CHAPTER II

Bhäśarvajña - His Date, Identity and Works

INTRODUCTION

Bhäśarvajña is often hailed as "the philosopher who may well represent the source of the most important schism in the Nyāyavaiśeśika school".¹ Among the numerous writers on the Indian systems of Logic, he occupies an important position. Though he cannot possibly claim to be the original formulator of any doctrines, undoubtedly he is the first known propounder of a number of doctrines which diverge boldly from the accepted traditional views of earlier writers. He is also the first Brahmanic writer who effected a thorough modification on the concept of categories. One scholar qualifies him as the first writer who attempted to reduce the sixteen categories to one.² Another holds that he reduced the sixteen categories to three.³ After Vācaspatimiśra he is only the second among

¹ Karl H. Potter, Encyclopaedia of Indian Philosophies, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1977, Vol.II, p.398
² Satischandra Vidyabhusana, A History of Indian Logic, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1978, p.357
the "two Nyāya authors who did not write commentaries, but who dealt with the transmitted stuff independently". The other writer is Jayantabhaṭṭa, the author of Nyāyamañjarī, who was perhaps a contemporary of Bhāsarvajñā.

HIS NAME

Bhāsarvajñā, the reputed author of Nyāyasāra is also called Bhāvasarvajñā. It seems that his real name was Sarvajñā to which the prefix "Bhā" is added. It is noted that his name bears a close resemblance to the names of Sarvajñāmitra and Sarvajñādeva who lived in Kashmir circa 775 A.D., and 1025 A.D., respectively. Sarvajñā seems to have been a popular name among the Śaivaites of Kashmir. The prefix "Bhā", it is observed, is commonly used among the names of the Pāṣupata sect of Śaivaites. An instance is Bhāsvāmin who lived about 600 A.D., at Gazaret, in Kashmir, who was a Śaivite of the Pāṣupata sect.

A KASHMIR ŚAIVAITE

Bhāsarvajñā was a great scholar with his own religious convictions. It is undisputed that this

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5 Karl H. Potter, op.cit., p.398; Erich Frauwallner, op.cit., p.9
7 Nyāyasāra with Nyāyatātparyadīpikā, Ed. Satischandra Vidyabhusana, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1910, p.5
philosopher was a member of the sect of the Pāśupatas, a Śaiva sect popular in Kashmir. He has often held divergent views characteristic of the Pāśupatas though strictly speaking they are embarrassing to a writer on Nyāya. For instance, against the standard tenets of the Nyāya school, Bhāsarvajña holds that there are only three instruments of valid knowledge. This is an important discrepancy caused by his bias for the Pāśupata system. The element of bhakti and vairāgya are declared by him as necessary requisites for the direct cognition and final release. His concept of God also shows to some extent the influence of Śaivism on him. Moreover, he is credited with the authorship of Gaṇakārikā, which is a handbook of the Pāśupatas. In this connection it may be noted that Bhāsarvajña’s work Nyāyasāra and the auto-commentary on it called Nyāyabhūṣaṇa starts with a salutation to Lord Siva: The Nyāyasāra begins with the following benediction:

Praṇāmya śambhum jagataḥ patim param
Samastatattvārthavidam svabhāvataḥ
Śiśuprabodhāya mayābhidhāsyate
Pramāṇatatbhedatadanyalakṣaṇam

His auto-commentary Nyāyabhūṣaṇa contains the following benedictory verse. 8

8 Nyāyabhūṣaṇa, Varanasi, 1968, p.1
Umāpatim sarvajagatpatim sadā,
Prāṇamya nirvāṇadamiśvaram param
Gurūmśca sarvāíanumokṣasiddhaye
Pravakṣyate nyāyasadarthasamgrahah.

Nothing further is known regarding his personal details or parentage.

HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Bhāsarvajña lived at a time when the Kashmir region was contributing much to Indian thought. Jayantabhaṭṭa, the well-known author of Nyāyamañjarī is very often considered as his contemporary.9 Vyomasivācārya, the author of Vyomavatī, a gloss on Praśastapāda’s Padārthadharmasangraha is also considered as a contemporary of Bhāsarvajña. But Bhāsarvajña was evidently junior to Trilocana whose fallacies of examples have been quoted by him and slightly senior to Vācaspatimiśra.10

HIS WORKS

Bhāsarvajña is at present credited with at least four works. They are (i) Nyāyasāra (ii) Nyāyabhūṣaṇa (iii)

9 See, Karl H. Potter, op.cit., p.399
10 Dineshchandra Bhattacaryya, History of Nyāya-Nyāya in Mithila, Mithila Institute of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Sanskrit Learning, Dharbhanga, 1958, pp.36-7
Gaṇakārikā and (iv) Nityajñānaviniścaya. All the works bring out his stature as a logician and a dialectician par excellence. They are notable for their lucidity and thoroughness in the treatment of the subject matter.

