

TIME OF RAJA BHARTRHARI

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ABSTRACT

The present work deals with the determination of the time of poet Bhartrhari which has been one of the unsolved problems of Ancient India. This research looks into various relevant and related literatures whose time is known. From these searches, the time of Bhartrhari is determined to be in the 5th century AD.

1 DIFFERING DATES AND IDENTITIES OF RAJA BHARTRHARI BY VARIOUS SCHOLARS

There exists a lot of confusion on the time and identities of Bhartrhari. There was one poet Bhartrhari who wrote Satakhatrayam consisting of roughly 100 verses each on Niti, Srngara, and Vairagya, and the other Bhartrhari who was a grammarian [1-4]. Some say that there was only one person who has written both.

The present work deals with Raja Bhartrhari, the poet, and establishes his time with reasonable accuracy.

2. DETERMINATION OF TIME OF BHARTRHARI

One can examine Murthy's summary [4] based on [1] and this summary is given in the Appendix A. Here, the time varies between the 1st century BC (beginning of the Vikram Era in 57 BC to 7th century AD when the Chinese traveller, I Ching (635-713 AD) who visited India as a pilgrim and he wrote that Bhartrhari was a Buddhist grammarian who lived about 60 years earlier than his visit.

Murthy [4] mentions that it is believed that Bhartrhari's brother was Vikramaditya. Implication here is that because the Vikram Era starts in 57 BC so, king Vikramaditya must have ruled then; thus, his brother Bhartrhari must have lived in the 1st century BC.

The author of the present work has recently published a work [5] where it is shown that the beginning year of 57 BC of the Vikram Era was due to the transition of the spring equinox from zodiacal sign Aries to Pisces. This Era was announced in 410 AD in the honour of Chandragupta II, Vikramaditya who had won over the Sakas at Ujjain. These Sakas were of Persian origin [6]. In this reference, it is also mentioned

that there was no king called Vikramaditya in 1st century BC.

Next, Murthy[4] has discussed that the poet Bhartrhari has mentioned a verse of Kalidasa in Bhartrhari's verse 61 in Neeti shataka; it refers to the verse (Abhijnana shankuntam 5.12) of Kalidasa.

Kalidasa was in the court of Chandragupta II Vikramaditya (379 -415 AD) [6] . Thus, Bhartrhari must have been after Kalidasa's time. This leads to the earliest time of Bhartrhari.

Next, Murthy [4] mentions that – “ In the Neeti shataka by Bhartrhari there is verse 85 - "gaja bhujanga vihangamabandhanaM shashidivAkarayOrgrahapIDanaM ... ". It is one of the verses which is also there in a book entitled - "Kalila U-Dimna" in the Persian language. This book was written during the time of a king of Persia who lived between 531 to 579 AD. Therefore, it can be said that the poet Bhartrhari lived before this time.

Therefore, king Bhartrhari lived after Kalidasa (5th century AD) but before the book entitled - "Kalila U-Dimna" was written in the 6th century AD.

Ujjain was not known to be the center of Sanskrit before the annexation of Saka country in 409 AD by Chandragupta II who hailed from Pataliputra, the capital of Magadha Empire

Regarding the earliest time of poet Bhartrhari, one can analyse the fact that the Sanskrit language used in Sataktrayam is very refined just like Kalidasa's works but far better than Asvaghosh's – “ Buddhacharita “ . Asvaghosha lived in Magadha (Pataliputra) first then went to Peshawar in the court of Kanishka in the 1st century AD. In this way, there was gradual refinement in Sanskrit language [7, 8].

Another important point that we can look into is the verse 34 in Sringara sataka – “ offer your wife betel leaf that is plucked by the young women with nails as pink as the cheeks of Saka women “ .

This verse ascertains the time of Bhartrhari around 5th century AD because Chandragupta II was called Sakari (destroyer of Sakas)..

3. CONCLUSIONS

In this work a search was made in various relevant books, and literatures available so that one could relate Bhartrhari's works with those of others whose times were known.

From the times of these sources, relationships and commonalities between these works, it is determined that Raja Bhartrhari, the poet, lived in the 5th century AD

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APPENDIX A

COMMUNICATION RECEIVED FROM G. MURTHY¹ ABOUT RAJA BHARTRHARI PUBLISHED IN A BOOK [1] IN TELUGU LANGUAGE

Stories or sayings about Bhartrhari

"SubhAShita trishati" can be assigned to the class of the "laghu kAvyA-s". Bhartrhari, the author of the "SubhAShita trishati" , was one of the great Sanskrit scholars. There are no reliable historical data for either the author or his works. But some events in his life are traditionally available in the form of stories. But they are not mutually consistent, and hence to put a common thread through is difficult.

One story is that Bhartrhari belonged to the family of kings of Ujjain and that he had eligibility to rule the kingdom; yet, he was vexed with the bad character of his wife, got disenchanted and gave the kingdom to his younger brother Vikramarka and he retired to the forests. This Vikramarka was the basis for the Vikrama-Saka of time-maintenance. Leaving that aside, we can infer from the contents of his shataka-s that he had a deep disappointment in life, and that he certainly had a deep dis-belief in the virtuousness of woman's character. We will look at some of that we know about Bhartrhari.

1. It is said in one of his works that his wife's name is Anangasena.
2. In another work, it is said that his father was a gandharva by name Veerasena and that Veerasena had sons by names Bhartr^ihari, Vikramaditya, subhataveerya, and a daughter by name Mynavati.
3. Another story is that ". Bhartrhari's wife's name was Padmakshi.
4. Another story: Bhartr^ihari's mother's name was Susheela. Through maternal relations, he became eligible to rule the kingdom, but he gave the kingdom to his brother Vikramaditya.

