

A Note on the Date of Samkara (Adi Sankaracharya)

BY S. SRIKANTHA SASTRI, ESQ., M.A.

An attempt is made here to solve the problem of the date of Sri Samkara taking for granted a certain number of more or less definitely ascertainable facts. It is well known that he refers to certain kings of his time. The relevant passages are: -

I. *Sutra Bhasya* -

(a)II. 1. 17

"न हि देवदत्तः सुव्ने सन्निधीयमानः तदहरेव पाटलीपुत्रे सन्निधीयते. युगपदनेकत्र व्रत्तावनेकत्र प्रसंगात् देवदत्त यज्ञदत्तयोरिव सुध्न पाटलीपुत्र निवासनोः" ॥
"न हि, वन्ध्यापुत्री राजा बभूवं प्राक् पूर्वर्मणोभिशेकात् इत्येवं जातीयकेन मर्यादा करणेन निरुपास्व्यो वन्ध्यापुत्रोपजा बभूव भवति भवति भविष्यति इति वा विशेष्यते" ॥

(b)IV. 3. 5.

"तथाच लोके प्रसिद्धेष्वपि आतिवाहिकेषु एवं जातीयक उपदेशो दृश्यते - गच्छ ! त्वं इतो बलवर्माणं ततो जयसिंहम् ततः कृष्णगुप्तमिति" ॥

(c)II. 4. 1.

"सादृश्ये हि सति उपमानं स्यात् - यथा सिंहः तथा बलवर्मेति" ॥

(d)I. 2. 7.

"यथा समस्त वसुधाधिपतिरपि हि सन् अयोध्याधिपतिरिति वपदिश्यते" ॥

II. *Upanishadbhasya*

(a)*Chandogya*, II. 23. 1,

"यथा पूर्णवर्मणः सेवा भक्त परिधानमात्रफला राजवर्मणस्तु राजतुल्यफला इति तद्वत्" ॥

(b)*Chandogya*, II. 19. 1,

"यथा असदेवेदं राज्ञः कुलं सर्वगुणसंपन्ने पुर्णवर्मणि राजन्य सतीति तद्वत्" ॥

The position of planets at the time of Samkara's birth as given by Madhava was the basis on which Dr.Swamikannu Pillai opined that the year 805 A.D. might have been the year of Samkara's birth. But it should be noted that the year 568 A.D. will also be a suitable date (*Indian Ephemeris*, Vol I, Part I, p. 122). If we take the "Devyaparadha Stotra" as a genuine work of Samkara, he must have lived for more than 85 years, for therein he says: -

मया पंचाशीतेरधिकमपनीतेतु वयसि ॥

i.e. his demise must have taken place after 653 A.D. It remains to be seen whether the above mentioned kings can be located in this period. Of Purnavarman, Samkara tells us that he was of a good family and possessed fine qualities but his power was little as compared with that of Rajavarman. Purnavarman of Magadha who had died some time before 640 A.D. was, as Yuvan-Chwang tells us, the last of the line of Maurya kings and hence of a good family. He restored the Bodhi tree, probably destroyed by Sasamka. Dandi in his illustration of *Preyolamkara* mentions a Rajavarman, most probably the same king mentioned by Samkara. We know that the Vamana mentions Dandin's *Chandovicchiti* (शब्दस्मृत्यभिधानकोश छंदोविच्छित्तिकला कामशास्त्र दण्डनीति पूर्वाविध्याः etc. etc). Thus there can be no flagrant mistake if we place Dandin in C. 600 A.D. Perhaps the tradition by which Madhava makes Samkara a contemporary of Bana-Mayura and Dandin might be genuine. It

is probable, therefore, that the Rajavarman mentioned by Samkara and Dandin is a king perhaps of the Pallava line. Krsnagupta is probably the first of the line of the Guptas of Magadha and must be placed about the year 570 A.D. Since the territories of Balavarman and Jayasimha should be in a line with the Magadha province. Jayasimha is probably the second son of the western Chalukya Kirtivarman I, who ruled later on in the time of Pulakesin II of Gujerat.

