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New Light on Devabodha, the Earliest Extant Commentator on *Mahābhārata*

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Abstract: The name of Devabodha is well-known to specialists of *Mahābhārata* textual traditions: author of the *Jñānadīpikā* or “Lamp of Knowledge”, the earliest extant commentary on the Great Epic, he has been duly referred to by the critical editors of this text along with his successors such as Vimalabodha, Arjunamiśra and Nilakaṇṭha. Yet Devabodha remains an almost complete mystery regarding the period or the place he lived in, or even the conditions that urged him to compose a commentary. Since he commented on a version of the *Mahābhārata* belonging to the Northern recension and was quoted by Vimalabodha between the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, he has been approximately assigned to eleventh-century Northern India or Kashmir, but till now no positive evidence has been brought forth to validate this opinion. The purpose of the present paper is to shed some light on this important author by proving that, contrary to a prejudice rehearsed in every history of Indian literature, he is one and the same person with a medieval poet and dramatist called Devabodha or sometimes Devabodhi. Then follows a critical and synthetic account on what we can know about Devabodha’s life and career from all the available sources.

Keywords: *Mahābhārata* exegesis, medieval India, Sanskrit theatre, Vaiṣṇavism, Sāṃkhya

Within the wide field of Indian exegetical literature on the *Mahābhārata*, the most renowned commentary is a relatively late one, the *Bhāratabhāvadīpa* or “Lamp on the Meaning of the Bhārata”, which was achieved in Banaras about the end of the seventeenth century by Nilakaṇṭha, a Brahmin scholar from Maharashtra.¹ Coupled with a revised edition of the epic text, this work met right away with a great success which is testified by the large amount of copies produced and diffused throughout India since that time. Indeed, Nilakaṇṭha did a great work as an editor, collecting and comparing many manuscripts of the

¹ Sukthankar 1944: 264–265; Gode 1954: 478–486; Minkowski 2005: 234; Pollock 2015: 119.

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Mahābhārata from different parts of India in order to determine the best reading. Besides, he consulted older commentaries and drew many explanations from them, but what made his reputation as a scholar is the way he enriched the exegetical tradition by allegorical interpretations. As a consequence of its qualities and its association with a widely appreciated version of the Great Epic, the *Bhāratabhāvadīpa* eclipsed the works of Nilakaṇṭha's forerunners and came to be associated to most of the editions of the *Mahābhārata* printed in India since the second half of the nineteenth century.²

Nevertheless, the many previous commentaries deserve more consideration for at least two reasons that were formulated as early as in the nineteen-thirties by V. S. Sukthankar, the promoter of the famous Critical Edition from the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of Pune. Apart from Nilakaṇṭha, this great Indian scholar listed no less than twenty-one writers who had commented either on the whole *Mahābhārata* or on selected parts, and he further underlined how useful their works could be not only for explaining difficult passages, but also for collecting variant readings.³ Indeed, the text that these authors had commented on may differ from the versions which have been preserved in manuscripts, a point of particular relevance for the editors from Pune since the commentaries were written down at an earlier date than the available copies of the *Mahābhārata*. Unfortunately, the more ancient the commentary is, the less known is the life of the commentator, and thus the four main predecessors of Nilakaṇṭha can be dated only in a relative way. It is known for instance that Arjunamiśra was born in Bengal to a well-known reciter of the *Mahābhārata*, but regarding his time, the only clue is provided by a copy of his commentary completed about 1534,⁴ and the same date serves also as an approximate lower limit for those authors among Arjunamiśra's sources whose commentaries are preserved, namely Devabodha, Vimalabodha and Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa. Vimalabodha is said to have flourished "after 1150", because of his references to works by the famous king-scholar Bhoja (first half of the eleventh century),⁵ while Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa's datation relies exclusively on his identification with

2 A notable exception is Mahadeva Shastri Bakre's edition of the *Virāṭaparvan* and the *Udyogaparvan* at the Gujarati Printing Press of Bombay, which includes several commentaries such as the ones authored by Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa and Arjunamiśra (cf. Sukthankar 1944: 265, n. 5; Minkowski 2005: 229). For a detailed analysis of the long-lasting success of Nilakaṇṭha's commentary, see Minkowski 2005.

3 Sukthankar 1944: 264.

4 Sukthankar 1944: 267–268. According to the copyist, the text had become by that time difficult to find in Arjunamiśra's homeland, which means that the latter probably lived much earlier.

5 Gode 1954: 319–321.

the author of a commentary on the *Manusmṛti* who bore the same name and presumably lived “between 1100 and 1300”.⁶ Since they provide the only chronological reference for Devabodha’s life by their quotations from his *Jñānadīpikā* or “Lamp of Knowledge”,⁷ any hypothesis about the time of this earliest commentator whose work is still extant appears to be very fragile, because he could have been either close or remote from the otherwise vague dates of his successors. As regards his place, what V. S. Sukthankar and his colleagues discovered by confronting the *Jñānadīpikā* to the different versions of the *Mahābhārata* is that Devabodha commented on a text belonging to the Northern recension, more precisely very close to the Śārādā and the so-called “K” versions.⁸

On that ground, most scholars have cautiously surmised that Devabodha lived at the latest in the twelfth century in Northern India, but some others have indulged in more precise statements. Sheldon Pollock, for instance, has written in a recent article on Sanskrit philology that Devabodha was “a Kashmiri” from the early eleventh century and, reversing the argument, further declares that, “given his location in Kashmir, [he] established a recension affiliated with the northwest tradition.”⁹ Admittedly, determining as precisely as possible in which context Devabodha produced his commentary is highly desirable, given the importance of this work for understanding how the tradition of epic exegesis started and developed, but nothing can be safely surmised unless further evidence is brought to light, and the fact is that no inquiry into the life and works of Devabodha has been conducted since the publication of four sections of the *Jñānadīpikā* in the forties.

