

Historicity of Kamandaka

Abstract

Writing the history of early india has been confronted with a number of problems. Absence of works of history is only one of them. However, with the assistance of archaeological and works of literature, both religious and secular, the historians have been able to establish a fairly well documented history of early india whether it is the political, social, economic or cultural aspects of ancient india. Initially tracing the political history predominated. Writing on political ideas institution of early india began in the post 1857 period. However, serious evidential writings started only in early 20th century. Compulsions of the time necessitated locating sources to establish the existence of political institutions in india in ancient india.

Keywords: Kamandakiya Nitisara, Arthasastra, Archaeological, Necessitated

Introduction

Kamandakiya Nitisara was one such source to establish that political thought and ideas were examined, analyzed and practised in india since the historical period.

Kamandaka is the author of *Nitisara*. He introduces himself as an honest pupil of Kautilya. His writing *Nitisara* approximately belongs to the post gupta period or A.D. 8th century. This book comprises of 19 sections, 36 heads and 1163 maxims. *Nitisara* is a work which is totally based on polity. It is generally regarded as a summary of *Arthasastra*, the political work of Chanakya.

Review of Literature

A number of scholars have worked on this manuscript. Most of these have been studied relating to studying the political theory as described by Kamandaka. Its importance as a political treatise gets reflected in a number of studies made by the historians and political thinkers. The sanskritists including Winternitz, A.B.Keith, S.K. De and P.V.Kane while writing on Kamandakiya Nitisara have not only discussed its chronology and style but have dealt with its contents without really going into any discussions on the issue contained there in. These include the works of R.C. Majumdar, Beni Prasad, A.S.Alteker and K.P.Jayasawal. The lists include scholars like R.Shamsastri, R.P. Kangle, S.C. Mishra and S.N.Mittal. Most of these works have highlighted the similarities between the Arthasastra and the Nitisara. In this context, Fuleshwar Jha gave a greater emphasis on the policies and personality of Kamandaka in his book which is a Comparative study between Kautilya's *Arthasastra* and the Kamandaka *Nitisara*. Kamandaka's work has also been studied by scholars writing on the police, crime and spy system in ancient India. Mention in this regard can be made to the work of K.K Mishra, K.M.agrawal and Bhasker Anand. One of the most comprehensive work on Kamandaka treaties is by U.N. Ghoshal in his book A history of political ideas. He has discussed not only the style of the Nitisara but also taken into account his ideas on kingship, state structure and governance and questions related to morality as put forward by kamandaka. R.Shamsastri while attempting to settle the issue of its chronology did discuss the qualities of the king as advocated by kamandaka. Devhuti has also taken note of Kamandakas writing while writing about the polity of Harshas period while Parmatma Sharan is the only one to have brought out a comparative discussion between Shukra Niti and Kamandakiya Nitisara. In the light of the above, it can be held that the work has been exclusively used for the study of political ideas and governance. No significant attempt has been made to relate it to the social system and ideas as portrayed in this text.

Objective

The main objective of this research is that most of the research scholars have worked only on the political concept of Kamandakiya *Nitisara*. The present research relooking at political reflection is to determine the actual time /period of composition of Nitisara, which has been a matter of controversy. It also attempts to establish the identity of Kamandaka and his personality as a thinker.

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Methodology

While the work is primarily based on Kamandakiya Nitisara the contents have been analyzed with collaboration from the contemporary literature sources of his period.

Style

Nitisara as already stated is a work in Sanskrit language. It was composed with 19 sections (Prakarans), 36 centos (sarga) and include 1163 maxims. It is a classical work in which the author has adopted the condensed and pithy style like that of proverbs. In the early state of literary development, there were concise rules and flashing proverbs where in the writers used a variety of metres and numerous political similes and metaphors. The work is entirely in prose and not a single line of poetry has been included. It was republished in the 17th century A.D. We do not find the original notes of Kamandaka¹ and what is available is the translation of the work only. Therefore there is no final conclusion about the work's style.

