

Ramagiri In Jaina Literature

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THE location of Rāmagiri described in the *Meghadūta* of Kālidāsa has recently become a matter of keen controversy. Many years ago, while editing the *Meghadūta*, Prof. H. H. Wilson suggested that it might be identical with Rāmṭek, about 28 miles north of Nagpur, but beyond stating that the hill was covered with buildings consecrated to Rāma and was periodically visited by numerous pilgrims, he did not substantiate the identification with any evidence. Besides, his identification of Māla with Māldā in the Bilāspur District of Madhya Pradesh, and of Amrakūṭa with the Amarakāṇṭak hill where the Narmadā takes its rise, are not in accordance with the description of those places in the *Meghadūta*.¹ Prof. K. B. Pathak accepted this identification of Rāmagiri with Rāmṭek near Nagpur in his first edition of the *Meghadūta* but in his second edition of that work published in 1916 he proposed to identify the place with 'the Rāmgarh hill in the Central Provinces as the place intended by the poet owing to its extreme proximity to

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- 1 Kālidāsa describes Māla as a table-land situated to the north of Rāmagiri, while Māldā in the Bilāspur district lies southeast of Rāmṭek. Amrakūṭa cannot be Amarakāṇṭak; for the poet describes in the *Meghadūta* that the Cloud-messenger saw the Narmadā after flying considerable distance from Amrakūṭa with great speed. (तोयोत्सर्गद्रुततरगतितस्तत्परं कर्म तीर्णः । रेवां द्रक्ष्यसि etc.) Amarakāṇṭak is, on the other hand, the source of the Narmadā.

Amrakūṭa or Amarakantak, the source of the Narmadā'. The argument advanced for this identification does not bear scrutiny as shown elsewhere.² More than twenty years ago we proved the identification of Rāmagiri with Rāmṭek in an article published in the *Nagpur University Journal*, No. IX, pp. 3 f. Recently the controversy has been revived by Shri V. K. Paranjpe of Poona, who, in his Marathi and English books on the subject, has reiterated the identification of Rāmagiri with Rāmgarh, first proposed by Prof. K. B. Pathak. We examined his arguments in several articles in Marathi³ and also in English⁴ and showed how they are extremely fallacious, based as they are on forced interpretations of Kālidāsa's words and wrong identifications of some other places like Māla and Āmrakūṭa. It is not intended to repeat the arguments in favour of Rāmṭek or those against Rāmgarh, but to state what light is thrown on the problem by the evidence afforded by Jaina literature. The suggestion for the examination of this evidence was made to us by Prof. V. M. Kulkarni, Gujarat College, Ahmadabad, when he read the controversy on the problem and drew our attention to it some years ago. We propose to deal with the subject here.

The first mention of Rāmagiri in Jaina literature occurs in the *Paūmacariya* (Sanskrit, *Padmacarita*) of Vimalasūri.⁵ The date of this work is not certain. If the statement in that Prakrit *kāvya* (118, 103) could be believed, it was completed in the year 530 after the *nirvāṇa* of the Tirthaṅkara Mahāvira. The date of the Tirthaṅkara is not yet definitely proved. Some place his *nirvāṇa* in 526 B.C. while Jacobi places it in 467 B.C. According to the former view the work was completed in A.D. 4, while according to the latter it was finished in A.D. 63. But the statement in the *Paūmacariya* is not accepted by scholars. It is pointed out that according to a statement of Vimalasūri himself he was a disciple of Vijaya, who was himself a disciple of Rāhu of the Nāila-kula-vaṁśa. This *vaṁśa* is usually

2 *Studies in Indology*, Vol. I, pp. 15 f.

3 See *Samśodhana-muktāvali*, Part IV, pp. 18 f.; *Meghadūtāntil Rāmagiri arthāt Rāmṭek* (Marathi), pp. 50 f. See also its Hindi version.

4 *Studies in Indology*, Vol. II, pp. 285 f.

5 For the citations given below I have utilised the edition of this work recently published in the *Prakrit Texts Series*, Vol. VI (edited by Jacobi and revised by Muni Jinavijayaji).

identified with the Nagendra-gaccha, which, according to the *Kalpasūtra*, was founded in A.D. 93. So Vimala could not have completed his work in A.D. 4 or even in A.D. 63. Besides, the *Paūmacariya* contains references to *dīnāra*, *lagna* etc. which suggest a much later date. So Dr. Jacobi places Vimalasūri in the third century A.D. There is, however, no doubt that his work is the oldest Prakrit *kāvya* now extant.