As early as 1942, however, R. N. Dandekar had brought to the attention of scholars an avenue worth exploring when he said in the introduction to his edition of Devabodha’s commentary on the *Ādīparvan*: “There are several writers of the name Devabodha, Devasvāmin, Devabodhi etc., but for want of evidence it

6 Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa’s *Manvarthanibandha* was quoted by Rāyamukuta in 1431 (Kane 1930: 157).

7 Otherwise called either *Mahābhāratatātparyāṭikā* “Commentary on the Purport of the *Mahābhārata*” or *Mahābhāratatātparyadīpikā* “Lamp on the Purport of the *Mahābhārata*” according to Holtzmann (Sukthankar 1944: 273).

8 Sukthankar 1944: 275–276; JD ad ĀP, p. I; JD ad UP, p. X–XIII; JD ad SP, introduction p. 2.

9 Pollock 2015: 117, 119. In a previous work, Sheldon Pollock has similarly stated that Devabodha was “the earliest extant commentator on the work [...] a Kashmiri ascetic of perhaps 1000” (Pollock 2003: 60 n. 48). Elsewhere, however, he says more prudently that Devabodha “sometime in the eleventh century established a text affiliated with the Kashmiri tradition” (Pollock 2006: 230, referring to Sukthankar 1944: 274). After stating, in 2005 that the extant commentaries on the *Mahābhārata* were “datable not much earlier than the twelfth century”, a few years later Christopher Minkowski in an article on Nilakaṇṭha’s *Mahābhārata* has said that Devabodha lived in North India or Kashmir during the eleventh century (cf. Minkowski 2005: 236; Minkowski 2010).

is not, at present, possible to connect them with each other. This question must therefore await further investigation.”¹⁰ Yet nobody has tried so far to identify the commentator with any of these authors, and, strikingly enough, the very few scholars who did know about the existence of poets called Devabodha or Devabodhi rather insisted on their being undoubtedly different from the commentator of the *Mahābhārata*, despite the fact that each author remained as mysterious as the other.¹¹ In his exhaustive account on Sanskrit poetry preserved in anthologies and inscriptions, Ludwik Sternbach even made a distinction between three authors, two Devabodha and one Devabodhi. According to him, the latter was mainly a playwright, who authored the *Satyavratarnāṅgada* or “Rukmāṅgada the Truthful”; as for the Devabodha, he said that one was a commentator, while the other wrote poetical texts quoted by Śrīdharadāsa in the *Saduktikarnāṃṛta* anthology.¹² It seems that in Sternbach’s mind, the author of erudite commentaries on great texts from the Hindu tradition could not at the same time have composed the samples of refined poetry found in the anthologies.

Thus the research carried out up to now has ended up in rather confusing statements, and what I intend to prove now, against the previous trend, is that despite their variety, all these texts were composed by one and the same author called Devabodha. I will first sketch how his name could have been turned into Devabodhi. Then I will try to collect, from his own works as well as from other medieval sources, all the pieces of evidence that could help us to know who he was, when he lived and in which parts of India he devoted himself to his intellectual activities.

1 Devabodha, poet, playwright and commentator

1.1 How Devabodha became Devabodhi

When Theodor Aufrecht in his pioneering article “Zur Kenntniss indischer Dichter” (1882) first presented verses authored by Devabodha, he briefly alluded to a verse ascribed to a poet called Devabodhi he had already translated a decade earlier (in 1873) in his account of the medieval anthology called

¹⁰ JD ad ĀP, p. II n. 1.

¹¹ Srikantha Shastri 1942: 419; Kunjunni Raja 1977: 114–115.

¹² Sternbach 1982: 118, n 625 for Devabodha the poet, and 626 for Devabodhi the dramatist, Devabodha the commentator being excluded from this study on Sanskrit poetry. Sternbach further noted that out of the five stanzas ascribed to Devabodha by Śrīdharadāsa in the *Saduktikarnāṃṛta*, one is alternatively associated with a poet named Jīvabodha.

Śārṅgadharapaddhati.¹³ Whether Aufrecht himself believed that these were one and the same author is impossible to ascertain, but his report shows that from the very beginning of scholarship on Devabodha, a confusion arose from the Indian sources themselves. Indeed, the anthologists registered several verses under two different names: Devabodha in Śrīdharadāsa's *Saduktikarṇāmrta* (1205), and Devabodhi in Jalhaṇa's *Sūktimūktāvalī* (1258), Śārṅgadharā's *Pad-dhati* (1363) and later ones.¹⁴ As the verses attributed to one were not the same as those ascribed to the other,¹⁵ there was no reason for modern scholars to identify these poets. Besides, both names Devabodha and Devabodhi appear in several anecdotes compiled throughout the medieval period by Jain authors in their semi-historical chronicles, which fact provided a further argument for distinguishing two poets.

However, even a rapid glance at the play assigned to the so-called Devabodhi proves that this name is nothing but a misreading, since the dramatist calls himself Devabodha in several passages of the prologue. For instance, the stage-manager enumerates all the advantages which may secure the success of the representation:¹⁶

The hero of the story is praiseworthy, he has the qualities of a man firm and brave, and he performs charming deeds; the poet is the illustrious Devabodha, an expert in producing the savours that the mind can drink; the troop of actors is fit for what must be done; the members of the assembly can appreciate the merits: may they dive into the river of savours increased thanks to the cloud of that work!

13 Aufrecht 1873: 88–89; Aufrecht 1882: 514–515; Sternbach 1980: XVIII.

14 Among the three verses ascribed to Devabodhi in the anthologies, two come from the *Satyavratarukmāṅgada* and can be found only in Jalhaṇa's compilation. The third one, of unknown provenance, is not only included in the *Sūktimūktāvalī* and the *Śārṅgadharapaddhati*, but also quoted under Devabodhi's name in two other works dating from the seventeenth century, Gadādharā's *Rasikajīvana* and Harikavi's *Subhāṣitahārāvalī* (which is not surprising in the latter case as Harikavi borrowed *in extenso* many passages from Jalhaṇa's text). Besides, it appears without mention of author in two more anthologies, one from the fifteenth century, Sāyaṇa's *Subhāṣitasudhānidhi*, the other one, entitled *Subhāṣitasārasamuccaya*, from the late seventeenth century (Sternbach 1980: XVIII–XX; Sternbach 1982: 118).

