

## INTERPRETING VĀKYAPADĪYA 2.486 HISTORICALLY (PART 2)

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1.1 In the first part of this article, to be published in the Dr K. Kunjunni Raja Felicitation Volume, I have pointed out, among other things, that the explanation of *parvatād āgamam labdhvā bhāṣya-bījānusāribhiḥ // sa nīto bahu-śākhatvaṃ candrācāryādibhiḥ punaḥ //* given in Puṇyarāja's or Helārāja's Tīkā is contextually unjustifiable. In the present part I wish to analyse the Tīkā explanation further to establish its mythic character and to account for its acquisition of that character. This is how the Tīkā comments on the verse: *atha kālāntareṇa candrācāryādibhir āgamam labdhvā tena copāya-bhūtena śakalāni bhāṣyāvasthitāni yāni nyāya-bījāni tāny anuṣṛtya vyākaraṇāgamam punar api sphītatām nīta ity abhi-dhātum āha* [at this point 2.486 is cited] *parvatāt tri-kūṭaika-deśavartī-tiliṅgaika-deśād iti. tatra hy upala-tale rāvaṇa-viracito mūla-bhūta-vyākaraṇāgamas tiṣṭhati. kenacic ca brahma-raksasānīya [sa?] candrācārya-vasurāta-guru-prabhṛtīnām datta iti. taiḥ khalu yathāvad vyākaraṇasya sva-rūpam tata upalabhya, sataṭam ca śiṣyānām vyākhyāya [vyākaraṇāgamo?] bahu-śākhitvaṃ nīto vistaram prāpita ity anuṣṛyate.*<sup>1</sup>

2.1 The Tīkā shares the detail *parvatāt* with the verse. Its identification of *parvata*, no doubt based on the traditional information it had, is very plausible (see Part 3 of this article to be published in the near future). However, the association it displays with a mountain or hill seems to be different from the one which the author of the verse displays. The latter's phrase, *dāksīnātyeṣu granthamātre vyavasthitah*, indicates that he looked upon *parvata* simply as a source or location of documents in which the *vyākaraṇāgama* was preserved; he does not seem to view, at least in verses 481-490, *parvata* as something in contact with the *vyākaraṇāgama* in a mysterious way - as having the presence of *vyākaraṇāgama* in a form inaccessible to ordinary men. However, this is precisely the way the Tīkā author looks upon *parvata*; in his view, *parvata* is a place of revelation. Now, this type of association with mountains or hills is not rare. There are several instances in religious literature of knowledge gained miraculously at elevated places, and I would be surprised if scholars of religion have not already

included elevated places among the locales of revelation and tried to explain why they figure so frequently in accounts of revelation. What is significant is that the knowledge gained thus is usually said to be fundamental (*mūla-bhūta*) and is claimed to be the content of an original insight which subsequently suffered distortion. Probably the closest modern parallel to the terse narrative in the *Ṭikā* is to be found in what has been written in the case of Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon movement. Smith's story<sup>2</sup> agrees with the one contained in the *Ṭikā* in all the crucial structural elements - revelation on a hill or mountain, assistance by a super-human creature (angel, *brahma-rakṣas*), access to an otherwise invisible and long-lost ancient account written<sup>3</sup> on a highly durable material (golden tablets in the case of Smith, *upala-tala* in the case of Candracārya), and the claim made about the discovered account that it can lead people back to the true, original understanding.

