THE DATE OF VIDYĀNANDA: LITERARY AND EPIGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

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Vidyānanda, and Mānikyanandī (of the Parīkṣāmukha fame), the pontiffs of the Southern Church, along with Siddharṣi (active c. A. D. 880-920) of the Northern Church, belong to the last batch of the great epistemologists within the ambit of the Br̥had-Nirgrantha tradition. Vidyānanda’s known works, some of which are famous, are the Tattvārtha-śloka-vārttika, the Aṣṭasahasrī, the Yuktyanuśasanālāṅkāra, the Vidyānanda-mahodaya, the Āpta-parīkṣā, the Pramāṇa-parīkṣā, the Patra-parīkṣā, the Satyasāsana-parīkṣā, and the Śrīpura-Pārīvanātha-stotra. The writers of this century had for long been placing him between the last quarter of the eighth and the first quarter of the ninth century A. D. and thus to the pre-medieval times. While late K. B. Pathak is one of the earliest to situate him in c. A. D. 816, but without producing much supporting evidence, it was Darbarilal Kothiyā who collected much of the vital evidence which had bearing on the issue and presented it in his “Introduction” in Hindi to Vidyānanda’s Āpta-parīkṣā where he almost convincingly fixed his date to c. A. D. 775-840. Kothiyā’s main points (which incidentally includes, according to his method of investigation, an observation that Vidyānanda did not anywhere refute Vācaspati Miśra, the famous mid 9th century scholiast and commentator of the works belonging to various darśanas) had been summarized by Gokul Chandra Jain in his “Introduction” in Hindi to the Satyasāsana[A] Parīkṣā, pp. 29-31. Nathmal Tatiya, in his prefatory paper, “A compendium of Vidyānanda’s Satyasāsana-parīkṣā” to the Satyasāsana[A] Parīkṣā edited by Jain, had, however, pointed out that Vidyānanda, in the Satyasāsana-parīkṣā, had in point of fact quoted an inaugural verse from the Bhāmatī-ṭikā on the Nyāya-vārttika of Udyotakara (c. 6th-7th cent. A. D.) as cited by Vācaspati Miśra, and also had drawn attention to a reference by Vidyānanda to Miśra himself at another place there as “Nyāyavārttikakāra.” Seemingly based on the indicators in Tatiya’s prefatory, Jain, in his aforementioned “Introduction,” cited the relevant verse and the phrase from Vidyānanda, which went against Kothiyā’s assertion that Vidyānanda did not refute Vācaspati Miśra. Vidyānanda, on this showing, has to be placed some time after A. D. 850. Since the style of writing of Vidyānanda (as of Siddharṣi’s) and also the phrasing, choice of words, as well as approach betray the colour and flavour of medievalism, further doubts arise about his so far conceded early date.

In point of fact, the suspicion is well-founded as will now be shown. For determining Vidyānanda’s more precise date, a re-engraved copy in c. mid 12th century of an earlier inscription of ś.s.993/A. D. 1071-1072 from Gāvarvāda (medieval Gāvarivāda) in Karnataka is very helpful. In this inscription, the donee is a Digambara Jaina divine Tribhuvanacandra whose hagiological history is given, and therein Vidyānanda finds a mention as a confrère of Mānikyanandī. (See the Table appended at the paper’s end.)
The inscription gives one information which is crucial in determining Vidyānanda's date. It states that Gaṅga Permādi (Satyavākya Permānādi alias Mārasimha II (who is not the Gaṅga prince Satyavākya Rācamalla II), founded a Jaina temple at Anṅigere (Annigeri) in memory of his father Gaṅga Būruga II (and this is not Būruga I as Kothiya had determined, or surmised or may be had depended on some other earlier scholar's determination) and handed it over to Guṇakīrtti, the disciple of Māṇikyanandi; and Māṇikyanandi has been mentioned there as a confrère, possibly senior, of Vidyānanda. The known dates, according to the available inscriptions, of Gaṅga Permādi fall between c. A. D. 962 and 974. The Anṅigere temple, therefore, may plausibly have been founded and made over to Guṇakīrtti during those years. Assuming that Guṇakīrtti's guru Māṇikyanandi by that date was not alive and Guṇakīrtti himself was fairly advanced in age, the date of Māṇikyanandi, and hence of Vidyānanda, can be broadly bracketed between A. D. 900-950 or about 100-125 years posterior to what had been surmised by Kothiya and the writers before and after him. In this connection Barnet's remarks are worth noting. "One is tempted to identify this pair of scholars with the famous Vidyānanda-Pātrakesari and the latter's disciple Māṇikyanandī, who wrote the Parīkṣā-Mukha and its commentary Pramēya-chandrikā. But Mr. Pathak has shown reasons for believing that Vidyānanda-Pātrakesari is referred to in the preface of Jinasēna's Adi-purāṇa, and that the former was an older contemporary of Māṇikyanandi, the author of Parīkṣā-mukha; and Jinasēna's latest date is Śaka 820 (J.B.B.R.S. 1892, p. 219 ff.) Now the Māṇikyanandi of our inscription must have been living shortly before Śaka 890, since his disciple Guṇakīrtti was contemporary with the Gaṅga Permādi, hence the gap between the two dates cannot be bridged over."

