KAVI PARAMEŚVARA OR PARAMEŚTHI

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In the history of Indian literature, there are many celebrated authors who are repeatedly remembered in subsequent works; but neither their works are available to-day, nor do we know any biographical details about them. Kavi Parameśvara or Parameśthi is one of them. In this paper I propose to put together whatever bits of information have been available to me, especially from Kannada and Sanskrit literature.

Eminent Kannada poets like Ādi Pampa (c. 911 A. D.), Abhinava Pampa (c. 1100 A. D.), Nayasa (1112 A. D.) Aggala (1189) and Kamalabhava (c. 1235) respectfully refer to Kavi Parameśthi along with Samantabhadra, the logician poet and Pūjyapāda, the grammarian.1 Ādi Pampa, it may be noted, calls him jagat-prasiddha. Their verses are given below.

श्रीमलम्बतम्भद्र —
स्वामिगाछ जगतसिद्ध —कविपरमेष्ठि —
स्वामिगाछ पृथ्विपाद —
स्वामिगाछ पद्मांगली शास्त्रपतिः ||

Ādipurāṇa (Mysore 1900) I. 15.

कविपरमेष्ठि गुण
सत्वनांगल पृथ्विपादंपतिः गुण —
सत्वनांगलं नालं —
में बंद मातवन चासाणं निदिष्टं ||

Rāmāyaṇa I. 11.

श्रीमलम्बतम्भद्र —
स्वामिगाछ नेयान्तरे कविपरमेष्ठि —
स्वामिगाछ पृथ्विपाद —
स्वामिगाछ पद्मांगली वेदोदयम ||

Dharmāṁrtā (Mysore 1924) I. 14.

1 R. Narasimhachary: Karnāṭaka-kavicaṅita Vol. I. (Bangalore 1924), pp. 2, 4-5.
Then turning to individual references, Guṇavarma II (c. 1235 A.D.) tells us in his Puspandita-purāṇa, I. 26 (Madras 1933) that Kavi Parameśṭhi’s mouth was beautiful with unparallelled speech, that he was praised by the learned, that he was almost the Para-brahman, and that he was no doubt a puraṇa-puruṣa:


Pārvapandita (1205 A.D.) qualifies him as ‘guṇa-jiṣṭha’ or ‘pre-eminent in virtues’ in his Pārvapurāṇa:


Nemicandra (c. 1170) tells us in his Nemināthapurāṇa (Mysore 1914) (I. 15-16) that Kavi Parameśvara wrote a puraṇa glorifying 24 Tīrthakaras and that Brahman and Sarasvatī were waiting on his glory.
Kavi Paramaśṭhi Or Paramaśṭhi

Then, still earlier, Cauḍārāya (978 A.D.) in his Ādipurāṇa (Bangalore 1928) clearly tells us that Kavi Paramaśṭhi wrote a Triṣṭi-śalakā-puruṣa-purāṇa:

चरितपुराणदीपित
बरेकर बरेदिबधित तिबिदिबलाका — ।
पुराणम मही —
प्रक्षेतवरस्तु जस्मे नानुर्मोऽछे ॥

and in another context (p. 6) he declares that the maha-purāṇa was composed formerly by Kūci Bhattāraka and Śrīnandi Muni, and that his work, namely, the Kannada Cauḍārāya Purāṇa only follows the compositions of Kavi Paramaśṭhi, who is called jināgamatīlaka, Jinasena and Guṇabhadra:

तिबिदिबलाका सुने महा —
पुराणम नेगालटु कुलमढ़॥रकर ।
परम श्रीनविदिं —
श्वरं तदनलं जिनागमतिलकर ॥
कुलमढ़फँदर बरेदुर जिनेन्द्रमाृहमुनीयादी —
सवनम तेत्रु माणे गुणमहीमुनीश्वरस्त्रेंदे तेत्रु प —
सवनम तेत्रु माणे गुणमहीमुनीश्वरस्त्रेंदे तेत्रु प —
लववदोऽछे भद्यक्षोलिगिरिल बरेदु गुणमहीमुण ॥

