ON PARAMĀRTHASĀRA OF ABHINAVAGUPTA[1]

Mahāmāheśvara Ācārya Abhinavagupta-pāda thrived in the 11th century A. D. in Kashmir. His paramārthasāra is a gateway to Kashmiri śaivism. He slightly modified the ancient composition of the same name paramārthasāra of Ādiśeṣa, which is a treatise on the advaita view of world outlook. Ādiśeṣa's paramārthasāra, which was elevated to te level of śruti during the lifetime of Abhinavagupta, belongs to the pre-śaṅkara era. Ādiśeṣa's allegiance to the Lord Viṣṇu is clearly evident from his work. Although the trinity of godhead, --- Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśvara, --- functions by rotation in different kalpas, different communities are found to be traditionally devoted to one of them, --- and Kashmir is known for its very old tradition of śaivism. What could be a better way for Ācārya Abhinavagupta than to adapt Ādiśeṣa's paramārthasāra to the need of the Kashmiri devotees of the Lord Śambhu? Most of the 85 verses of Ādiśeṣa's paramārthasāra are kept almost intact with the Lord Śambhu replacing the Lord Viṣṇu. However, Abhinavagupta added 20 more verses to introduce the basic elements (tattvas) of śaivism and to round off the angularities created by his editing.

  One may wonder, why Abhinavagupta, a consummate scholar in philosophy and the science of drama, should base one of his best compositions on an existing scripture. His unflinching conviction for the advaita mode of explanation of the jagat and the saṃsāra together with his intensse desire to consolidate śaivism in Kashmir in a big way must have inspired him to undertake the daring job of recasting Ādiśeṣa's verses to the level of a superb original work.

  The theory of duality, the dvaita mode of world outlook, asserts that the spirit, the cetana tattva, and the matter, the jada taddva, exist side by side eternally and that the material bondage of the individual souls, the jīvātmās with their multiple personalities, carries an eternal history too. The theory of nonduality, the advaita mode of world outlook, asserts that one cannot bathe in a river even once, because the present does not exist. Hence the knowledge of the world that is decided by our buddhi is a false one. It is like the unreasonable scare of a snake falsely created by a piece of rope. This destroys the theory of eternal coexistence of the ātmatattva and the jadatattva. Secondly, the same sun is reflected in millions of tanks and ponds. The multiplicity of souls appears somewhat like that, and thus the second contention of dvaita is rejected too. In both the paramārhasāras the concept of duality has been demolished effectively with sharp examples.

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1. *If this article cannot be viewed properly, please download and install the font called URW Palladio Pali (TT) from the site* http://www.sanskritweb.net *of Ulrich Stiehl.*

There is no dearth of commentaries on the paramārthasāra of Abhinavagupta. The most popular is the commentary by Yogarāja. Yogarāja was a disciple of Kṣemarāja, who, in turn, was counted among the chief disciples of Ācārya Abhinavagupta. Being a devotee of the Lord Śiva, Yogarāja quotes profusely from the śivatattva. Another interesting feature of this commentary is that he quotes frequently from the bhagavadgītā and the various upaniṣads.

In order to appreciate Abhinavagupta's paramārthasāra with full satisfaction, one should go through the various stages of śaivism in Kashmir with its periods of ascent and decline. An excellent account of "Kashmir Shaivism" compiles by Sunil Fotedar can be viewed from the following site:

http://www.ikashmir.net/publications/doc/shaivism.pdf

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Chandaḥs (Metres) Used in the Paramārthasāra of Abhinavagupta :

(A). The very first verse that runs as " paraṃ parasthaṃ ⋯ śaraṇam prapadye " is in the indravajrā metre that belongs to the wider class of metres called the triṣṭup class of metres, each pāda (foot) of which contains in general 11 syllables (akṣaras). Usually a verse in the classical Sanskrit contains two lines. Each of these lines are broken into two parts. So, a verse is broken into four parts, each of which is called a foot of the verse. In particular, in each foot of the indravajra metre, the 3rd, 6th, 7th and 9th syllables are light (laghu). Here the cæsura (yati) falls at the end of a foot. If L and G denote a laghu (light) and a guru (heavy) syllables respectively, the four feet of the first verse can be broken into gaṇas (triplets of syllables) as follows:

