



HISTORIOGRAPHY OF SANSKRIT EPIC VIKARAMANKANDEVACHARITAM

DR. OM PRAKASH MISHRA

Associate Professor of Sanskrit
Vikramajit Singh Sanatan Dharm College Kanpur
Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University Kanpur India

The Vikaramankandevacharitam¹ of Bilhana is a panegyric in the honour of his patron and protector Vikramaditya TribhuvanaMalla of Chaulukya Dynasty. It speaks of the history of the chaulukyias in general and of Vikramaditya VI (1076-1127A.D.)² in particular. He First gives some information regarding the origin of the Chaulukya race and the earlier kings of the restored dynasty which begins with Tailapa. The author of the historical epic Vikaramankandevacharitam was Bilhana. He has written about his life history, birth-place etc. in the last canto of Vikaramankandevacharitam. Bilhana was the son of Jyesthakalasha and nagadevi, a Family of the Brahmins of Madhyadesa, He was born at Khonamukha, in Kashmir. From the Rajatarangim of Kalhana, we come to know that his great grandfather, Muktikakalasa and his grandfather Rajakalasa were Agnihotres (XVIII.75), and were able to recite the Vedas. His Father Jyesthakalasha was a grammarian (XVIII.79). Bilhana received his education in kashmir and attained proficiency in grammar and poetics (XVIII.82).

With regard to the date of Vikramankadevacharitam's composition, there is no controversy, and the unanimously accepted date of it is the 11th century A.D. or before 1088 A.D. This date of the composition of the Kavya is supported both by external and internal evidences. Bilhana must have left his country during 1062 to 1065 A.D. and composed the vikramankdevacharitam before 1088 A.D. for, the expedition which vikrama led to central india is not mentioned in the kavya. The date of this expedition is believed to be 1080 A.D. Thus, Bilhana's travels and literary activity fall in the 3rd and the 4th quarters of the 11th century.

Edition - The MS of the Vikramankadevacharitam was discovered by G.Buhler, during his tour in search of Sanskrit MSs. in Rajputana in 1894.

The story of Vikramankadevacharitam³

First canto- The vikramankadevacharitam begins with a benediction addressed to Lord Krishna the enemy of Kansa. Then follow the description of the descent of the first man of the Caulukya dynasty. At four O'clock in the morning, when Brahma is about to perform his daily devotions, Indra appears and requests him for the birth of some divinity on the earth to bring about the destruction of the enemies of gods on it. Brahma, on hearing Indra's request, directs his look at his hollowed palm which as full of water and from it springs handsome warrior strong enough to protect the three worlds. He consoles Indra and engages himself in the destruction of the demons on earth. From this



warrior descends the Caulukya dynasty in which the kings like Harita and Manavya are born. Ayodhya is regarded as the original seat of the Caulukyias. But later on those kings settled at Kalyana in the south. After some time, in that dynasty is born Tailapa, the gem of the family and a mighty warrior-

एषास्तु चालुक्यनरेन्द्रवंश-समुद्गतानां गुणमौक्तिकानाम् ।
मद्भारतीसूत्रनिवेशितानामेकावली कण्ठविभूषणं वः ॥ विक्रमांक० १/३०
विपक्षवीराद्भुतकीर्तिहारी हारीत इत्यादिपुमान् स यत्र ।
मानव्यनामा स बभूव मानी मानव्यं य कृतवानरीणाम् ॥ विक्रमांक० १/५८
श्रीतैलपो नाम नृपः प्रतापी क्रमेण तद्वंशविषेकोऽभूत् ।
क्षणेन यः शोणितपंकषेपं संख्ये द्विषां वीररसं चकार ॥ विक्रमांक० १/६८

He is succeeded by a valorous king Satyashrya who surpasses Bhargava in the skillful use of his bow-

चालुक्यवंशमलमौक्तिकश्रीः सत्याश्रयोऽभूदथ भूमिपालः ।
खड्गेन यस्य भ्रुकुटिक्रुधेव द्विषां कपालान्यपि चूर्णितानि ॥ विक्रमांक० १/७४

Next comes Jayasimhdeva, who wins many a battles-

प्राप्तस्ततः श्रीजयसिंहदेवश्चालुक्यसिंहासनमण्डनत्वम् ।
यस्य व्यराजन्त गजाहवेषुमुक्ताफलानीव महायशांसि ॥ विक्रमांक० १/७९

He is succeeded by his son Trailokyamalla, also known as Ahavamalla, who is a great warrior, and in songs, tales and plays is celebrated as the second Rama-

तस्माद्भूदाहवमल्लदेवस्त्रैलोक्यमल्लापरनामधेयः ।
यन्मण्डलाग्रं न मुमो लक्ष्मीर्धारालोत्था जलमानुषीव ॥ विक्रमांक० १/८७

Ahavamalla conquers Cholas and storms Dhara the capital of Malava. He also defeats King Karna of Dahala. He vanquishes the king of Dravida who attempts to attack him. He also storms Kanchi, the capital of the Cholas. The first canto ends with the brave deeds of Ahavamalla.