Samkara can be placed in the eight century only if we are determined to ignore a number of facts. First, Gaudapada's *Bhasya* (along with Matharavritti on the Samkhya Karikas of Isvara-Krsna) was translated into Chinese during the Ch'en dynasty (557 – 83 A.D.). Therefore Gaudapada must be placed at the latest about the year 550 A.D. He was probably the same as Samkara's *paramaguru*. Secondly, Vidyananda quotes from Suresvara's *Bṛhadāranya Vartika*. This Vidyananda was the immediate disciple of Akalamka and two generations earlier than Jinasena I, the author of *Harivamsa* and the contemporary of Govinda III and four generations earlier than Jinasena II, the author of *Mahapurana* and the contemporary of Amoghavarsha Nrpatunga, as pointed out by me in my [Sources of Karnataka History, Vol I](#). Therefore Vidyananda must be placed about the year 700 A.D. For Suresvara's work to obtain recognition even by alien dialecticians at least half a century must have elapsed. Therefore he must be placed about the year 650 A.D. and cannot possibly be the same as Umveka Mandana who almost certainly is Bhavabhuti Srikantha. Bhavabhuti must be placed in 730 A.D. or thereabouts and thus there is a difference of at least a hundred years between Suresvara and Mandana. Mandana is the immediate disciple of Kumarila and under his alias as Umbveka he wrote a commentary on Kumarila's *Slokavartika*, quoted by Pratyagasvarupa, Chitsukha, Bodhaghana, etc. Umbveka seems to have also been known to Prabhachandra, the author of *Prameya Kamala Martanda*. Now several generations later than Mandana Umveka, his descendants Paramesvara, author of *Sphotasiddhivakhyā*, Vasudeva, the author of *Sivodaya*, and Narayana, the commentator on Mandana's *Bhavanaviveka*, call themselves the nephews and the disciples of a Samkaracharya. This Samkara is probably the commentator on *Samkhya Saptati* and in my opinion also the author of *Sanatsujatiya Bhasya*; and thus is different from Samkaracharya, the disciple of Govindabhagavatpada I.

If the above reasoning is correct, it follows that Kumarila, who knows the *Kasika*, should probably be the younger contemporary of Samkara and not the elder as tradition makes him out to be. It is probable that Samkara indicates in commenting upon "अथात" that in a way he is following Bhavadasa's Vritti and is also making remarks on Sabara's criticism of Bhavadasa (regarding *anantaryartha*), and in the *Devatadhikarana* while refuting *Sphotavada* he criticises Sabara and Bhagavan Upavarsha but does not seem to be aware of Mandana's *Sphotasiddhi*.

Thus it is not possible to identify the Balavarman mentioned by Samkara with the one mentioned in an inscription dated saka 842 (*Vikrama*) of the time of the Rashtrakuta Indra III (*Mad. Epi. Rep. 47 of 1904*). By the courtesy of the Madras Epigraphic Department, I have been able to obtain the text of the inscription which is as follows :-

श्रीमान् श्चाळुक्य वंशे समजनि निहिताशेष श [बु] क्षितीशो ।
 न्यायोपेतः स्सपृथ्वीं चतुरुदधि लतावेष्टितां यः प्रभूताम् ।
 अकृष्यादातुकामो नृपसदसि तदां धोर नाम्ने महिम्ना ।
 हृष्योध्यदृण्डिकायां समकृत (?) वलवर्माधिपः पट्टवन्धम् ॥
 संग्रामौकरसः परात्रम धनः कांचीपमुग्राहवे ।
 जित्वा [वी] र गजेद्रं दंतयुगलं (?) संस्थाप्य नामांकितम् ।
 [स्व्या] ता लम्पुर नामधेय नगर ब्रह्मेश्वर स्याग्रतः ।
 सोयं तस्य सुतीं ह्यधायि दशवमस्त्वियः प्रचण्डोदयः ॥

Dhora mentioned above must have been a Rashtrakuta prince. We have a Dhruva, son of Krsna I about the year 783 A.D. Another was the son of Kakka of Gujerat (C. 834-5); and a third the son of Akalavarsha

Subhatunga (c. 866 A.D.). The Dhora or Dhruva, helped by this Balavarman, must have been one of the latter. Another Balavarman, grandfather of a Vimaladitya, mentioned in the Kadaba grant of Prabhutavarsha (supposed to be spurious) probably lived about the year 775 A.D. In any case these cannot be placed in the latter half of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century contemporaneous with Krsnagupta and Purnavarman.

Then there is the question of the identification of Manukuladitya referred to by Sarvagnatman, the disciple of Suresvara. Probably he must be identified with Adityavarman, the second son of Pulakesin II or Vinayaditya or Vijayaditya of the Chalukyas of Badami who belonged to the Manavyasa *gotra*. Adityavarman ruled near the confluence of the Krshna and the Tungabhadra probably from Alampur which was a renowned centre of the Pasupata cult. Taking all this into consideration, we can arrive at the more or less certain conclusion that Samkara must have lived in the latter half of the sixth and the former half of the seventh century long before the destruction of Pataliputra and Srughna.

www .srikanta-sastri.org