15 Actually, Jalhaṇa and Śārṅgadharā, who make use of the spelling Devabodhi, do include in their work a verse ascribed to Devabodha by Śrīdharadāsa (*yāvad yāvat kuvalayadṛśā dantarājī*), but they do not indicate its authorship (Aufrecht 1882: 516; Sternbach 1982: 118).

16 *dhīrodātta-guṇo'bhīrāma-caritaḥ ślāghyaḥ kathā-nāyakaś
cetaḥ-peya-rasa-prayoga-nīpunaḥ śrī-devabodhaḥ kavīḥ |
karttavye kuśalaḥ kuśilava-janaḥ sabhyā guṇa-grāhiṇo
gāhaṃtāṃ rasa-vāhinīm upacitām asmāt prabaṃdhāmbudāt ||*

(SVR folio 2a line 9 to folio 2b line 1).

I suspect a verse by Devabodha himself to have led astray anthologists as well as chroniclers. Quoted by Śrīdharadāsa in the section called “Pride of the Talented” (*guṇi-garvaḥ*), it reads as follows:¹⁷

The situation of emperor among logicians, the praises of poets, the excessive arrogance of being unchallenged in poetry and erudition, all these things last as long as the creeper-like words uttered by the illustrious Devabodha do not echo in the cavity of the ear, as an undecentful seed of instantaneous nectar flowing beyond measure in each limb.

The expression *śrīdevabodheritās*, which is here analysed as a compound, *śrī-devabodha-īritās*, “uttered by the illustrious Devabodha”, might have been understood as made of two words, *śrī-devabodher itās*, that is “coming from the illustrious Devabodhi”. Thus the first distinction between Devabodha and Devabodhi can be dismissed as founded on a very early misinterpretation of one stanza of that poet

1.2 A versatile author

As regards the second distinction between two Devabodha, one being a poet and the other a commentator, it collapses as soon as are acknowledged the poetical skills that the author of the *Jnānadīpikā* displays on the threshold of the section devoted to the *Ādīparvan*. Indeed, the commentary opens with nine stanzas in praise of several deities that follow various metrical schemes. If the last four are rather common *anuṣṭubh*, the five others are much longer and more elaborate verses: among them can be identified one *sragdharā* (v. 2), one *mālinī* (v. 3) and three *śārdūlavikrīḍita* (v. 1, 4, 5). These metres are employed in the lyrical tradition,¹⁸ and it is noteworthy that the five verses quoted by Śrīdharadāsa under the name of Devabodha display a similar variety with the same predominance of the *śārdūlavikrīḍita* metre (three verses out of five, the remaining ones being a *mandākrāntā* and a *śikhariṇī*). Moreover, these facts tend to confirm the identification of the commentator with the dramatist as well, since the *śārdūlavikrīḍita* was one of the most favoured metres in medieval dramatic literature. For instance, Kṛṣṇamiśra, the renowned author of the allegorical play *Prabodhacandrodaya* (second half of the eleventh century), preferred it to any

¹⁷ *tāvāt tārīkika-cakravartī-padavī tāvat kavīnām giras
tāvaca cāpratimallatā-mada-bharaḥ sahitya-pāṇḍityayoḥ |
yāvan na pratīparva- nīrbhara-sudhā-nīrvyāja-bijaṃ kṣaṇād
vāg-vallyo vilasanti karṇa-kuhare śrīdevabhoderitāḥ ||*

(*Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, 5.30.2, cf. Aufrecht 1882: 515).

¹⁸ Sternbach 1980: XVI.

other metre, including the *anuṣṭubh*.¹⁹ As the *Satyavratarukmāṅgada* has not been preserved in its entirety, it is impossible to know whether this metre was especially favoured by the dramatist, but at least it can be stated that it occurs quite often in the available text. Regarding the poetical merits of the verses included in the *Jñānadīpikā*, we will see that some of them are really similar to the ones selected as masterpieces by the medieval anthologists.²⁰

Further evidence showing the acquaintance of the commentator with the codes of dramatic literature can be traced from the *Jñānadīpikā*: for instance, Devabodha starts the explanation of the *Ādīparvan* by discussing at some length the homage to Nārāyaṇa that opens the text he comments on,²¹ and he abruptly concludes with an expression which would not be surprising in a theatrical context: *ity alam ativistar-eṇa*, that is “Enough prolixity!”²² Indeed, in the prologue of Sanskrit plays, the stage-manager often makes use of such an exclamation while entering the stage at the end of the inaugural benediction (*nāndī*), even when it just consists in one short verse like in Bhavabhūti’s *Uttararāmacarita*.²³ Thus he is all the more entitled to complain that way in the *Satyavratarukmāṅgada*, since its *nāndī* is made of three longer verses.²⁴ As regards the commentary, Devabodha probably considered the homage to Nārāyaṇa as the *nāndī* of the *Mahābhārata* because of the influence of dramatic theory. Another instance of assimilation of the epic to a drama is found a little further, when the commentator says that the charioteer Ugraśravas “sums up with both these verses the principle of righteousness and unrighteousness, which is the germ of victory and defeat of [respectively] Yudhiṣṭhira and Duryodhana, the hero and the adversary of the hero in the story.”²⁵ Indeed, no less than three words belonging to the technical vocabulary of dramaturgy can be singled out of this sentence. Firstly, that the eldest Pāṇḍava and the eldest Kaurava are presented

19 Interesting statistics on the frequency of metres in *mahākāvya* and *nāṭya* have been provided by Ingalls 1965: 35–36. In Kṣemīśvara’s *Naiṣadhānanda*, a play roughly contemporary with Kṛṣṇamiśra’s, the *śārdūlavikrīḍita* is the second metre in terms of frequency (*Naiṣadhānanda*, introduction, p. XLI–XLIV). For slightly later plays dating from the second half of the twelfth century see Leclère 2013: 565.