(i) NYĀYASĀRA

The Nyāyasāra is a short treatise of the Nyāya system in three chapters. While generally agreeing with the Sūtrakāra and his school, the author diverges from some of the accepted theories of that school. Thus he accepts only three pramāṇas viz., Pratyakṣa, Anumāna and Āgama and has included all other pramāṇas as coming under these three. He also treats of such other topics as prameya, fallacies of reason, fallacies of example etc., in this work. Herein he shows a clear influence of Buddhist and Jaina logic. This is a brief and rather straightforward summary of the Nyāya doctrines and stands unique in the history of the medieval school of Nyāya philosophy, with some remarkable features which we cannot notice in the works of earlier Nyāyikas.

(ii) NYĀYABHŪŚAṆA

Bhāsarvajña's auto-commentary NyāyabhūśaṆa holds a very unique position in the history of Nyāya philosophy. Though it was conceived and composed as a commentary on
Nyāyasāra, the importance of the work for the development of the system is difficult to over emphasize. This is a long and sizable work which treats and discusses a number of topics of the Nyāya as well as of the other systems of Indian logic. The doctrines set forth in this work are apparently highly extra-ordinary and original since many of the opinions of this work involve throwing out of whole categories of time-honoured importance within the system. It is understandable that Bhāsarvajña’s views provide the basis for what is perhaps the only serious factional split within the system, one that lasts on and is referred to till the end of our period.\(^\text{11}\) The book is almost indispensable for the study of Nyāyavaiśesika literature.\(^\text{12}\)

(iii) GANAKĀRIKĀ

Gaṇakārikā is another treatise written by Bhāsarvajña. It is a hand book of the Pāśupata sect of Saiva Saints briefly explaining the main features and doctrines of the that school. This book clearly indicates that Bhāsarvajña was a follower of the Pāśupata sect of Saiva religion. But according to one scholar the work

\(^\text{11}\) Karl H. Potter, \textit{op.cit.}, p.6

\(^\text{12}\) Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, \textit{op.cit.}, p.36
is written by Haradatta who lived about 879 A.D., on which Bhāsarvajña wrote a commentary called Ratnaṭīkā. His argument runs as follows “as we have mentioned elsewhere Haradatta was the author of Gaṇakārikā. Mr. Dalal in all probability had confused the two in his introduction to the Gaṇakārikā, in which he says that Bhāsarvajña was the author of Gaṇakārikā. In reality Haradatta wrote only the kārikā and the Nyāya author Bhāsarvajña wrote a commentary on it called Ratnaṭīkā”. But this view seems to be untenable since the very meaning of the sentence at the end of the colophon of the work - "iti Bhāsarvajñaḥviraṇaṭīkāṃ Gaṇakārikāyaṃ Ratnaṭīkā parinīpaṭa" clearly suggests that this is a work written by Bhāsarvajña.

(iv) NITYAJÑĀNAVINIŚCAYA

The fourth work ascribed to Bhāsarvajña is Nityajñānaviniścaya. But the work is not so far recovered and the name of it is not mentioned by other logicians. But we get a reference to this work in the Nyāyabhūṣaṇa in connection with the portion dealing with the topic knowledge of the supreme is eternal. It seems that the book severely criticised the Buddhist doctrine of momentar-

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13 Surendranath Dasgupta, A History of Indian Philosophy, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1975, Vol.V, pp.11-12
14 Nyāyabhūṣaṇaḥ, Saddarśnaprakāśana pratiṣṭātanaṃ, Varanasi, 1968, p.466
Yaḍadvṛṇuṅktam parotacodya pratisamādhānam pratipakṣa-bādhakam ca tat “nityajñānaviniścaye” draśṭavyam etc.
With regard to the age of Bhāsarvajña scholars hold two different views. According to one section of the scholars Bhāsarvajña lived about the first half of the tenth century A.D., and according to the other section he lived about the second half of the tenth century A.D.

To the first group belong scholars like Satischandra Vidyabhushana, Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, Karl H. Potter, S. Subramonia Sastri, Swami Yogindrananda and Dr. Umaramana Jha while the foremost writer in the other group is Surendranath Dasgupta. The arguments of the scholars who hold Bhāsarvajña's time as the first half of the tenth century A.D., may be noted as follows:

Satischandra Vidyabhushana points out that Bhāsarvajña is mentioned as the reputed author of Nyāyasāra by the Jaina sage Guṇaratna (1409 A.D.) and Maladhāri Rājasēkhara (1348 A.D.). The name of the commentary, Nyāyabhāṣāna of Bhāsarvajña, is mentioned by the Buddhist

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15 Umaramana Jha, Sri Ranbir Kendriya Sanskrit Vidya- peetha, Jammu, 1976, p.7

16 Satischandra Vidyabhushana, op.cit., pp.357-8
sage Ratnakīrti, the preceptor of Ratnākaraśānti, who lived about 1000 A.D. This is the latest date that Vidyabhusana assigns to Bhasarvajna. The earliest limit fixed by him is 650 A.D., when there lived the Buddhist logician Dharmakīrti whose controversy about the fallacy of non-erroneous contradiction (viruddhāvyabhicāri) is referred to in the Nyāyasāra. Bhāsarvajña is evidently junior to Trilocana, whose fallacies of example have, according to Rāghavabhaṭṭa, been quoted by him. On these and other considerations Vidyabhusana is inclined to believe that Bhāsarvajña lived about 950 A.D.