Vimalasūri has taken the life of Rāma as the subject for his *kāvya*. *Paūma* (Padma) was another name of Rāma. The oldest Sanskrit work that describes the life of Rāma is the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki. The Buddhist and Jaina writers who have dealt with the story of Rāma have introduced several changes into it. Vimalasūri also has omitted or altered several incidents or descriptions in the *Rāmāyaṇa* story which appeared to be fantastic and unbelievable such as the killing of the Rākṣasas by monkeys, the six-month long sleep of Kumbhakarṇa, the ten-headed form of Rāvaṇa, or has given another explanation of them. He says, for instance, that the Vānaras who helped Rāma in the Battle of Laṅkā were not monkeys but Vidyādharas. Rāvaṇa had only one face, but as it was reflected in the nine gems of his necklace he appeared to be ten-faced.

Though Vimalasūri has thus altered some incidents in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, his story of Rāma is by and large the same as in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He describes for instance that Daśaratha, being very old, decides to crown Padma (i. e. Rāma) as his successor. But his queen Kaikeyī reminds him of the boon he had given her and asks him to give the kingdom to her son Bharata. So Padma leaves for the forest, accompanied by Lakṣmaṇa and Sitā. Bharata does not like this, but at the bidding of Kaikeyī and Padma he agrees to administer the kingdom till the return of Rāma.

Vimalasūri has described some events in the life of Rāma as in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmiki, but has altered some others. He describes that in the course of their wandering, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sitā reached the place Vaṁśasthapura. Though they were pressed by the prince of the place to enter the town, they preferred to stay on the adjoining hill called Vaṁśagiri. Vimalasūri thus describes the hill (40, 4) —

नाणाविहतरुछन्ने नाणाविहपक्खिकुलरवुग्गीए ।

वरकुसुमगन्धपवणे निज्जरपवहन्तविमलजले ॥

(The hill was densely covered by trees of various kinds; birds of different kinds were singing sweetly there; it was wafted by breezes laden with the fragrance of excellent flowers; and streams of clear water were flowing therefrom.)

The prince of the place supplied all the necessities of life to Rāma and others and at Rāma's bidding, erected many shrines of the Jinendras.⁶

तथैव वंससेले पडमाणत्तेण नरवरिन्देण ।
जिणवरभवणाइं तओ निवेसियाइं पभूयाइं ॥

After staying there for some days, Rāma said to Lakṣmaṇa,⁷

अह अन्नया कयाई भणिओ रामेण तत्थ सोमिस्सि ।
मोत्तूण इमं ठाणं अन्नं देसं पगच्छामो ॥
निमुणिज्जइ कण्णरवा महाणई तीए अत्थि परएणं ।
मणुयाण दुग्गमं चिय तरुवहलं दण्डयारणं ॥

(Let us now leave this place and move to another. There is said to be a great river named Karṇaravā, after crossing which one comes across (the great forest called) Daṇḍakāraṇya abounding in trees, which is inaccessible to human beings.)

So Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā left the place and proceeded to Daṇḍakāraṇya. Vimalasūri then says,⁸

रामेण जम्हा भवणोत्तमाणि जिणिन्दचन्दाण निवेसियाणि ।
तथैव तुङ्गे विमलप्यभाणि तम्हा जणे रामगिरी पसिद्धो ॥

(Since Rāma got erected excellent and brilliant temples of the Jinendras on the high hill, it became well-known thereafter by the name of Rāmagiri.)

It is difficult to say how far the description of Rāmagiri cited above from Vimalasūri's *Paūmacariya* is historically correct. Much of it appears to be imaginary, but it clearly shows that in the age of Vimalasūri (i.e. in circa third century A.D.) there was a hill known by the name of Rāmagiri north of Daṇḍakāraṇya. Vimalasūri tells us that the hill got this name because Rāma stayed there for some time and got some Jaina temples erected there. The geographical situation of this Rāmagiri suits Rāmṭek. That this Rāmagiri (Rāmṭek) lay to the north of Daṇḍakāraṇya appears clear from the description in Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita*.⁹ On the hill of Rāmṭek there is still shown the place where the Śūdra ascetic Śambūka was practising

6 *Paūmacariya*, 40, 9.