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5. Another story: A brahmin by name Chandragupta had four wives belonging to the four castes: his sons were Vararuchi, Vikramarka, Bhatti, Bhartrihari.
6. Yet another story: Vikramaditya had four wives belonging to the four castes and had four sons Vararuchi, Vikramarka, Bhatti, Bhartrihari.

From all these stories, the readers can infer how difficult it is to assign a time for Bhartrhari.

Writing of the three shatakas

The general consensus was that ". Bhartrhari was the author of the subhAShita-trishati. If we read these trishati carefully, we would notice they are somewhat dis-jointed. Also, some of the same verses can be seen in other works. Hence, there was a theory that this trishati was a compilation and not an original work by Bhartrhari. If we look at this theory, firstly, the number of verses that are in subhAShitas and also other works are very minimum. Also, these other works are post- Bhartrhari.. Also, these other works are not as famous as subhAShita-trishati. Thus, it is doubtful that they are not Bhartrhari's works. The common theme in all subhAShitas is that they are the outpourings of a person who is deeply dis-encharmed with the world. When a person is in such a state of mind, the outpouring work may appear dis-jointed.

The author did not say anything about himself or about the timing of his life. Hence it is very difficult to assign a time for Bhartrhari. We have to use other people's works as tools to assign a time for Bhartrhari..

The scholars say that Bhartrhari.was the brother of Vikramaditya of Vikrama-Saka fame. The early scholars did not find fault with this point. Vikrama-Saka started fifty six years before Christ and all scholars agree with that point.

The evidence from the contents of the works by others do not help with the timing and in fact make it more complicated. SubhAShita-trishati is full of Vedanta paribhASha. However, Vedanta had been churned for hundreds of years with purva-pakshaand Vedanta arguments; hence to assign a time based on the content is difficult. This was first mentioned by Kumarila Bhatta and Kumarila Bhatta was of 8th century AD. The next one who churned Vedanta was Shankara. Some say Shankara was of 9th century AD and some question that. But Vedanta was there for a long time before that. Hence it is difficult to assign time to Bhartrhari.based on Vedanta paribhaSha in subhAShita-trishati.

There is mention of purANA-s in the trishati. According to western scholars, purANA-s were of the past 1000 years only and not earlier than that. Some of them think the purANA-s are of the 12th and 13th century AD. Therefore, opinions of Western scholars in this regard may not be very useful. Irrespective of any differences of view, the prevalent view of Indian scholars is that the author of the purANA-s is Veda Vyasa. We cannot disregard that. It is certain that Veda Vyasa was in thousands of years BC. Therefore it is without doubt that purANA-s were available by 1st century AD

External evidence.

Sanskrit scholar and historian Krishnamacharya lists various scholars who wrote commentaries on the subhAShita-s. They are Mahabala, Ananda Ramachandra Bhudendra, Dhanasara, Ramarshi, Gunavinaya, Meenanatha, and Indrajitta. None of them have paid attention to the timing of the author. Among them, Ramachandra Bhudendra wrote in his commentary

"vipreNA bhUtaparvam palamidi tapasA'lambi sUryaprasAdA
llabdhvA tasmAt svayaM tatpracuratarajarA pancatA kuncanADhyaM
hitvA mohaM svakAntA svativimaladhiyl taM niShE vyAktaabhavyO
yOgIndro bhartr^iharyAhvaya iha kurutE"dyApi vidyAvilAsam"

A certain brahman gave a fruit that he got through surya-prasAda to king Bhartrhari.. Bhartrhari.gave it to his dear wife, She, without eating it, gave it to her lover. And the lover gave it to his lover girl- friend and finally it ended up with king Bhartrhari.Again. knowing the full story, the king Bhartrhari became despondent with the world and was overcome by vairAgya.

From other evidence we can determine Bhartrhari's time. There is a book titled "Kalila U-DimnA" in Persian language. This was written during the time of a king in Persia who ruled in the period 531-579 AD. It is generally argued that the Sanskrit Pancatantra is the basis for that book. Therefore, at the least, the Pancatantra book was already in existence by 6th century AD. Pancatantra was not an independent work from cover to cover. It has taken various examples from various well-known works that were already in existence. The Neeti shataka by Bhartrhari was one of such works. Neeti shataka verse 85 "gaja bhujanga vihangamabandhanaM shashidivAkarayOrgrahapIDanaM ... " is one such verse. This example also appeared in the Persian work. Therefore, it is indisputable evidence that the author of Neeti shataka cannot be post 500 AD.

Another school of thought was that Bhartrhari was of 700 AD. People cite the following evidence as the basis for this school of thought: Bhartrhari's verse 61 in Neeti shataka refers to verse of (AbhijnAna shankuntam 5.12) of Kalidasa. This was considered natural if Kalidasa was of 6th century AD. But there is this following objection to this. Even the time of Kalidasa is debatable. But looking at various evidences, the scholars came to the conclusion that Kalidasa was of 1st century AD. Therefore the above argument of Bhartrhari's time cannot hold.

Further, there is this evidence. A Chinese traveler by name Itsing was travelling in India in 7th century AD and he wrote that Bhartrhari died forty years before his travels. This Bhartrhari was a grammarian. Itsing wrote - "this person was a bouddha

and had deep faith in ratnatraya and dvividhasunya". In 11th century AD, Vacaspati Mishra remarked that the author of Vakyapadlya is a Vedabahya. At that time, it was traditional to refer to Buddhists as Vedabahya-s. This strengthens Itsing's description of Bhartrhari as a Buddhist. Now, the subhAShita-karta Bhartrhari was a shiva-bvhakta and a scholar of Vedanta (see the Neetishataka first shloka). According to modern scholars, the Neetishataka author and the grammarian are two persons. From this we can say that the Neeti-shataka author was of the same time as Vikramarka which is the 1st century