20 According to Prabhācandra’s *Prabhāvākacarita* (1278), Devabodha deserved not only the title of “poet” (*devabodha-kaviḥ*, PCa XXII. 207), but even that of “lord among poets” (*devabodhaṃ kavīśvaram*, PCa XXII. 197).

21 This stanza “is foreign to the entire Southern recension of the epic” (Sukthankar 1944: 12, n. 2).

22 JD ad ĀP, p. 3.

23 This verse is written in the *anuṣṭubh* metre. The expression can be more sophisticated in other dramas, as instanced by the *Mṛcchakatikā* (*alam anena pariṣat-kutūhala-vimarda-kāriṇā pariśrameṇa*).

24 *nāṃdy-ante sūtradharaḥ | alam ativistarena* (SVR folio 1a lines *3–4, in the margin).

25 *kathā-nāyaka-pratināyakaḥ yudhiṣṭhira-duryodhanayoḥ jaya-parājaya-bijaṃ dharmādharma-matvaṃ ślokaḥbhyāṃ samkṣipati* (JD ad ĀP, p. 8–9).

here as the *nāyaka* “hero” and the *pratināyaka* “adversary of the hero” of the story is rather significant, since these words are discussed as key-concepts of the construction of the plot by theoreticians of theatre.²⁶ Admittedly, they might have been employed by the commentator in a less technical sense, yet it is striking that, as a dramatist urged to simplify the epic material for adapting it to the stage, he has singled two characters out of many others who could be considered as *nāyaka* and *pratināyaka* as well.²⁷ Similarly, the word “germ” (*bīja*) appears in the prescriptions relative to the plot, as one of the five means of reaching the goal (*artha-prakṛti*): it is a slight indication at the very beginning of the play of what the hero will obtain in the denouement.²⁸

Beside these stylistic arguments, it is also possible to glean from the texts some information about the author’s creed and way of life that allows to identify the commentator as the dramatist.

1.3 An eminent renouncer

All the Indian scholars involved in the process of studying and editing Devabodha’s commentary underlined that barely nothing was known about his biography, except that he belonged to a religious order of wandering ascetics. According to the colophons of his text, he was the disciple of a renouncer named Satyabodha whose authority over their co-religionists he eventually inherited, as revealed by the prestigious titles associated to their names: in most occurrences, they are styled *paramahansa-parivrājakācārya*, “Paramahansa and Master of

²⁶ Lévi 1963: 62–72; Keith 1998: 305–308.

²⁷ In many plays inspired by the *Mahābhārata*, the *nāyaka* is not Yudhiṣṭhira but either Arjuna or Bhīma. The latter for instance plays a decisive role throughout Bhaṭṭanārāyaṇa’s *Veṇiṣaṃhāra*, since he fulfills in the sixth and last act the promise of taking revenge on the Kaurava he has made in the first one, and Arjuna is undoubtedly the protagonist of Kulaśekharavarman’s *Subhadrādhanamjaya*, where he struggles during six acts for marrying Kṛṣṇa’s sister Subhadrā. On the other side, Duryodhana is actually the *pratināyaka* in most cases, but the role may also be assumed by other evil characters such as the demon Baka who is opposed to Bhīma in Rāmacandra’s *Nirbhayabhīmavyāyoga*. Devabodha himself makes it clear at the very beginning of the commentary on the *Sabhāparvan* that Duryodhana is merely “one of the *pratināyaka*” of the epic (*duryodhanādipratināyaka*, JD ad SP, p. 1).

²⁸ The four remaining means of reaching the goal are, according to Bharata’s *Nāṭyaśāstra*, the “drop” (*bindu*), the “banner” (*patākā*), the “help” (*prakāri*) and the “achievement” (*kārya*). The rendering of these technical terms is inspired by Lyne Bantsat-Boudon’s analysis of Abhinavagupta’s commentary (Bantsat-Boudon 1992: 130–131) which I prefer to earlier translations (Lévi 1963: 34; Keith 1998: 298).

Wandering Ascetics”,²⁹ and their high rank is sometimes further expressed by the word *bhaṭṭāraka*, “Great Lord”.³⁰ Strangely enough, neither S. Shrikantha Shastri nor Ludwik Sternbach took these data into account when they wrote a note on Devabodha, while they both explicitly indicated that the dramatist they called Devabodhi was a *paramahaṃsa parivrājaka*.³¹ Actually, Devabodha himself had laid much stress on his ascetic condition in the prologue of the *Satyavratarukmāṅgada*: his name is almost systematically followed by the title

29 If by the time of Devabodha *paramahaṃsa* had already become the only category of ascetics to exist, just as it is attested at the end of the seventeenth century (cf. Olivelle 1977: 69), then the word should not be understood as honorific but rather as qualifying *parivrājaka* in a *karmadhāraya* kind of relationship. Then the compound could be translated by “Master of Paramahaṃsa Wandering Ascetics”. However the mention of *haṃsa* ascetics in an inscription from the twelfth century (see below n. 96) suggests that a difference between simple renunciators and more advanced ones still existed by then. In any way, both Satyabodha and Devabodha are presented that way in the colophon of an unpublished manuscript of the *Jñānadīpikā* section devoted to the *Droṇaparvan*: *iti śrī-paramahaṃsa-parivrājakācārya-satyabodha-śiṣya-paramahaṃsa-parivrāja[kā]cārya-śrī-devabodha-kṛtau mahābhārata-tātparya-dīpikāyām jñānadīpikāyām droṇa-parvaṇi vīvaraṇaṃ samāptam* || (manuscript No. 8647 in Shastri 1932, dated 1621 of the Śaka Era, that is 1699 of the Christian Era). The title is generally associated to Devabodha’s names in the colophons, as instanced by the commentary on the *Bhīṣmaparvan*: *iti śrī-paramahaṃsa-parivrājakācārya-śrī-devabodha-kṛta-mahābhārata-dīpikāyām bhīṣmaparva-vyākhyānaṃ samāptam* || (JD ad BP, p. 34). For other examples, see below n. 30. The two only exceptions appear in the opening verses of the *Bhīṣmaparvan* and *Kaṇṇaparvan* section of the *Jñānadīpikā*, where the metrical structure may have prevented Devabodha from introducing himself at length: in one instance, he just gives his bare name, while in the other one, the name is followed by the simpler title of “ascetic” (*muni*).

