. The age of Bhojadeva the Second (665 A.D.) accords well with that of Māgha ⁴ (650-700 A.D.) .

The same inscription is helpful to us in arriving at the same conclusion regarding the date of Māgha (650-700 A.D.) from another point of view. It brings to our notice the name of one of the earliest Gurjara kings of the Gurjara kingdom of Bhinmal. Now Brahmagupta, the famous astronomer, who calls himself 'Bhīlāmāllakā-cārya' wrote his well-known 'Siddhānta' in 628 A.D. under king

1. JRAS, 1908, p.499.

2. Kāśikāvivarāṇanpanjikā, pp.1-2.

3. Vide Ch.V. p.115.

4. Vide Chap.V. p.106.

Vyāghramukha of Chāpa dynasty. He was the king of Bhinmal. Vyāghramukha must then have been the immediate successor of Varmalāta and the date 625 A.D. must be marking the closing period of his reign. It is therefore safe to believe that Māgha flourished latest by 700 A.D. Hiuen Tsang, who visited Bhinmal about 641-2 A.D. describes the reigning king in the following words:

"The king was a Ksatriya by caste, a young man celebrated for his wisdom and courage and a firm believer in Buddhism²". Evidently he is the immediate successor of Vyāghramukha and may therefore be looked upon as the contemporary and patron of our poet Māgha, the grandson of Varmalāta's minister.

This gives us the date of Māgha between 650-700 A.D.

This date is in conformity with the opinions of scholars that Māgha is posterior to Bhārevi (634 A.D.) whom he imitates in certain respects, Bhatti (6th cent.A.D.), Kumāradāsa (6 A.D.), Bāna (625 A.D.) and Subandhu (6 A.D.) whose dates range from 550 A.D. to 650 A.D. This is also confirmed by the statement of Dr. Jacobi, "We cannot place Māgha later than about the middle of the 6th century A.D."²

Moreover Vāmana (8th century A.D.) refers to Magha's Śiśu. in his 'Alamkārsūtra'. Now a great writer like Vāmana would never quote an author who is not much older and who has not established his fame. All good writers with a desire of increasing the worth of their literary creations always remain indebted to the

1. Watters: On Y.C.II.p.249. 2. Vien.Or.JIV. p.61.

older authors of established fame. It takes about a 100 or 150 years for a book to be authoritative. Vamana flourished in the 8th century A.D. Hence Magha can safely be placed in about 650 A.D.

Finally, our conclusion is in full accord with the following verses giving the traditional chronology of the ten great poets:

आदौ कालिदासः स्थाद्वघोषस्ततः परम्
भारविश्च तथा भट्टिः कुमारश्चापि पंचमः ।
माघरत्नाकरौ पश्चाद् हरिश्चन्द्रस्तथैव च
कविराजश्च श्रीहर्षः प्रख्यातः नवमो दश ॥