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ON THE BHATTIKAVYA.

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SOME modern commentators have ascribed the Bhaṭṭi-kāvya to Bharṭṛihari, the author of the celebrated Śatakas, without assigning reasons for their assumption. It has never been shown why this kāvya, dealing with the story of Rāma, is entitled Bhaṭṭikāvya. The imaginary derivation of the title from either of the names Bharṭṛihari or Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa is so far-fetched that it must be rejected, if strong evidence be not adduced to prove that either of them was really the author of the epic.

The poet does not give us his own name: all that he says is that the kāvya was composed at Valabhī, during the reign of Dharasena. It must be noticed here that the commentator Jayamaṅgala reads “Śrī-Dhara-sūnu-narendra-pālitāyām” for “Śrī-Dharasēna-narendra,” etc. This is merely a mistake. On reference to the very careful and exhaustive list of the princes and kings of Valabhī given by Mr. Fleet in his Gupta Inscriptions, vol. iii of the “Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum,” it will be found that there was no Valabhī king whose name was Śrīdhara or Narendra. Having read wrongly *sūnu* for *sena*, the commentator was forced to explain the passage by “Śrīdhara-sūnunā Narendra-nāmnā nripeṇa.”

Whilst narrating the story of Rāma, in twenty-two long cantos, the poet gives examples of all the important grammatical forms, of the rules of poetical composition, and of various Alaṅkāras, both in Sanskrit and Prakrit. The literary Prakrit in which some twenty-eight stanzas are composed, in the 13th canto, differs greatly from the Prakrits used in the Śakuntalā and the Ratnāvali. Being more allied to Sanskrit, it is doubtless earlier. A poet of the seventh century would not have illustrated the ideal Prakrit by so largely mixing it up with Sanskrit words. For composition in the purer Prakrit dialects was extant in all the dramas of that time.

The elaborate manner in which the poet has given illustrations of Śabdālaṅkāra and Arthālaṅkāra in the 10th canto shows that the poet meant to be exhaustive in what he took up to illustrate. How is it, then, that some forms of the Alaṅkāras, well known in the seventh century, are wanting in the Bhaṭṭikāvya? The cantos were lengthy enough to afford space for them.

Bhāravi, who is regarded almost as a contemporary of Kālidāsa, resorted to verbal jugglery in the composition of many stanzas in his Kirātārjunīya. In the Kāvyaḍarśa of Daṇḍin we get all sorts of examples of this jugglery. It follows that plays on words and tricks with letters were an established art long before Daṇḍin wrote his book towards the end of the sixth century. The Bhaṭṭikāvya gives, in the 10th canto, many examples of this sort of thing. But it is to be noted that some important forms of it, such as the fully developed Sarvatobhadra, Gomutrīkā, Arddha-bhrama, and Varṇa-karīśala (tricks with letters, such as "Nunaṁ nunnāni nānena," etc.), are not referred to. The poet of the Bhaṭṭikāvya, who composed his work with the distinct object of illustrating such tricks of composition, would never have omitted these instances of them if he had flourished after Bhāravi and Daṇḍin. This omission would, in the seventh century, have been construed as a failure on the part of the poet, since he had undertaken to teach his readers all the various forms of rhetorical composition.

The Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa, as we now have it, consists of seven cantos. That the seventh is a later development is known from the introduction of the epic itself. It can be easily imagined that it took time for the new story of the Uttarākāṇḍa to become popular. Now Kālidāsa and all his successors in the field of poetry never omit to narrate this later part of the story. The author of Bhaṭṭikāvya gives the story to the end of Laṅkākāṇḍa only. This is worthy of note. The Bhaṭṭikāvya is extremely lengthy, and contains twenty-two very long cantos; and yet, for no apparent reasons, the story ends with Rāma's return to Ayodhyā. Yet it would seem, from the general remarks in his introduction, that the poet proposed to tell the whole story.

Kālidāsa says in the introduction to his Raghuvamśa, that his subject had been dealt with before him by more than one poet. Vālmīki is certainly the poet whom Kālidāsa followed. Is the author of Bhaṭṭikāvya one of those referred to?

The text of the Mandasor stone inscription of 472 A.D. was composed by a poet named *Vatsabhṭṭi*. For the full text the readers may refer to Mr. Fleet's work on the Gupta Inscriptions. There is a striking resemblance between stanzas 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 in the inscription and the description of Śarat in the 2nd canto of Bhaṭṭi. That the name of the poet is *Vatsa-bhṭṭi*, that the date 472 is the date when Dharasena I was reigning as a Valabhī-Rājā, that the Mandasor text was composed in praise of Kumāra Gupta, whose Senāpati and feudatory this Dharasena was, are acknowledged facts. If we accept *Vatsabhṭṭi* to be the author of Bhaṭṭikāvya, many things which we cannot otherwise explain can be explained. It explains the name of the kāvya; it explains why some forms of rhetoric, popular during the days of Bhāravi and Daṇḍin, are not found in this kāvya; and it explains also why the story of Rāma, as it is given in the poem, does not include the later portion.