vyāsa-vāṇmaya-vaidagdhya-madhu-vāridhī-vīcayaḥ |
devabodha-sarasvatyāḥ sevyatām bhīṣmaparvaṇi || (JD ad BP, v. 3)
devabodha-muner jīyād vāk-karṇi kaṇṇa-parvaṇi |
ajñāna-matta-mātāṅga-hṛdaya-sthāna-dāriṇaḥ ||

(JD ad KP, v. 2, ms. n°8648 in Shastri 1932).

30 Devabodha is given twice this title in the extant sources: the first instance is to be found in one of the three manuscripts of the commentary on the *Ādīparvan* described by R. N. Dandekar in his introduction, the manuscript b, dating back to 1584 CE: *iti paramahaṃsa-parivrājakācārya-bhaṭṭāraka-śrīmad-devabodha-vīracitāyām bhārata ādīparvaṇi jñāna-dīpikāyām ādīparva samāptam* | (JD ad ĀP, p. II). The other one appears in the colophon of the commentary on the *Sabhāparvan*: *iti paramahaṃsa-parivrājakācārya-bhaṭṭāraka-śrī-devabodha-kṛtau mahābhārata-tīkāyām jñānadīpikāyām sabhāparva samāptam* || (JD ad SP, p. 45). As for Satyabodha, he is presented as a *bhaṭṭāraka* in another manuscript of the *Ādīparvan* section of the *Jñānadīpikā*, C, the colophon of which reads as follows: *iti śrī-paramahaṃsa-parivrājakācārya-bhaṭṭāraka-śrīmat-satyabodha-śiṣyasya paramahaṃsa-parivrājakācārya-śrī-devabodha-kṛtau mahābhārata-tātparya-tīkāyām jñānadīpikāyām ādi-parva samāptam* || (JD ad ĀP, p. III, 100).

31 Shrikantha Shastri 1942: 419; Sternbach 1982: 118.

yamin, “Endowed with Self-Restraint”,³² and is even associated with the other titles at the first instance, when the stage-manager tells the jester: “There is a new heroic drama called *Rukmāṅgada the Truthful*, a work by the Illustrious Ascetic Endowed with Self-Restraint, Devabodha, Paramahaṃsa and Master of Wandering Ascetics: this is what we are about to perform.”³³ That two authors may have borne the same name is possible, but that they shared the same titles would be an unbelievable coincidence.

1.4 A devotee of Viṣṇu

Last but not least, the *Jñānadīpikā* and the *Satyavratarukmāṅgada* betray the same devotion to Viṣṇu as the Supreme Being. At the very beginning of both works, the author invokes, in elaborate verses, the god under his cosmic aspects of Nārāyaṇa³⁴ and Trivikrama,³⁵ and even though he does not ignore other divinities such as Śiva³⁶ and Gaṇeśa,³⁷ he undoubtedly gives preeminence to Viṣṇu throughout his texts.

This is particularly evident in the case of the *Satyavratarukmāṅgada*, since it deals with the purāṇic story of king Rukmāṅgada, who was a fervent devotee of

³² Three occurrences: *devabodha-yaminaḥ*, *devabodha-yamino* (SVR folio 2b, lines 7–8) and *śrī-devabodha-yaminaḥ* (see the following note). The only instance of the name unaccompanied by this title has been given above n. 16. The title of *yamin* is clearly linked to the actions of restraint, *yama*, and discipline, *niyama*, two of the eight members of *yoga* (*aṣṭāṅga*), as instanced in Kṛṣṇamiśra’s *Prabodhacandrodaya*: in the second verse of the inaugural benediction, the poet celebrates Śiva as an ascetic endowed with self-restraint (*yamin*), whose inner light triumphs after entering Brahma’s crevice by means of the air disciplined (*niyamita*) into the median channel (*antar-nāḍī-niyamita-marul-laṅghita-brahmarandhram* [...] *pratyagjyotir jayati yaminaḥ*, PCU I.2). For a list of restraints, see for instance Colas 1996: 31–32.

³³ *asti paramahaṃsaparivrājakācāryasya śrī-devabodha-yaminaḥ kṛtir abhinavaṃ satyavratarukmāṅgadaṃ nāma nāṭakaṃ tad evābhinayāmaḥ* | (SVR folio 2a, lines 1–2).

³⁴ JD ad ĀP, p. 1, v. 1.

³⁵ JD ad ĀP, p. 1, v. 2; SVR I. 1 (folio 1a, lines *1–2, with the second *pada* missing, but quoted by Jalhaṇa in the *Sūktimuktāvalī*, section 2 “Āśīrvādapaddhati”, p. 31, v. 85). That these stanzas were composed by one and the same author is further suggested by two more features, one being a common insistence on the pollen-like dust which covers the divine foot of Trivikrama, the other a remarkable use of the precative of the verb *dā* (*deyād*, 3d sing., in the JD, and *deyāsur*, 3d pl., in the SVR).

³⁶ JD ad ĀP, p. 1, v. 3–4; JD ad BP, p. 1, v. 1.

³⁷ The author pays homage to Gaṇapati after Nārāyaṇa in the very first line of the text (*oṃ namo nārāyaṇāya* || *śrī-gaṇapataye namaḥ* || JD ad ĀP, p. 1), and invokes him at the beginning of each section, be it individually (*oṃ śrī-gaṇeśāya namaḥ* | JD ad BP, p. 1) or in association with other objects of veneration (*oṃ namaḥ śrī-guru-gopāla-gaurī-gaṇapatibhyaḥ* || JD ad SP, p. 1; *śrī-gaṇeśāya namaḥ* | *śrī-sarasvatyai namaḥ* | *śrī-gurubhyo namaḥ* || JD ad KP, ms. No. 8648 in Sastri 1932).