Guṇabhadra,* at the end of his Uttarapurāṇa (middle of the 9th century A.D.) informs us that the Ādipurāṇa composed by his teacher Jinasena was based on the gadya-kathā of Kavi Paramaśṭhi:

कुलमढ़फँदर—निगामतिलकभाषामूले पुरोद्डररम — ।

Jinasena (c. 837 A.D.) also respectfully mentions him as the compiler of the entire purāṇa, possibly under the title Vāgarthasaṅgraha:

न पूलं: किलापके कर्त्ती सम्पूर्ण: ।
वार्तसंग्रह द्वस्ते पुराण: व: सम्प्रवीहत ॥

Ādipurāṇa I. 60.

Besides these literary references, the Humch inscription† of 1077 A.D. mentions Kavi Paramaśṭhi along with a host of Jaina teachers and authors.

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* About Jinasena, Guṇabhadra etc. see, Premi: Jaina Sāhitya aura Itihasa, pp. 282, 497 ff.; also Hiralal: Dhavalā, Intro. Amraoti 1939.

† Epigraphia Carnatica VIII, Nagar No. 35.

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Thus we see that Kavi Parameśvara is being respectfully mentioned by various authors from the beginning of the 9th century almost up to the middle of the 13th century A. D. His personality stands before us as that of a famous, worthy authoritative poet with remarkable mastery over expression. He composed a purāṇa glorifying 63 Śālākā-puruṣas or celebrities of the Jaina church. Gunaabhadrā says that it was a gadya-kathā and that it was used by Jinasena for his Ādipurāṇa. Jinasena calls it Vāgartha-saṅgraha; and Cāmuṇḍarāya used it for his Kannada work. It is a high compliment to the scholastic greatness of Kavi Paramesṭhi that he is ranked with Samantabhadra and Pujyapāda whose works have come down to us.

This is all that we glean about Kavi Paramesvara's personality from the casual references of subsequent authors, some of whom had actually used his work. His date is uncertain,*a But he definitely flourished earlier than Jinasena who finished his Jayadhavalā in 837 A. D.

As yet we have not been able to trace the work of Kavi Paramesvara in any Ms. library; but the chances of tracing it are not remote, because many collections in the South are not fully explored.

Lately, the section of Śāntipurāṇa from the Cāmuṇḍarāyapurāṇa has been published,† and we are lucky to find there that Cāmuṇḍarāya has given some quotations attributed to Kavi Paramesvara. I reproduce below the extracts almost as they are:

कविपरमेश्वर कुलः |
रामचं गणभूत्वमण्डित्वम सोकनतिकर्षेऽ तथा |
दर्ज्जपाली सुंदरासनवन सर्वपरिवर्ण्यादिदि |
इत्यत्कामादिदिवश्च सहित्य श्रावन्त न संसारिभि |
तवाप्सो सर्वनेत्रप्रसंसृतितवत्तच्छेदं कुलं विश्वसं समुद्रिभि |
कविपरमेश्वर क्रोकः |
कषायोऽत्रकालव्यं प्रतदशीतस्ततः |
दृष्टान्तविचराद्रसान्ति ततो कोषादि कर्षेदेतु |
त्यागमेव लेंन्ति क्षम्य प्रकोपः |
मानं गृहुवेन मनोहरं नित त्यागमेव लेंन्ति क्षम्य प्रकोपः |

*(a) R. Narasimhacharya would like to put Kavi Paramesvara between Samantabhadra and Pujyapāda, and he gives to him a tentative date, viz. 550 A. D. This is just a conjecture; and the earlier limit of his date is not at all fixed. We want more evidence.

† Kannada Sāhitya Parishat Patrika, vol. 29, March–June 1944, pp. 53, 58,
We are not in a position to state whether only the opening verse of the larger extract belongs to Kavi Paramesvāra or all the verses are to be attributed to him. All the quotations are in Sanskrit and in a metrical form. One verse is very obscure and one line metrically defective. Cavūndarāya says that he has used Kavi Paramesvāra's work; it is very good of him that he quotes by mentioning the author's name.