M.N.Dutt while discussing the style stated that the essential characteristics of Nitisara are its gravity and sententiousness. The work did influence the later writings. Testimony to its subsequent influence on the later writings is borne out by the number of its commentaries and wholesale incorporation of its verses in later works as well as its being quoted as an authority in the later digests on polity and sacred law not to speak of its abstracts or counterparts in the literature of Indo China and Indonesia.²

Chronology

There is not only a controversy regarding Kamandaka but assigned different time frame for this work (Nitisara). M.Winternitz³ assigned the work to the 8th century A.D. and the same has been accepted by R.C.Majumdar.⁴ Other scholars including D.Devahuti,⁵ D.D.Kosambi,⁶ R.P Kangle,⁷ S.K Maity,⁸ P.L Gupta,⁹ Bimal kant Majumdar,¹⁰ A. Viganvantsev,¹¹ S.C Mishra,¹² Mabet,¹³ R.S.Sharma,¹⁴ Saloter B.Anand,¹⁵ K.K Mishra,¹⁶ Baniprasad Birendranath,¹⁷ M.N Dutt¹⁸ and A.L Basham¹⁹ are all in agreement with this date of A.D 8th century. K.P Jayasawal²⁰ however holds the work to be a composition of A.D 4th or 5th century while R. Shamshastri²¹ takes the period of A.D 400 to 600 to be the period of its composition. A.B .Keith²² too has supported this conclusion P.V Kane²³ however prefers to place it in an earlier period on the basis of the Kavyalankara sutra.

M.N Dutt on the basis of a report submitted by Frederich to the Batavin Society of arts and science on the Sanskrit literature of Bali held that the most popular work on that Island on polity is entitled Kamandakiya Nitisara. All the Sanskrit works extant there are acknowledged to be the counterparts of their Indian originals. The researches of Sir stamford Raffles and crowford show that the predominance of Buddhism in the Island of Java forced the Hindu inhabitants of that place to retire to Bali in the A.D. 4th century along with their households gods and sacred scriptures, where they and their descendants have ever since carefully preserved their literature and their religion.

This Sanskrit literature also available in Bali, including the Kamandakiya Nitisara, are of a date

anterior to A.D 4th century.²⁴ The contents however of the Balenese code of morals, are unknown and it would be premature from the similarity of names to infer its identity with the work, yet the fact that the people of Bali themselves acknowledge all their Sanskrit literature to have been obtained from India, would argue the existence of at least a Kamandakiya Nitisara at the time when the literature was imported from the shores of India. He therefore supports an earlier date of composition of the Nitisara. J.Jolly extends two reasons for accepting 8th century A.D. as the period of its composition.²⁵ These include that the work was not alluded to by the author of the earliest version of the panchatantra, nor by the ancient commentators of Manu and that Vamana was once quoted by Kamandaka (A.D. 800), this fact has also been referred by Keith and Winternitz. Birendra Nath holds it to be a composition of the Gupta period and states that the author Sikhara Swamin (kamandaka) was a minister of Chandragupta Vikramaditya.

Attempts has also been made to arrive at a chorological conclusion on the basis of the use of the term hora on the text. It has been observed by some that the use of word hora in this work is fatal to its claim to antiquity. It has been shown that the word is of Arabic origin and therefore could not have been borrowed in Sanskrit writings before the 10th century.²⁶ However the introduction of the term can be held to have been an interpretation and therefore need not be emphasized.

In the light of the above discussion, it can be held that the work belongs to the post Gupta period or definitely composed before the eight century A.D.

KAMANDAKA/ Historicity

Kamandaka is taken as the author of Nitisara which is based on the Arthasastra of Chanakya/Kautilya. Kamandaka proclaimed himself to be a pupil of Kautilya. There is a controversy about the identity of Kamandaka as also of his work both amongst his contemporary writer and the present day scholars writing on early India. He has been introduced by scholars as a pupil of Kautilya while other holds different opinion. Kamandaka himself does not give any reference regarding himself or of his religious learning and presents himself only as an obedient pupil of Kautilya.

Dandin and Bhavbhuti have described Kamandaka as a female, Kamandaki who is portrayed as an actress in their works. Fuleshwar Jha²⁷ and Ganpati Shastri are also agreed in accepting the writer of the Nitisara Kamandaki as a female. On the basis of the Arabic author, Abu Salima, Birendra Nath,²⁸ A.Agrawal²⁹ and other have identified Kamandaka with Sikhara Swamin, a minister of Chandragupta Vikramaditya, who is said to have written a work on polity under the pen name of Kamandaka. Abu Salima refers to him as Sifara.

Doubts have also been raised regarding his religious leanings as well. According to Fuleshwar Jha, he had adopted Buddhism after completing the Nitisara. Pramathan Nath Benerjee³⁰ and Rajendra Lal Mitra also support the contention that Kamandaka was a Buddhist. However the question emerges that if he had adopted Buddhism, how could he have regard for upholding the varnashramadharma system, a

system which did not find a place in the herodox sects.

It can therefore be held that he did belong to the Kautilya's school of thought and this credited himself as his pupil although not a contemporary of one . Besides that he was initiated into brahmanical thought at least at the time of composing this work can be established on the basis of the internal evidence. He may have turned to Buddhism later in life.

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