Viṣṇu: according to the *Nāradapurāṇa*, that king, in order not to desist from his vow of fasting on each Ekādaśī – the eleventh day of a fortnight dedicated to Viṣṇu –, was ready to sacrifice his own son Dharmāṅgada, and eventually went to heaven along with his wife and his son brought back to life by divine grace.³⁸ Besides, the stage-manager indicates in the prologue that the play was staged for the first time in a context clearly imbued with Vaiṣṇava devotion:³⁹

A black bee on the lotus-feet of the Crusher of Madhu, he has made shine forth the banner of his arm at the great festival of war: the king Tribhuvanamalla has informed me that he wants to propitiate by the performance of a new work the wise people who have come from all countries for seeing the god Viranārāyaṇa on the occasion of the great festival celebrating the waking of Kamalā's Husband.

Thus the performance took place in a temple dedicated to Viṣṇu under the particular name of Viranārāyaṇa or “Hero-Nārāyaṇa”, during a festival which, as specified by the copyist in the margin, is the holiest of the Ekādaśī called Prabodhini Ekādaśī or “The Eleventh Day of Viṣṇu's Waking from Cosmic Sleep.”⁴⁰ As regards the patron, he appears to be animated by a veneration of Viṣṇu's feet that the poet himself has already expressed in the inaugural benediction of the play:⁴¹

38 The manuscript of the *Satyavratarukmāṅgada* is incomplete and ends abruptly in the middle of the sixth act, before the sacrifice of Dharmāṅgada by his father, but there is no reason to doubt that Devabodha departed at any moment from the *Nāradapurāṇa* version which he closely followed on the whole as far as can be judged from the extant text. Besides, the prologue encapsulates the entire plot, as the jester tells the stage-manager a dream very similar to Rukmāṅgada's story: when asleep, he says, he fell in love with a bewitching woman who made him promise to grant whatever favour she would ask for. He accepted, and then she forced him either to desist from studying the Veda or to behead his own son. Despite his prayers, she did not change her mind, and he sacrificed his son (SVR folio 1a line 9 to folio 1b line 10).

39 *ādiṣṭo'smi | madhu-mathana-pada-kamala-madhu-vratena | samara-mahotsava-samullāsita-bhu[ja-dhva]jena śrīmat-tribhuvanamalla-devena | asmin kamalā-nātha-prabodha-mahotsave • vīra-nārāyaṇa-deva-darśanārthasa[rva-deśa]-samāyātaṃ vidvaj-janam abhinava-prabandhābhīnayanārādhayāmīti |* (SVR folio 1a, l. 1–3).

40 *bodhīny-ekādaśī-mahotsave* (SVR folio 1a, marginal note). A slightly later play, Someśvara's *Ullagharāghava* (second quarter of the thirteenth century), was similarly performed on the occasion of Viṣṇu's Waking festival for the god Kṛṣṇa in the sacred city of Dvāraka (UR I. 4 + [2. 5–7]; for a French translation see Leclère 2013: 149).

41 *candrārkau yāvad aṅghry-udbhavad-amara-sarīt-toya-bhinna-tri-lokī-
kedāre deva-lakṣmī-punar-udaya-vidhau bīja-bhāvaṃ bhajantyaḥ |
vītrasya-d-bhūr-bhuvah-svaḥ-kramaṇa-kutukino niṣpatantyaḥ samantād
deyasur dānavāreḥ pada-kamala-rajo-rājayo maṅgakaṃ vaḥ ||* (SVR I. 1)

It is also noteworthy that the manuscript begins by a sentence proclaiming Viṣṇu's victory (*śrī-harir jayati |* SVR folio 1a, line *1).

As long as the moon and the sun exist, they assume the nature of seeds for provoking the reappearance of the Fortune of the gods in the field of the triple world divided by the water of the River of the Immortals which springs from the foot [of Trivikrama⁴²]; they fall from every side, out of desire for reaching the earth, the ether and the heaven which are trembling: may the lines of dust coming from the lotus-foot of [Viṣṇu], the Enemy of the Dānava, give you happiness!

A similar devotion pervades the commentary on the *Ādiparvan*, as the verse invoking Viṣṇu's cosmic foot at the very beginning of the explanation is echoed by a similar and even more elaborate one at the end of the section:⁴³

It causes the hot and cool-rayed [celestial bodies] to turn away rapidly and conceals the sky-roads; refulgent, it pervades the earth, the ether and the heaven and makes them shine with its luminous nails; it tears away the wall-like shores of the eastern and western regions from the world of mortals up to the [celestial] abode; may it protect you, the foot of Nārāyaṇa which grants [serenity] to the moving and stationary beings frightened for long!

42 There are other examples of this motif in Indian poetry and iconography. In the *Āśīrvāda-paddhati* section of the *Sūktimuktāvalī*, Jalhaṇa quotes a verse by Rājaśekhara where the Jāhnavī river is described like a line of sweat issuing from Hari's foot when it gets closer to the sun (*hari-pādaḥ sa vaḥ pāyāl lambhito yaḥ svayambhuvā | yasyāsanna-raver āsīt svedarrekheva jāhnavī || Sūktimuktāvalī*, p. 31, v. 84). As for Bilhaṇa, he says in the first canto of the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* that the lineage of Cāḷukya kings descended from a hero born from Brahmā's hollowed palm (*culuka*) "like the flow of the Gaṅgā [emanated] from the foot of Viṣṇu" (*śaureḥ padād gāṅga iva pravāhaḥ || VDC*, I. 57). As a sculptural motif, the Gaṅgā flowing out of Trivikrama's foot appears on the walls of many Hoysāḷa temples, as can be seen at Halebid on a corner of the southern half of the great Hoysalesvara temple. It can also be found in the Pañcaliṅgeśvara temple of Govindanahalli, built in 1237 under the reign of Someśvara I (Devaraj 1994: 80–81), in the Lakṣmīnarasimha temple of Nuggehalli which dates back to 1246 (Collyer 1990: fig. 196a; Evans 1997: 258), and in the temple of Somnathpur built in 1258 and dedicated to Keśava (Devaraj 1994: 102; Evans 1997: 258). Strikingly enough, other depictions of the episode found in temples from all over India and dating from the sixth up to the eleventh centuries insist on different details, such as the fact that Viṣṇu's foot touches the head of the demon Rāhu (cf. Dhaky 1996: 361; Sivaramamurti 1999: 79, 498 and fig. 63, 142, 310, 312).