2.2 We are told in the *Ṭikā* that the *mūla-bhūta vyākaraṇā-gama* remains or endures (*tiṣṭhati*) on a rock surface. I have indicated above that in accounts of revelation the object which serves as the immediate source of knowledge is not rarely one which can be durable material for inscribing. This is only logical, given the situational elements that the knowledge to be discovered is lost for a long time and that revelations to persons far removed from each other (i.e. repeated revelations over long segments of time) are to be accounted for. However, there could be more to the appearance of the *Ṭikā* detail than the structural strains in revelation stories or the activation of a particular mythic element. Influence of certain contemporary factors cannot be excluded from consideration:

(a) Kṣema-rāja, who was most probably only one generation removed from the author of the *Ṭikā*,<sup>4</sup> tells us in his *Śiva-sūtra-vimarśinī* that the *Śiva-sūtras* were revealed to Vasugupta on the Mahā-deva-giri after Śiva advised him in a dream to acquire the secret doctrine [written (see note 3)] on a great rock (*mahati śilā-tale*).<sup>5</sup> The structural similarity of this story with the story recorded in the *Ṭikā* or with the story of Joseph Smith is obvious. What is specifically interesting at this point is that the tradition of Kashmir Śaivism, with which the *Ṭikā* author was in all probability familiar, contained a revelation account in which the matter to be revealed was available on a rock. The probability that this detail influenced the *Ṭikā* author's or his predecessors' narrating of the account of Candracārya is all the greater because the rock associated with Vasugupta is known as *Shankarpala*<sup>6</sup> (= *Śaṅkarapāla*); the word *upala* thus figures in the narrative of Vasugupta's extraordinary experience as well as in that of Candracārya's. Also to

be noted in this connection is the fact that the *Ṭikā*, unlike verse 486, associated Vasu-rāta, whose name resembles the name Vasu-gupta, with the acquisition of the *mūla-bhūta āgama*.<sup>7</sup>

(b) The tenth to twelfth centuries of the Christian era, in the atmosphere of which the *Ṭikā* author probably lived (see note 4), seem to be marked in north India by considerable interest in rock and stone inscriptions. The Mahā-nāṭaka or Hanuman-nāṭaka is said to have been discovered on a rock surface during the reign (1011-55) of Bhoja (De 1959: 218-20). Historians like Kalhaṇa (twelfth century), as we learn from Rāja-taraṅgiṇī 1.15, evidently studied the edicts, grants, and inscriptions accessible to them. The enlightened Paramāra rulers apparently were so keenly aware of the loss of literature due to use of perishable writing materials that they got inscribed on stone slabs some of the appropriate literary creations of their times as well as some basic texts of *śāstras* such as the Māheśvara sūtras or Pratyāhāra sūtras (Bhatia 1967: 94, 320, 320 fn. 6, 324, 326, 340-41). It need not surprise us, therefore, if in this atmosphere the *Ṭikā* author or those who preceded him in Bharṭṛ-hari studies thought that if an *āgama* had been preserved for a long time it must have been inscribed on a rock somewhere.

(c) Conceivably, by the end of the first millennium A.D., the knowledge of the scripts in which older inscriptions were written was lost to such an extent that a tendency to view them as containing secret, mysterious messages decipherable only in an extraordinary experience developed among the people.<sup>8</sup> Such a tendency is very likely to make itself felt in the exegesis of 486 if the *parvata* mentioned in that verse was taken to be Śrī-parvata (see Part 3). Since Śrī-parvata is particularly famous for miracles and the presence of beings having extraordinary capacities,<sup>9</sup> the then unintelligible inscriptions in its vicinity<sup>10</sup> could have been viewed as mysterious writings of great antiquity and significance comprehensible only to those who possessed superhuman capacities of the mind.

2.3 Rāvaṇa is the composer or author of the *mūla-bhūta vyākaraṇāgama*, according to the *Ṭikā*. This detail is internally consistent in that it agrees with four other details:

(a) The *āgama* was preserved in the South.

(b) It was discovered at Tri-kūṭa, a mountain or mountain range surrounding Rāvaṇa's Laṅkā, as the sources recorded in part 3 have said.

(c) It was available, most probably in an inscribed form, on a rock, in chiselling which the Rākṣasas associated with Rāvaṇa seem to have specialised.<sup>11</sup>

(d) It was delivered by a *brahma-rakṣas*, that is, by a being having genetic and scholastic affiliations with the brahmins but opposing in conduct, on account of uncontrollable pride and greed, the *dharma* of the brahmins.<sup>12</sup> Rāvaṇa was the son of the brahmin Viśravaśa (*Vālmīki-rāmāyaṇa* 7, chapters 7 and 9). The tradition frequently speaks of him as a very learned individual (cf. Bhāṣa's *Pratimā*, Act 5). However, his deeds bore no relation to his lineage or learning.