LGL | GGL | LGL | GG   pa raṃ pa | ras thaṃ ga | ha nā da | nā dim
GGL | GGL | LGL | GG   e kaṃ vi | śiṣ ṭaṃ ba | hu dhā gu | hā su
GGL | GGL | LGL | GG   sar vā la | yaṃ sar va | ca rā ca | ras tham
GGL | GGL | LGL | GG   tvā me va | śam bhuṃ śa | ra ṇamp ra | pad dye

Now, when is a syllable laghu or guru? The vowels a, i, u, ṛ, ḷ are short (hrasva) and the vowels ā, ī, ṝ, e, ai, o, au are long (dīrgha). A syllable that contains a short vowel is said to be laghu and a syllable that contains a long vowel is said to be guru. Further, a syllable that ends with an ṃ or with an ḥ is said to be guru. A syllable the vowel of which is followed by a saṃyoga (a conjunct of two or more consonants) is said to be guru. A laghu syllable at the end of a foot may optionally be regarded as guru according to the need for identifying a metre. These rules of a syllable to be laghu or guru are applied above when we broke Verse 1 into its syllables. This metre is clearly recognised in the verse " vāsāṃsi jīrṇāni yathā vihāya ⋯ dehī " of the bhagavadgītā, and so it is in the indravajrā metre too.

(B). All the other 104 verses are composed in three varieties of the metre gerenally called the āryā metre, viz. āryā, gīti āryā, and upagīti āryā. Āryā is not a vṛtta metre, but is a mātrā metre. In a vṛtta metre the sequence of occurrence of the syllables in a foot is observed and at each position a syllable is checked whether it is laghu or guru there. This consideration identifies a particular vṛtta metre. On the other hand, in a mātrā metre each syllable in a foot is assigned a mātrā (weight) of 1 or 2 according as the syllable is laghu or guru. Thereafter the total number of mātrās contained in the foot is counted. These counts for all the four feet in a verse can identify the particular mātrā metre the verse is composed in. If the mātrā counts of the four feet of a verse are 12 | 18 (first line), 12 | 15 (second line), then the verse is identified to be in the pure form of the āryā metre. The mātrā counts for all the three types of āryā metres used by Abhinavagupta in his paramārthasāra are according to the following scheme:

1. Āryā   12 | 18
                 12 | 15
2. Gīti Āryā   12 | 18
                 12 | 18
3. Upagīti Āryā 12 | 15
                 12 | 15.

We give examples of these three metres from Abhinavagupta's work as follows.

(1). Āryā: Break Verse 2 of paramāthasāra by Abhinavagupta into its syllables. The number after each syllable denotes its mātrā:

gar(2) bhā(2) dhi(1) vÀ(2) sa(1) pūr(2) va(1) ka(1) = 12
ma(1) ra(1) ṇān(2) ta(1) ka(1) duk(2) kha(1) cak(2) ra(1) vibh(2) rān(2) taḥ(2) = 18
ā(2) dhā(2) raṃ(2) bha(1) ga(1) van(2) taṃ(2) = 12
śiṣ(2) yaḥ(2) pap(2) rac(2) cha(1) pa(1) ra(1) mār(2) tham(2) = 15.

(2). Gīti Āryā: Break Verse 4 of paramārthasāra by Abhinavagupta:

ni(1) ja(1) śak(2) ti(1) vai(2) bha(1) va(1) bha(1) rā(2) = 12
daṇ(2) ḍa(1) ca(1) tuṣ(2) ṭa(1) ya(1) mi(1) daṃ(2) vi(1) bhā(2) ge(2) na(2) = 18
śak(2) tir(2) mā(2) yāp(2) ra(1) kṛ(1) tiḥ(2) = 12
pṛth(2) vī(2) ce(2) tip(2) ra(1) bhā(2) vi(1) taṃp(2) ra(1) bhu(1) ṇā(2) = 18.

(3). Upagīti Āryā: Break Verse 18 of paramārthasāra by Abhinavagupta:

kam(2) bu(1) ka(1) mi(1) va(1) taṇ(2) ḍu(1) la(1) ka(1) ṇa(1) = 12
vi(1) ni(1) viṣ(2) ṭaṃ(2) bhin(2) na(1) map(2) ya(1) bhi(1) dā(2) = 15
bha(1) ja(1) te(2) tat(2) tu(1) vi(1) śud(2) dhiṃ(2) = 12
śi(1) va(1) mār(2) gaun(2) mukh(2) ya(1) yo(2) ge(2) na(2) = 15.
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