Professor Dineshchandra Bhattacharya holds that in the body of the books of Jñānaśri and his disciple Ratnakīrti, the name of Nyāyabhūṣaṇa is clearly given and correctly placed after Trilocana and before Vācaspati. Bhāsarvajña was slightly junior to Trilocana and slightly senior to Vācaspati and lived about the middle of the 10th century A.D. It is known that in the Bhūṣaṇa the views of the Buddhist scholar Prajñākara are controverted.17

Karl H. Potter puts him between 860-920 A.D. His argument is support of this view is that "a Kashmiri like Jayantabhaṭṭa, Bhāsarvajña must have flourished contemporaneously with him. Bhaṭṭa Rāghava remarks that

17 Dineshchandra Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 36
Bhāsarvajña consulted one of Trilocana's works, which is quite reasonable if we place Bhāsarvajña C.A.D. 860-920.18

S. Subrahmania Sastri supporting the view that Bhāsarvajña flourished about the first half of the tenth century A.D., observes that Bhāsarvajña is referred to in Udayana's Kīraṇāvali. Udayana has not only quoted from Nyāyasāra but also from Nyāyabhuṣaṇa, its auto-commentary. Thus Bhāsarvajña must have lived long before Udayana (984 A.D.) but probably after Vācaspatimisra who has not taken up for discussion the innovations of Bhāsarvajña like his three pramāṇa theory etc., and on these grounds, the above scholar places Bhāsarvajña's time between 875 and 925 A.D.19

Swami Yogindrananda considers Bhāsarvajña's time as the first half of the tenth century A.D. He states: "The time of Udayanācārya is A.D. 984. The arguments of Buddhist monk Jñānaśrī who lived about 960 A.D., was discussed by Udayanācārya. Bhāsarvajña whose name was mentioned by Jñānaśrī, therefore, seems to have lived about 930 A.D.

18 Karl H. Potter, op.cit., p.399
Further the age of Kānakagomin who refutes the theory of Mandanamiśra is considered to be the last quarter of tenth century. It is ascertained that Mandanamiśra lived about 822 A.D. Bhāsarvajña has referred to the name of a Sāmkhya philosopher named Mādhava whose views are discussed by Kānakagomin. Therefore Swami Yogindrananda concludes that Bhāsarvajña lived about the tenth century A.D. 20

Dr. Umaramana Jha also supporting the view of Vidyabhusana puts Bhāsarvajña in the first half of the tenth century A.D. His arguments in support of this view are almost the same as shown above. 21

The other section which maintain that Bhāsarvajña lived about the second half of the tenth century A.D. is represented by Surendranath Dasgupta. He argues as follows: "Bhāsarvajña is well-known as the author of the Nyāyasāra, on which he wrote a commentary called Nyāyabhūṣaṇa. In this he tried to refute the views of Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Prajñākaragupta, the author of Prameṇavārttikālaṅkāra, who lived about the middle of the tenth century and is quoted

21 Umaramana Jha, op.cit., pp.5-6
by Ratnākaraśānti of about 980 A.D. Bhāsarvajña therefore seems to have lived in the second half of the tenth century A.D. 22

CONCLUSION

In this connection a fact requires special consideration. In his Nyāyabhūṣaṇa, Bhāsarvajña had either mentioned by name or considered the views of many Jaina sages like Umāsvāti, Siddhasena Divākara, Akalaṅka etc., and Buddhists sages like Dharmakīrti, Dharmottara, Prajñākaragupta etc. This Prajñākaragupta is the author of Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāra. Satischandra Vidyabhūṣaṇa considers his time as 940 A.D., on the basis that he lived at the time of Mahāpāla who died in 940 A.D. 23 The arguments of this Prajñākaragupta is very often quoted by Bhāsarvajña in his Nyāyabhūṣaṇa. Therefore he should have preceded Bhāsarvajña and there is no controversy about his time among the scholars including Vidyabhūṣaṇa and others since they accept Prajñākarā's date as 940 A.D. Accepting the view of S. Subrahmanya Sastri that Udayana in his Kīranāvali quotes from Nyayasara as well as Nyāyabhūṣaṇa since there are many references to the views of Bhūṣanakāra, one may assume that Bhāsarvajña lived

22 Surendranath Dasgupta, op. cit., pp.143-44
23 Satischandra Vidyabhūṣaṇa, op. cit., p.336
before Udayana. Thus it seems better to consider that Bhāsarvajña lived after Prajñākaragupta and before Udayana and hence one may conclude that Bhāsarvajña lived between 940-980 A.D.