2.4 The mention of Rāvaṇa is interesting also because it agrees with the attribution of many other works to Rāvaṇa. Sudhīrakumāra Gupta (1967) has edited and translated into Hindi the fragments said to come from Rāvaṇa's commentary on the Ṛgveda. Muni Jambūvijaya (1961: 150-1, 174; 1966: *Prākkathanam* p.20; 1976: 498-9), and Anantalal Thakur (1961: 12-4) have gathered much valuable information on the Kaṇḍī, which was a *bhāṣya* or *tīkā*, ascribed to Rāvaṇa in the Vaiśeṣika system (cf. Potter 1977: 238-9; Matilal 1977: 60-2). Aufrecht (*Catalogus Catalogorum* pt. I p.526) mentions a *Srī-sūkta-bhāṣya* by Rāvaṇa, as well as works called *Rāvaṇabhait* (or *Chalākṣara*; pt. I p.526, pt. II p. 123) and *Rāvaṇa-cetaka* (pt. III p. 112). Three short texts relating to medicine, *Kumāra-tantra*, *Arka-prakāśa*, and *Nāḍī-parīkṣā*, are also said to have been composed by Rāvaṇa (Filliozat 1937: 171-8). The first is available in several languages, including Chinese and Arabic, while the last is published in many editions by the Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office (6th ed. 1976; Haridas Sanskrit Series no. 141) and Chowkhambha Orientalia (1st ed. 1975). A hymn to Śiva said to have been composed by Laṅkeśvara (an epithet of Rāvaṇa) is published in *Kāvya-mālā* pt. 1 (1866; 2nd ed. 1893). In short, there is a tendency in Sanskrit literature toward (a) confusing some historical authors named Rāvaṇa<sup>13</sup> with the mythical Rāvaṇa of the Rāmāyaṇa fame and (b) attributing works in almost all branches of learning to Rāvaṇa. In the latter aspect, Rāvaṇa is almost a rival of Śiva, whose devotee he is said to be.

2.5 The *Ṭikā* characterisation of the *āgama* as *mūla-bhūta* befits a way of thinking according to which things evolve and dissolve cyclically. I think it need not be established anew that a dominant tendency in Indian culture is to look upon the products or evolutes in various spheres as emerging and submerging in rotation. According to most schools of Indian philosophy, the universe arises, expands, dissolves, and returns to

its original cause. According to more than one school, the Vedas appear from the *pranava* seed and eventually again become one with it. In the *Ṭikā* account, this *sarga-sthiti-laya* way of thinking has been brought to bear on the science of grammar. Grammar is viewed as a body of knowledge that develops from a perpetual subtle source, is thrown in a state of disarray, and can be reorganised through reference to the subtle source. The latter remains as a constant basis or blueprint in the background.

2.6 That a *brahma-rakṣas* was instrumental in imparting Rāvaṇa's *mūla-bhūta vyākaraṇāgama* to Candracārya is also an interesting detail. As indicated above, it agrees with Rāvaṇa's description in literature as a fallen brahmin. What is more interesting is that at least one more grammarian is said to have become a ghost or spirit of similar sort. K.V. Abhyankar (1954) tells us that, according to a tradition current among Pāṇinīyas of the post-Siddhānta-kaumudī period, Bhaṭṭoji Dīksita became a *brahma-samandha* (Marathi equivalent of *brahma-rakṣas*) and instructed Jñānendra-sarasvatī, so that the latter could write his *Tattva-bodhinī* commentary. I shall have more to say on this point in Part 4, which will be devoted to a comparison of the *Ṭikā* account with other accounts of Candracārya's acquisition of the *āgama*.