But Jinasena in the Adipurāṇa (c. A. D. 830-839) referred to Pātrakesari and not to Vidyānanda: For Vidyānanda and Pātrakesari, though for long confounded, are not the same persons. Pātrakesari is an earlier Digambara epistemologist who flourished some time in the seventh century as was conclusively proven by Jugalkishor Mukhtar. Also, Māṇakyanandi was not the disciple but, as has been shown, the confrère of Vidyānanda as is clear from the Gāvarvād inscription. And the temporal bracket of the concerned Gaṅga Permādi's activities is c. A. D. 962-974. The epithets mahāvādī (the great dialectician) for Vidyānanda and tārikkarā (the sun among logicians) for Māṇikyanandi used in the inscription, leave no doubt that no other Vidyānanda and Māṇikyanandi but those two illustrious epistemologists are implicit in that context. Likewise, this is the only inscription which mentions these two notable figures. Also, the divine Tribhuvanacandra's claim of succession from those two illustrious pontiffs does neither seem spurious nor a pretence. No attempt at appropriation of these great names by way of establishing a glorious lineage for himself can be smelled in the draft; or else, some other well-known names such as Samantabhadra, Pātrakesari, Devanandi, and Akalankadēva could as well have figured. The hagiography has all the
appearance of being unambiguous and hence of indubitable genuineness. The temporal bracket of Vidyānanda, on this showing, can now firmly be ascertained to have been between A. D. 900 and 950 as noted earlier in the discussion.  

Mūla Saṅgha-Nandi Saṅgha (Valgāra-gaṇa)

Gaṅgānvaya-guru Vardhamāna

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\begin{align*}
\text{Mahāvādi Vidyānanda-svāmi} & \quad \text{Tārrikāra Māṇikyanandī} \\
\text{Contemporary of Gaṅga} & \quad \text{← Guṇākṛtti} \\
\text{Permāḍi (c. A. D. 962-974)} & \quad \text{Vimalacandra} \\
\text{Gūnacandra} & \quad \text{Abhaynandī} \\
\text{Gāṇḍavimukta I} & \quad \text{Siddhāntika Sakalacandra} \\
\text{Sarvamalānvita Gāṇḍavimukta II} & \quad \text{Mantravādi Tribhuvanacandra} \\
& \quad \text{(Ins. A. D. 1071-1072)}
\end{align*}
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ANNOTATIONS:

1. Siddhārṣi’s most famous works are the Upamitibhavaprapaṅcā-kathā (Sanskrit) (A. D. 905) and his commentary in Sanskrit (c. A. D. 900) on the Upadeśamāla of Saṅghadāsa gaṇi (c. mid 6th cent. A. D.). Recently, I have shown that the Nyāyāvatāra, a famous dvātrimśikā in Sanskrit on the Nirgrantha pramāṇaśāstra, is not the work of Siddhasena Divākara (c. A. D. 400-444) as had been held by many but of Siddhārṣi: (Cf. “The Date and Authorship of Nyāyāvatāra”, Nirgrantha I, Ahmedabad 1996.) Also may be added the Śakrastava as Siddhārṣi’s work, though hitherto steadfastly, insistently, but wrongly attributed to Siddhasena Divākara.

2. This is a further commentary on the southern adoption of the Tatttvārthadhigama-sūtra of Umāsvāti (c. A. D. 350-375), the latter work is called the Tatttvārtha-sūtra in the fold of the Digambara Jaina sect.

3. This is an enlarged commentary incorporating the Aṣṭaśatī of Bhaṭṭa Akalanakadeva (active c. A. D. 730-780) on the Aḥṭamīmāṃsā of Samantabhadra (c. A. D. 575-625).

4. The work is a commentary on the Yuktyanuśāsana of Samantabhadra.

5. Vidyānanda has referred to this work in his Tattvārtha-śloka-vārttika and in
the Astasahasri. The work till now is unavailable.

6. The work has been inspired by the inaugural verse of the Sarvarthasiddhi-tika on the Tatvartha-sutra by Pujiyapada Devanandi (active c. A.D. 635-680).

7. Probably inspired by Akalaṅkadeva’s Pramāṇa-saṅgraha as well as plausibly some other works of a few preceding authors.

8. It embodies a critical analysis on the characteristics of ‘patra’.

9. The work compares the epistemological stands of other philosophical schools with that of the Nirgrantha. Ed. Gokul Chandra Jain, JMJS No. 30, Calcutta-Varanasi-Delhi 1964. The information in annotations 1-9, 11, and 12 in this paper has been abstracted from Gokul Chandra’s “Introduction” in Hindi of the selfsame work, pp. 32-34.

10. This is a hymn addressed to Jina Pārśva of Śrīpura, the latter place was a tīrtha in that period, situated as it probably was somewhere in Karnatak.


13. Jain, p. 8. There is also other evidence inside Vidyānanda’s work. For example his citing from Sureśvara Mśra’s Sambandha-vārttika. Sureśvarācārya was the principal disciple of Śaṅkarācārya whose traditional date is A. D. 780-812. The reference to ‘Satyavākyadhipa’ in some of the Vidyānanda’s works had been taken by Kothiya (and possibly by Pathak) as Gaṅga Raśamalla Satyavākya, the nephew and successor of Gaṅga Śivamāra I (Jain, “Introduction,” p. 31.) However, “Satyavākya” was also the title of Gaṅga Permānḍā (Marasiṅha II) (c. A. D. 963-974), son of Gaṅga Būruga II. And it is he who is implied in the context under discussion.


18. Vidyadhara Joharapurkar, in his “Introduction”, summarizes the content of the Gāvarvāda inscription but offers no comment on the implications which have a vital bearing on the date of Vidyānanda as also of Māṇikyanandi. (Cf. Jaina Śīlālekha Saṅgraha, MDJG No. 48, Varanasi V. N. 2491/A. D.1964, pp. 10, 11.)