CHAPTER IV.

LIFE, DATE AND WORKS OF BĀLACANDRA SŪRI

A. Geneology of Bālacandra’s Teachers

Bālacandra was a pupil of Haribhadra Sūri of the candra Gachcha. He has given at length the genealogy of his teachers in the parasastis of his commentaries on the Upadesākandali and Vivekamāṇjari of Aśāda:

In the Candra Gachcha there flourished an Ārya named Pradyumna Sūri, who gave religious instruction to the king of Talavataka. Candraprabha Sūri, who succeeded him, composed a morning hymn to Jina. After him came Dhaneśvara Sūri who got a Mantra from his Guru and intiated to right understanding the Goddess of Samayupura. He had four pupils Virabhadra,
Devasūri, Devabhadra and Devendrasūri, like four hands of Sarasvati. Devendrasūri was staying at Manḍali and he performed the installation ceremony of the image in a temple of Mahavira in that city. His successor was Bhdrēsvarasūri, and after him came Abhayadevasūri who vanquished many disputants. The poet Asāda drank the nectars of instruction of Abhayadevasūri, and then composed his two works - Viśekamaṇḍjari and Upadesakahādali. His pupil was Haribhadra, well versed in six schools of philosophy and literature and the teacher of Bālacandra Sūri.3

Bālacandra Sūri’s Personal History

In the first Canto of his Vasantavilāsamāhākāvyā, Bālacandra Sūri has gives some accounts of his life, prior to his becoming a Jaina ascetic:

In the town of Moḍheraka there was a famous Brahmin named Dharādeva. He was well-aquainted with Jainism. He was a wealthy man, and supplicants coming to his house always returned with their hands full with wealth. The name of his wife was Vidyut. They had a son named Munjala, who though living with parents, looked on the world as an illusion. Being instructed and enlightened by Haribhadrasūri, he became a Jaina ascetic with the permission of his parents and was named Bālacandra.4 When Haribhadrasūri found that his end was near, he installed Bālacandra in his place. Bālacandra was tutored by Padmaṇḍitya, who was a great scholar and adored by the Caulukya kings. Udaya Sīri of the Gachcha, of Vadi Devasūri gave him to the
Sārvāvata charm. Once when Bālacandra was in Yogāniḍī or contemplative trance, Goddess Sarasvati appeared to him and told him that she was pleased with his devotion and that he was just her child, like Kālidāsa and other poets. And the poet says that being thus blessed by the Goddess Sarasvati, he became bold enough to sing the fame of Vastupāla. The Prabandhas mention that once young Bālacandra praised Vastupāla with a verse, comparing him with God Śiva in every respect; and Vastupāla, being pleased with it, spent several thousand gold coins in the ceremony for installing Bālacandra as an Ācārya.

C. Literary Works of Bālacandra Sūri

The main work of Bālacandra is his Vasantavilāsamaḥākāvyya, depicting the life of Vasantapāla, a name given to Vastupāla by his poet-friends. It was written at the request of the latter’s son Jaitrasimha. The author has not given the date of composition, but as it mentions the death of Vastupāla in 1296 V.S., it must have been written after that year.

Karunāvajrāyudha is a one-act play of Bālacandra, which was acted on Sattuṇjaya in the temple of Ādinātha, for the entertainment of the pilgrims on the occasion of one of Vastupāla’s Saṅghāyātras, as mentioned in the prologue.

It has taken for its theme the Jaina version of the famous legend of king Śibhi and the pigeon occurring in the Vanaparvan of Mahābhāratas. In the
Jaina story the hero is king Vajrāyudha who is the Tirthankara Śāntinātha in one of his former births, and it occurs in its oldest form in the 21st chapter of the Vasudeva Hindi of Samghadāsa.

In the prologue of the play the Sūtradhāra give good many details about Vastupāla and his ancestors and also about the poet and his spiritual teachers.

Then follows a Viskambaka, containing a dialogue between two dancing-teachers named Kalahamsa and Kalak-antha from which we know that king Vajrāyudha has only recently returned after accomplishing a world-conquest, and that he is a man of great pity. Kalahamsa infers from the throbbing of both of his eyes that some incident will occur which will be bad for the king in the beginning, but will turn out to be good in the end. Both start to see the king who was sitting in the courtyard of the Paasadıkśa after ending the Pausadha of the last day which was the fourteenth day of the fortnight, held sacred by the Jainas. Then follows a conversation between the king and his minister Puruṣottama in which the king expresses his great ideas about the religion which enjoys non-violence to all living beings and gives the ideal of his life in the following verse:

अतास्य शरीरस्य सारमेवदुण्डयम् ।
tapast prāṇairapi prātiṣṭhāyanaṁ pare jañe । | 10

On which the fruition of the main action in the play is based. Meanwhile a great uproar is heard from the background, and a frightened dove chased by a hawk enters. The dove seeks shelter from the king, which the later is ever-ready to extend, but the hawk is very hungry and demands his
food, and faints. The king offers him sweet-balls, but he being a carnivorous animal can not partake of them. Then the king decides to give him the flesh of his own body equal in weight to that of dove, but the dove proves to be so weighty that the king sits down in the scale and thus offers his life for the bird.