2.7 Thus, once one realises that the event recorded in 2.486 has been mythologised by the time the *Ṭikā* was written, one sees a host of factors operating behind the words of the *Ṭikā*, and a fascinating web of mythological and historical strands emerges. It becomes apparent, as the word *anuśrūyate* in the *Ṭikā* explanation indicates, that the author of the *Ṭikā* is not the 'author' of the story or myth narrated. To a large extent, if not exclusively, he merely connects his traditional information with the verse.

#### Notes

1. An English summary of the *Ṭikā* explanation is given in section 2.5 of the first part of this article. The aspects in which the *Ṭikā* explanation appears hazy and hesitant are clarified in a footnote to that section.

2. Although scores of narrations of Joseph Smith's acquisition of *The Book of Mormon* plates are available, the following two publications will furnish most of the necessary details in the clearest manner: (a) Donna Hill, *Joseph Smith the first Mormon*, Garden City (N.Y.): Doubleday and Company, 1977, pp. 70-97; (b) William Edwin Berrett, *The restored church*, Deseret Book Company, thirteenth edition, 1965, pp. 22-60.
3. The *Ṭikā* does not specify that the *āgama* was 'written', but that would be the natural implication of *upala-tale tiṣṭhati* 'remains on the surface of a rock/stone'.
4. Kṣema-rāja was a disciple of Abhinava-gupta who, in turn, was a student of Indu-rāja, brother of Helā-rāja (most probably), whom I consider to be the probable author of the *Ṭikā*.
5. See Chatterji 1914: 26-31. The pictures of the Mahā-deva-giri and the rock are given at the beginning of Chatterji 1911.
6. This detail is taken from Chatterji 1911, who is not responsible for the Sanskritised form *śaṅkaropala*. Chatterji (1914: 26-31) adds that Kallaṭa, who was Vasu-gupta's disciple, can be said to corroborate the Śiva, Mahā-deva-giri, and dream elements in Kṣema-rāja's account, but not the rock element, and that the tradition as recorded by Rāma-kantha, Utpala, and Bhāskara differs in that according to it Vāsu-gupta received the doctrine from a *siddha*.
7. It is perhaps revealing that in Punyarāja's summary verses appended to the *Ṭikā* Candrācārya of 2.486 does not figure; only Vasurāta is mentioned: *bhraṣṭasyāmmāya-sārasya vaiyā-karaṇa-gāminah / mūla-bhūtam avāpyātha parvatād āgamah svayam // ācārya-vasurātena nyāya-mārgān vicintya sah / prañito vidhivac cāyam mama vyākaraṇāgamah //*
8. Cf. Ojha 1918: *bhūmikā* p.2, Burnell 1878: Introduction pp. 1-2, fn. 1.
9. (a) Bāṇa, *Kādambarī* (Peterson's third edition, p. 227): *śrī-parvatāścārya-vārttā-sahasrābhijñena ... jarad-drāviḍa-dhārmikena*; Abhinava-gupta, *Locana on Ānanda-varḍhana's Dhvanyāloka* 1.13: *na hi nirvighnottama-siddhāyo 'pi śrī-parvatādaya imān siddhiṃ vidadhyuh*; Kalhana, *Rāja-taraṅgiṇī* 3.267 and 4.390: *śrī-parvate pāsupata-vratī-vesam tam āgatam / ācakhyāu aśva-pādākhyah siddhah kandaśanam dadat //*

... *abhagna-śama-saṁvega-labdha-siddhir narādhipaḥ / śrī-parvatādāv adyāpi bhavyānām eti dr̥k-patham //*. In Bhava-bhūti's *Mālatī-mādhava* (speech after 8.8, speech at the beginning of the ninth act, 9.53, 10.14), Kapāla-kuṇḍalā and Saudāminī, who possess siddhis, are depicted as residing at Śrī-parvata. Jagaddhara, in his comment at the beginning of the ninth act of that play, observes: *nānā-siddhi-sthānatvena devatātmakatayā bhagavat-padām śrī-parvate*. The great siddha Nāgārjuna is associated with Śrī-parvata. Bu-ston (p. 132) speaks of Nāga-bodhi's residence at Śrī-parvata.