7 *Ibid.*, 40, 12-13.

8 *Ibid.*, 40, 16.

9 Act II.

penance. He was beheaded by Rāma, but immediately thereafter he was turned into a Śiva-liṅga, now called Dhumreśvara. This tradition is at least seven hundred years old; for it is mentioned in a stone inscription of the Yādava period fixed in the front wall of the temple of Lakṣmaṇa on the hill of Rāmṭek. His name occurs there in a slightly different form, viz., Dhumrākṣa.¹⁰ We learn from Bhavabhūti's *Uttararāmacarita* that the Daṇḍakāraṇya containing large hills and dales infested by dreadful ferocious beasts stretched southward from the place of Śambūka's hermitage up to the confines of Janasthāna, on the bank of the Godāvari.¹¹ The situation of Rāmṭek thus answers to the description in the *Paūmacariya*. That the place was known by the name of Rāmagiri in the fourth century A.D. is clear from the Riddhapur plates of the Vākāṭaka dowager queen Prabhāvatiguptā, who made one of her grants there near the *pādukās* of Rāmagirisvāmin (i. e. Rāmacandra).¹² Kālidāsa also describes that the hill of Rāmagiri had the venerable *pādukās* of Raghupati (Rama) installed on it¹³. The way of the Cloud-messenger described in the *Meghadūta* suits Rāmṭek and no other place,¹⁴ and there are reasons to suppose that Kālidāsa sojourned for some time in the neighbouring Vākāṭaka capital Nandivardhana, which lies only about three miles from Rāmṭek.¹⁵ The hill of Rāmṭek was thus undoubtedly known as Rāmagiri in the fourth century A.D. and it is not unlikely that the place was known by the same name a century or two before in the age of Vimalasūri. In describing the hill of Rāma's sojourn as Rāmagiri which lay to the north of Daṇḍakāraṇya, Vimalasūri was not simply drawing on his imagination, but appears to have known the tradition about Rāmṭek.

In one respect, however, Vimalasūri's description appears to be imaginary. He tells us that at the instance of Rāma several temples of Jinendras were erected on the hill, which later became known as Rāmagiri. There are now no remains of any temples of the Jaina

10 See श्रीरामचन्द्रस्य करेण चंद्रहासादृतः प्राप्य पदं सुरारेः । स शंबुकः शूद्रमुनिर्महीभराजेऽत्र धूम्राक्ष इति प्रसिद्धः ॥ *Ep. Ind.*, Vol. XXX, p. 17.

11 See एतानि खलु सर्वभूतरोमहर्षणान्युन्मत्तचण्डश्चापदकुलसंकुलगिरिगह्वराणि जनस्थानपर्यन्तदीर्घारण्यानि दक्षिणां दिशमभिवर्तन्ते । *Act. II*.

12 See रामगिरिस्वामिनः पादमूलात् । *C. I. I.*, Vol. V, p. 35.

13 See वन्यैः पुंसां रघुपतिपदैरङ्कितं मेखलायु । V. 12.

14 See *Studies in Indology*, Vol. I, pp. 15 f.

15 *Ibid.*, pp. 19 f.

Tirthaṅkaras on the hill of Rāmṭek. But there were evidently some in the vicinity of Rāmṭek. A huge and beautiful image of Śāntinātha about 15 ft. in height, was discovered some years ago in the vicinity of Rāmṭek and has now been installed in a magnificent temple erected by the munificence of the Jaina community at Rāmṭek. In the same temple are also installed the images of the Tirthaṅkaras Pārśvanātha and Candraprabha.

Rāmṭek has been known as a sacred place from very early times. There are several temples of Hindu gods and goddesses on the hill of Rāmṭek. On one of the off-shoots of the hill there is a cave known from very early times as the cave of Nāgārjuna. At Mansar, which lies in the vicinity of Rāmṭek, there are remnants of a Buddhist Vihāra. Its Jaina images have been mentioned above. The place was thus regarded as sacred by the followers of all the three great religions, Hindu, Bauddha and Jaina.

The description of Rāmagiri in the *Paūmacariya*, on the other hand, definitely goes against the identification of Rāmgarh with Rāmagiri of Kālidāsa's *Meghadūta*, for, firstly, there are no remains or vestiges of Jaina temples on or in the vicinity of Rāmgarh and, secondly, there is no evidence that Rāmgarh lay to the north of ancient Daṇḍakāraṇya.