43 *āvṛṇvan vyoma-vīthiḥ khara-tuhina-karau vegav[antau vivartya]*

nīrvāpya dyotamāno nija-nakha-rucibhir bhāsayan bhūr-bhuvah-svaḥ |

āmartyād āvasatyāḥ prathama-carama-dig-bhitti-kūlamkaṣo'ṅghriḥ

pāyān nārāyaṇyaś cira-cakita-cara-sthānu-[-śānti]-prado vaḥ ||

(JD ad ĀP, p. 100).

R. N. Dandekar gave *vegavāpau vivartau* as the end of the first *pada* and indicated by a question mark that the reading was dubious. I have emended it with respect for the metrical scheme, which is a *sragdharā*. In the last *pada*, there is a lacuna that must be filled by a word of two syllables, the first one long and the second either short or long as its position before a consonant cluster induces its lengthening. As this word may express a remedy to the long-lasting fear indicated at the beginning of the compound, I suggest to restore *śānti* in preference to, *mokṣa*, *mukti* or similar words.

Moreover, it is probably because he was convinced of Viṣṇu's supremacy over the other gods that Devabodha decided to comment at length on the homage to Nārāyaṇa situated at the very beginning of the *Mahābhārata*: otherwise, he would have not delayed the explanation of the epic text properly speaking by what he presented himself as an excessively detailed gloss.⁴⁴

Having ascertained that the commentator Devabodha was a Vaiṣṇava renouncer gifted with poetic talents, we now have to determine as precisely as possible when and where he lived by collating the information supplied by his own works and the medieval sources such as anthologies, chronicles and inscriptions.

2 A tentative account of Devabodha's life

2.1 A writer from the twelfth century

The identification of Devabodha the poet with Devabodha the commentator is useful at first for confirming the twelfth century as the lower limit of the period at which the latter may have lived. Whereas this assumption has hitherto depended exclusively on the very approximate dating of Devabodha's successors Vimalabodha and Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa,⁴⁵ it is now strongly supported by the fact that verses by Devabodha are quoted in the *Saduktikarṇāṃṛta*, which Śrīdharadāsa completed in Eastern India about 1205.⁴⁶

As for proving that Devabodha lived the most part if not the whole of his life in the twelfth century, it can first be said that Śrīdharadāsa, like most anthologists, is likely to have favoured poets not very remote from his own time and place,⁴⁷ and Devabodha may have been one of them. Such a proximity would explain why he is the only anthologist to record the poet's name with the correct spelling. Two further pieces of evidence are provided by another medieval anthology, the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa*, which was compiled in Bengal by the

⁴⁴ Cf. above n. 22.

⁴⁵ See the introduction above.

⁴⁶ Sternbach 1974: 16; Sternbach 1980: XVIII, XX; Warder 2004: § 6398.

⁴⁷ Ludwik Sternbach makes a distinction between the "classical" anthologies compiled between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries and the recent ones wherein, according to him, are particularly cited the poets who lived at the same time or just before the anthologists (Sternbach 1980: XX). However, the analysis of the *Subhāṣitaratnakoṣa* by Daniel Ingalls proves that it was already a tendency in the earliest extant compilation: "Vidyākara's favourite authors were fairly close to him in time" and in place as well, most of them being "Bengalis, or at least easterners, of the time of the Pāla dynasty" (Ingalls 1965: 32).

Buddhist monk Vidyākara in two stages, the first one around 1100, and the second one three decades later, by addition of about six hundred stanzas.⁴⁸ Since Vidyākara had a strong predilection for contemporaneous dramatists,⁴⁹ but did not quote any verse authored by Devabodha, it may be surmised that the latter flourished as a poet and playwright in the period spanning between these anthologies. Another clue is Vidyākara's possible acquaintance with the poetical production of Devabodha's master Satyabodha.⁵⁰ In the very first version of his anthology Vidyākara indeed anonymously quoted a stanza which is explicitly attributed to a poet called Satyabodha in Śrīdharadāsa's work:⁵¹

Happy are they who in some mountain dale
sit meditating on the highest light,
the fearless birds alighting in their lap
to taste their tears of bliss.
But here I sit in a pavilion
set in a pleasure garden by a pool
within the palace of my daydreams;
and as I daydream, I grow old.

This text has been ascribed to the great moralist Bhartṛhari by most of the later anthologists,⁵² but they can be suspected of having substituted, either by ignorance or intentionally, a prestigious name for a rather obscure one. On the other hand, Śrīdharadāsa would have attributed this stanza to Bhartṛhari as he did for many

48 *Subhāṣitaratnaśoṣa*, introduction p. XXXIX; Warder 2004: § 5562–5563. Ludwik Sternbach presents Vidyākara as a writer from Kashmir, but this hypothesis does not seem to be prevalent by now (Sternbach 1980: XX).

49 Ingalls 1965: 30.

50 See above n. 29, 30.

51 *dhanyānām giri-kandarodara-bhuvī jyotiḥ paraṃ dhyāyatām*

ānandāśru-jalaṃ pibanti śakunā niḥśaṅkam aṅka-sthitāḥ |

asmākaṃ tu manorathoparacita-prāsāda-vāpī-taṭa-

kriḍā-kānana-keli-maṇḍapa-sadām āyuh paraṃ kṣiyate ||

Subhāṣitaratnaśoṣa, n°1461, tr. Ingalls 1965: 387. The text given by Śrīdharadāsa is slightly different (*aṅke* for *aṅka*, *juṣām* for *sadām*, *Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, 5.58.3).