At this juncture the two gods who had came in the form of birds to test the kings piety reveal themselves, and everything ends well.

The work is an example of a paly composed and performed for the propagation of the Jaina religion. Consequently, greater part of it is occupied by the religious discussions between the king and his minister, and also between the king and the hawk. Sometimes the pranks of Vidūṣaka bring a lively touch, but on the whole there is practically very little action, and the verses predominate over than dialogues. So much, so that we find not less than one hundred thirty five stanzas in this short play. Some of the verses are quite noteworthy. When the Vidūṣaka raises doubts regarding the existence of another world the king makes him silent with the following illustration:

करस्यमप्येवमभी कृषीवलाः
श्किपान्ति बीरं पृथुप्रक्षसिद्धते ।
व्यस्य केनापि कथं विलोकितः
सपस्ति नातीत्यथवा फलोदयः ॥ ॥

And description of the shining sabre in the kings hand:
Finally, when the gods praise the greatness of Vajrayudha, he expresses his modesty in very simple but eloquent words.

बलचन्द्र के विवेकमान्जरी और उपदेशाकांडली के अनुमर्यांकनों

Next we come to Bālacandra’s Commentaries on the two prakrit Prakaraṇas by Āśā-vīz his Vivekamaṇḍari and Upadeśa kaṇḍali. The former work contains 327 Gatas, while the latter one companies 125 Gāthas and both the works contain Jain religious instruction in its various aspects. The commentary on the Vivekamaṇḍari is published, while that on the Upadeśakaṇḍali being unprinted is available only in manuscript form. Both the commentaries have been composed in the style of the Kārṇika inserting numerous long narratives in verse, so much Vivekamaṇḍari is 8000 Slokas while that of the commentary on the Upadeśakaṇḍali is 7600 Slokas. The Vivekamaṇḍari Ṭika has been divided into four parts, and at the end of the first three parts the author has given a verse in praise of Jaitrasimha, Āśā’s son
for whom he had composed the commentary, while at the end of the fourth part a long Praṣasti has been given, which is literally identical with that at the end of the Upadeśakaṇḍali Tikā.

The Upadeśakaṇḍali Tikā, is in twelve parts and two verses are appended at the end of each part - One in praise of Haribhadra Sūri the Guru of Bālacandra, and the other in praise of Āśāda, the author of the original Prakaraṇas. ¹⁶

Date

With regard to the date of the composition of the Mahākāvyya, no specific mention is made by the poet. But from the mention of the date of the death of Vastupāla, which is placed in 1240 A.D. we can say that the work must have been composed after his death. Moreover, it is said here that the present Kāvyā was written for the pleasure of Jaitrasimha, Vastupāla’s son. ¹⁷ This shows that the date of the work falls in the period when Vastupāla’s son came into power. Thus the upper limit of the date of composition can be fixed about the end of the thirteenth century A.D.
1. This verse has been found written at the end of a manuscript of the VV. Nothing is known about the date or present history of Aparajita Kavi. (VV.p.79)


3. cf. B.J.Sandesara, LMV, p.76.

4. दरिद्रलोकातिसिद्धामृदास्य कान्तांभवद्विदिवास्य विशुद्ध ।
 सन्मार्गापूशोत्तयति सम सर्धो या देहिना दुर्जितानक्षिणति । ॥ ५१ ॥

पिशवं पदोपासितविधि सदोजा मुम्मालनामाजनि तत्तुजः ।
संसारामलोकयति सम योस्मुं जाळस्वप्नं निवासगृहाः ॥ ५२ ॥

समाहितः श्रीहरिमवर्धूपरिगोरोरीपथश्चितकस्मयः ।
कथाश्चित्वदानामतः पितृप्रामभ्यासद्रजैनमत्वः सः ॥ ५३ ॥

पूर्णं समग्रप्रमिती कलाकृति कमेश्वर मांविति गृहुविमायः ।
तं प्रीतन्ते जिन वालचन्द्र इत्याम्या दीशितमभवतः ॥ ५४ ॥
अधिकतिरिक्त तमथा क्रमेण समारहसुद्धित्वमायुष्योऽन्ते ।
न्ययाबिविशालतिव्यानमस्यस्य तस्मिन्यद्व श्रीहरिभद्यूरिहि ।। ५५ ।।

5. सारस्वतध्यानवतोऽस्य योगनिद्रामुखेतस्य मुहूर्तमेकस् ।
स्वप्नात्माकत्वं जगतजनाना श्रीशारदा सादरमित्युुवाच ।। ७० ।।

6. VV. p. 3
7. Vastupala. NN XVI.38.
8. VV, XIV.37.
9. Balacandra, KV. p.2
11. Ibid, Act.V.50
12. Ibid, Act.V.62
15. cf.B.J.Sandesara, LMV. p.156.
17. VV. I.75.