Second canto - It states that King Ahavamalla, having conquered all the quarters, makes Kalyana, blessed with virtuous men, as his capital. He beautifies Kalyana in such a way that its splendor is seen to surpass all other cities on the earth. But in the midst of victories and prosperity, Ahavamalla is always seen grieving over his childlessness. Having consulted his queen, he puts the burden of the kingdom on the shoulders of the ministers and retires to a temple of Siva to meditate upon the same. After a few days, while he is in meditation, he hears a voice saying, 'O, king stop your penance. Lord Siva being happy grants you three sons.' Hearing this, the king stops his penance and returns to his kingdom. In due course of time, the queen gives birth to Somesvara and later on to Vikramankadeva, who is endowed with good birth-sings and virtues. The canto ends with the description of the celebrations connected with the birth rites of the two sons.

Third canto - It begins with the description of the extraordinary qualities and luster of Vikramanka seen in his childhood. In a very short time, he attains knowledge of all the sciences. In the meantime, the third son of King Ahavamalla is born. After a while, when Ahavamalla sees Vikramankadeva grown up to manhood, he desires to coronate him, but the latter, respectfully but firmly, refuses to accept the throne in the presence of his elder brother. As



a result, Somesvara, the eldest son of the king, is installed as the heir-apparent, but actually Vikramanka bears the burden of administration. With the permission of his father, he starts on a series of warlike expeditions. In the course of the, he conquers Cola, reinstates the king of Malawa Who comes to take refuge with him. Some other kings, under the pretext of marrying their daughters to him make alliance with him.

Fourth canto - Here, Vikramanka is seen starting for digvijaya (the conquest of all the quarters). In the course of this expedition, he conquers kerala, Simhala, Gangakundapura and Cola. He also defeats the kings of vengi and Cakrakota. When, after finishing his work he leaves for his city, he notices many inauspicious signs. In order to get the peace of mind, he retires to the bank of the river krsna where he is approached by a messenger from kalyana, who gives him the news of the death of his father. At this, Vikramanka laments greatly and starts for kalyana immediately to see his elder brother. In a few days, he reaches kalyana where he is received by his elder brother. Vikramanka, looking upon somesvara as his father, offers him the booty he had won in wars. But, unfortunately, Somes'vara goes astray and becomes addicted to vevas. He thus proves to be a blot on the fair name of the Caulukya family. Seeing his brother incurable, Vikramanka leaves the capital along with his younger brother and the army.

Fifth canto - When some'vara comes to know of this, he sends a large army against Vikramanka. The latter, against his will, destroys Somes'vara army. Having defeated his army, the brave Vikramanka reaches the banks of the Tungabhadra, and fights against the Cola king. For aWhile, he rests in the Vanarasamandala. After that, he advances further with the resounding echoes of his army's valour making the Malaya kings conscious of his triumphs. During his march, the king of Konkana named jayakesi, pays a tribute to him. Then, with a desire to conquer the Cola country, he marches towards it. Finding himself no match to Vikramanka's power, the king of Cola enters into a treaty with him and gives the hand of his daughter in marriage to him.

Sixth canto - After a few days, the Cola king expires and Vikramankadeva, with a grieved heart, goes to that country and coronates the Cola prince as the king of kanci and returns to Tungabhadra. Unfortunately, after a few days, the king of vengi named Rajiga, usurps the Cola kingdom. The vengi king apprehending an attack from Vikramanka in retaliation makes an alliance with the Caulukya king, Somesvara. At this, Vikramanka starts to attack the vengi king. The Caulukya army comes to fight against him on vengi's side. Vikramanka requests his brother to keep off his way, but the latter refuses. Vikramanka, greatly empowered by the grace of Lord Siva, gets ready to fight. There takes place a bloody fight between the armies of Rajiga and Somes'vara on one side and Vikramanka on the other. As a result, the king of vengi takes to flight and somes'vara is imprisoned. Vikramanka returns to Tungabhadra and is on the point of re-instating his brother on the throne, but is re-strained



by the power of lord Siva. Thus, with a grieved heart, he mounts the throne, and makes his brother jayasimha, the ruler of vanavasamandala.