(b) General praise of Śrī-parvata as a place where religious or spiritual practices bear fruit easily is to be found in: *Mahābhārata* 3.83.16-17; *Agni-purāṇa* 113.3-7; *Viṣṇu-smṛti* 85.34; *Śivopaniṣad* 6.189-3.

(c) Other references to Śrī-parvata in Sanskrit texts known to me are: *Suśruta-saṁhitā cikitsā* section 29.27; Subandhu's *Vāsava-dattā* p. 100 (*Vani Vilas* edition, corresponding to p. 156 of Gray's edition); *Brahmāṇḍa-mahā-purāṇa* 1.16.22b-23a; *Vāmana-purāṇa* 45.92 (the last two according to Kirfel 1954:112).

(d) Inscriptional references to Śrī-parvata which indicate its fame as a holy place and which I have so far come across are: Chikkulla plates of Vikramendra-Varman II, ed. by F. Kielhorn, *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. IV (1896-7) no. 25 p. 193; Inscriptions at Ablur, ed. by J.F. Fleet, *ibid.*, vol. V (1898-9) no. 25, pp. 251, 259; Three western Ganga records in the Mysore Government Museum at Bangalore, ed. by J.F. Fleet, *ibid.*, vol. VI (1900-01) no. 6 p. 51 fn. 4 (which, in turn, refers to an inscription of 1168 A.D. found at Baḷagāmi); Tālagunda pillar inscription of Kākusthavarman, ed. by F. Kielhorn, *ibid.*, vol. VIII (1905-06) no. 5 p. 28 fn. 4; Tālagunda stone-pillar inscription of the time of Śānti-varman (c. 455-70 A.D.), ed. by F. Kielhorn, *ibid.*, vol. VIII (1905-06) pp. 31ff, reproduced in Sircar 1965: 474-9; Nāgārjunakonda inscription of Vīra-puruṣa-datta (regnal year 14), ed. by J. Ph. Vogel, *ibid.*, vol. XX p.22, reproduced in Sircar 1965: 235.

(e) If Śrī-parvata is taken as identical with Śrī-śaila, (see n. 10 below) one could add the following to the above references: Śaṅkara, *Yoga-tārāvalī* verse 28; Ballāla, *Bhoja-prabandha* p. 60 in *Sadāśiva-śāstrī* Joshi's edition, *Haridas Sanskrit Series* no. 42, 1949; *Padma-purāṇa*, *Uttara-khaṇḍa* chapter 19/20; *Revā-māhātmya*, chapter 29

- (according to H.H. Wilson, *The Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, vol. V, 1870, p.118 fn \*). Fleet, *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. V, (1898-9) no. 25 p. 241, informs that a text called Channabasavapurāṇa speaks of a miracle (absorption of a Prabhu into Śiva) that reportedly took place at Śrī-śaila.
10. Although Sanskrit authors as well as modern scholars have frequently identified Śrī-parvata with Śrī-śaila in Kurnool district, it seems more justifiable to hold that the primary association of the name Śrī-parvata was with the Nālamalai or Nāgārjunakonda area in Guntur/Guntoor district (see Part 3). Several inscriptions have been discovered in that area.
11. See Rāja-taraṅgiṇī 4.503-10. As indirect evidence, see Vālmiki-rāmāyaṇa 7.7.21.
12. It is evident from the following statements that the term *brahma-rakṣas* or *brahma-rākṣasa* refers to those who bring harm to the brahmin way of life despite their association with brahminhood: Mahābhārata 2.11.68, 9.42.17, 13.92.12, 13.112.40-42, 13.133.61; Manu-smṛti 12.60; Yājñavalkya-smṛti 3.212; Agni-purāṇa 371.35.
13. Rāvāna was the name of a king of Kashmir according to Kalhāṇa 1.193-5.

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