* This verse is apparently corrupt and obscure.
† Metrically defective.
Kavi Parameśvara’s work, as the quotations indicate, was in Sanskrit and in verses. There is one difficulty in accepting this that Guṇabhadra has described Kavi Parameśvara’s work as gadyakathā. Possibly it was in prose with some verses here and there, and for convenience Cāmuḍārāya might have quoted only the verses.

If not the whole work of Kavi Parameśvara, at least a couple of quotations are available to us. And I do hope, some day, like the Varāṅgacarita of Jālīla, Kavi Parameśvara’s purāṇa would be discovered.
SAMARAMIYAṆKĀ KAHA OF HARIBHADRA

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Uddyotanasūri, the author of Kuvalayamāla (completed on 21st March, 779, A. D.) was a disciple of Haribhadra; and any information he gives about his guru deserves our special attention. He speaks about his guru thus in the introductory verses of the Kuvalayamāla:*

जो इस्त्रू महाविरहे महाविरहे को य वेदमुखो |,
समयसमस्तयुगोः समरामियंका कहा जसस ||

Clearly this is a respectful reference to Haribhadra who is well-known as virahōuka and who is proved to be the guru of Uddyotana. According to Uddyotana, then, Haribhadra composed Samaramiyaṅkā kahā which has been all along rendered into Sanskrit as Samara-mrgāṅkā Kathā.

The statement of Uddyotana is quite clear, and naturally various questions can be raised. Is it that Haribhadra wrote a Samara-mrgāṅkā-kathā besides his famous Samarāditya-kathā; or is it that the phrase samara-miyāṅkā kahā only refers to the present Samarāicca-kahā? The first question has to be answered in the negative, because no other source, as far as I know, has attributed an additional work, Samara-mrgāṅkā by name, to Haribhadra. A comparison of the concluding verse of the Samarāditya Kathā, which runs thus,

जे विरह्रुण पुष्पमहान्भावरचरोः मे पत्ते ||,
ते इहे भविश्योऽहूः सव सवम्भविलेवस ||

with the verse of Kuvalayamala, quoted above, hardly leaves any doubt that Uddyotana has the present Samarāicca-kahā in view. As long as we render the title in Sanskrit as Samara-mrgāṅkā Kathā, we will be forced to find out how mrgāṅkā can mean aditya, and whether the Sanskrit language supplies any reference to the effect that mrgāṅkā did mean ‘sun’ as well, beside the normal meaning ‘moon’.

* I have on hand a critical edition of this important Prākrit campā based on the Ms. material so kindly entrusted to me by Shri Jinarajaviraj, I am quoting this verse from a transcript.
† See Jocobi’s Intro.to his ed. of the Samarāiccaakahā, BI. No. 169, Calcutta 1926.
There is no doubt that Uddyotana has in view the present Samaraśicçakahā, and as I shall show presently, the phrase *samara miyaṃkā kahā* signifies the same. But the various difficulties about this problem are due to the wrong Sanskrit rendering of this phrase, namely, Samara-miśgāṅkā kathā. In my opinion, the real Sanskrit rendering should be Samara-miśārkā kathā, which means the story of Arka or Āditya, limited, qualified or prefixed by Samara, i.e., the Samarrāditya-kathā. The equation of *aṅka* with *arka* can be explained. In Prākrit we have a similar phenomenon in *Karkotā-kāmpkoṭa* (Hema, VIII. i. 26); in the *Tiloyapavottī* both *akka* and *aṅka* are used for *arka* (see VII.295–96, 345–46); and the famous royal name Vikramāṅka is just a phonetic variation of Vikramārka, i.e., Vikramāditya. So we can safely conclude that Uddyotana's phrase Samara-miyaṃkā kahā is to be rendered into Sanskrit as Samaramitārkā kathā, and it stands for the *Samarāditya kathā* of Haribhadra.