Seventh canto - Vikramanka, having defeated the king of Cola, again enters into kalyana. His arrival is followed by the charming description of the spring season which goes on right up to the end of the canto.

Eighth canto - Very soon, Vikramanka hears of the svayamvara ceremony of Chandralekha of marvelous beauty, daughter of the king of Karahata, which is to take place shortly. The poet then gives a charming description of Chandralekha, knowing which Vikramanka desires to marry her.

Ninth canto - It begins with the description of the sad plight of Vikramankadeva lost in the thoughts of Chandralekha. A Messenger from the king of Karahata comes to him inviting him to attend his daughter's svayamvara ceremony. Hearing it, Vikramanka is greatly pleased and leaves for Karahata, where he is received with great warmth by the king with due courtesy. Vikramanka is conducted to the hall where Svayamvara is to be held. In due time, the princess arrives attended by her maid-servants and an elderly matron of the harem. The latter apprises her of the great qualities of the assembled chiefs, but the princess chooses Vikramanka, symbolizing her choice by garlanding him.

Tenth canto - The wedding ceremony takes place under the nuptial canopy. The rejected suitors depart finding themselves weaker than Vikramanka. The canto ends with description of the couple in the pleasure-gardens.

Eleventh canto - Here the poet describes the beautiful sight of the setting sun. King Vikramanka in the company of the women of the harem, is seen enjoying the moonlight and then follow the drinking bouts and so on.

Twelfth canto - Having spent a few days happily at Karahata, Vikramanka leaves for kalyana. The ladies of the capital, hearing of his arrival, rush to see him and have a somewhat different feeling on seeing the king with Chandralekha. By that time, the summer has set in, and the king is seen resting in the dharagrhas and enjoying water-sports in the company of his other wives.

Thirteenth canto - It begins with a comparative description of the rivers which flow from the Himalaya mountains and those which do not, thereby depicting the end of the summer and the commencement of the rainy season. The descriptions of the rainbows, clouds, Peacocks, swans, rivers, mountains, oceans, sun, lightning and women with husbands far away from them abound in this canto.

Fourteenth canto - But when the end of the rainy season comes, Vikramanka receives a news which rudely arouses him from his luxurious repose. A confidential advisor informs him about the breach of faith by jayasimha, his younger brother. Vikramanka is greatly distressed by this for it opens the prospect for another fratricidal war. He tries to dissuade his brother from following the wrong path but all in vain. In the meantime autumn sets in, but the beauty of the season does not allay Vikramanka's anxiety and distress, and he prepares to march against his brother.



Fifteenth canto - Jayasimha advances to the Krsna river, plunders and burns the surrounding villages. He even tries to win over Vikramanka's troops to his side. Vikramanka, finding no way out attacks jayasimha's army is routed and he takes to flight. Vikramanka acquires great victory and booty and returns to his capital triumphantly.

Sixteenth canto - The autumn season appears which makes the nights longer than the days. The cold breeze from the kailasa mountain begins to flow. Carried away by the beauty of the season, Vikramanka sets out for hunting and enjoys nature.

Seventeenth canto - Vikramanka subdues all his enemies. His dominion enjoys peace and prosperity. In the course of time, he is blessed with sons who resemble him. He erects buildings for pious purposes and builds a city with splendid temples and palaces. In the mean-time, he comes to know of the revolt by the king of Cola, and starts to suppress it. Eighteenth canto - In this the last canto of the work, we have an interesting account of the poet's family history, his country and its rulers, his wandering and literary adventures. He is said to have been born at khonamukha near Prevarapura in Kashmir in a pious and a learned family of brahmanas. He has his early education there and acquires proficiency in grammar and poetics. He then sets out on his wanderings in quest of fame and fortune. He visits Mathura Kanyakubja, Prayaga and vanavasi. He receives welcome at the court of the king of Dahala where he composes a poem on Rama. Lastly, he visits Kalayana where he is honoured and given the office of Vidyapati by the Chaulukya king Vikramanka. In return for his honour, he writes the Vikramankadevacarita.⁴

Conclusion

The historical importance of the vikramankadevacarita is by no means of low caliber. The biographies of the Indian princes, who belonged to the Chaulukya dynasty are preserved here. The historical facts narrated here are well supported by the inscriptions preserved.

Vikramankadevacharitam

Harita->Manavya->Tailapa-> Satyashraya & Dasavarman

Dasavarman->Jayasimha->Trailokyamalla/Ahavamalla/SomeshvaraI

SomeshvaraI-> Someshvara II & Vikramankadeva & Jayasimha

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