52 So did Jalhaṇa in his *Sūktimuktāvalī* (1258), Śārngadhara in his *Paddhati* (1363) and Haribhāskara in his *Padyāmṛtaraigīṇī* (1674). In his *Padyaveṇī* (1644 or 1701), Veṇidatta indicates that he has borrowed the stanza from the *Jagajjīvanavrajyā*, a collection compiled by his own father Jagajjīvana. Elsewhere it is quoted anonymously (Sternbach 1980: 33; Sternbach 1985: 331). It has also been inserted by Śilhaṇa in his *Śāntīśataka* as the fourth verse of the first part (dealing with sorrow, *paritāpa*). The latter collection mixing original and borrowed verses, its dating has been debated (Ingalls 1965: 43, 387), but it may have been composed between 1130 and 1205, since Vidyākara does not quote any verse devised by Śilhaṇa himself whereas his name is associated to several verses in Śrīdharadāsa's anthology (Sternbach 1974: 55; *Śāntīśataka* 2007: 11–12, 17–18).

other ones in the same section of the *Saduktikarṇāmṛta* if this authorship had been acknowledged by that time. His testimony is all the more trustworthy since the quotation of two more stanzas under the name of Satyabodha in his anthology suggests a genuine familiarity with the different works of that poet.⁵³ Moreover, the way the stanza celebrates meditation on the “highest light” (*jyotiḥ param*) corroborates its attribution to Satyabodha, since Devabodha says in the prologue of his play that “his meditation reaches the awakening to the highest light, which consists in consciousness emerging from sleep and opening like a flower.”⁵⁴ Accordingly, Satyabodha would have flourished in the decades immediately preceding the first completion of the *Subhāṣitaratnaśoṣa* about 1100, when Devabodha was not yet a famous poet and dramatist, though he may already have received his initiation by that time and even produced some intellectual works.

That the upper limit of Devabodha’s life cannot be fixed much before 1100 is corroborated by the Jain chroniclers, whose anecdotes about Devabodha all take place in the course of the twelfth century. The earliest chronicle to mention him is the *Prabhāvaka-carita* or “Deeds of the Exalters of the Doctrine”, a collection of twenty-two religious biographies completed in 1278 by the Jain poet Prabhācandra.⁵⁵ Therein Devabodha is said to have met three Jain scholars who flourished under the rule of the Caulukya king Jayasiṃha Siddharāja (r. 1094–1143): the layman Śrīpāla, who held the position of king of poets at the court, and the monks Devasūri (1087–1170)⁵⁶ and Hemacandrasūri (1088–1173).⁵⁷ If Prabhācandra

53 *dāse kṛtāgasi bhaved ucitaḥ prabhūṇaṃ*

pāda-prahāra iti mānini nātidūye |

udyat-kaṭhōra-pulakāṅkura-kaṇṭakāgrair

yadbhidiate tava padaṃ nanu sāvayathā me || [vasantatilaka] (Saduktikarṇāmṛta, 2.83.5).

Jalhana quotes this stanza with slight variations (*sundari nāsmi dūye for mānini nātidūye, yatkhidyate instead of yadbhidiate*) in the fifty-seventh section of the *Sūktimuktāvalī* (*nāyikā-nāyakayor ukti-pratyukti-varhe lha || hims*, v. 11, p. 199), but he attributes it to Muñja.

mugdhe nārjunatām jahāti nayanam madhye tathā kṣṇatām

dve rūpe dadhatāmunā viracitaḥ karṇena te vighrahaḥ |

tatkṣṇārjunakamavighrahavati sāksāt kurukṣetratām

yātāsī tvadavāptirevataruṇi śreyaḥkimanyatparam ||

[*śārūlavikrīḍita*] (*Saduktikarṇāmṛta*, 2.122.3)

54 *yad-dhyānam vyapanidra-cin-maya-para-jyotiḥ-prabodhāvadhi* (SVR I. 5). In the opening verse of the commentary on the *Ādīparvan*, Devabodha also evokes the light of Nārāyaṇa’s knowledge, made out of the triple Veda, which resides in the triple world (*prajā-jyotiḥ upāsyaite tribhuvane yasya trivedimayam*, JD ad ĀP v. 1).

55 Deleu 1981: 61.

56 Parikh 1938: CCXLVIII, CCLV.

57 Bühler 1936: 6, 56

dra has reported the anecdotes with respect to the chronology, the date of Devabodha's first appearance in the capital city of Gujarat must be 1122.⁵⁸ As for later Jain chroniclers, they connect Devabodha not with Jayasiṃha, but with his successor Kumārapāla, who reigned from 1143 to 1173: according to them, he came to Gujarat after that king converted to Jainism (which event took place in 1160) in order to win him back to Hinduism. It is not impossible that Devabodha lived up to that time, as both the Jain monks he met at the court of Siddharāja died within the last years of Kumārapāla's reign, but the mission of championing Hinduism Devabodha is invested with in these accounts probably betray a later reworking of his biography for ideological purposes.⁵⁹ That is why it is

58 Cf. Parikh 1938: CCLIX. According to Prabhācandra, Devasūri decided one day to go to Nāgapura (mod. Nagaur), and while making a halt at Mount Abu, he was told by the goddess Ambā that he should go back to Aṇahillapura (mod. Patan) at once since his master Muncan-dra was to die within eight months (PCa XXI. 53–60). At another time (*anyadā*), Devabodha came to the capital of Gujarat and brought out a riddle that Devasūri eventually solved six months later (PCa XXI. 61–66). Then a wealthy Jain layman named Thāhaḍa asked Devasūri in which praiseworthy task he could employ his money, and the monk made him build a Jain temple where he installed a beautiful image of Mahāvīra (PCa XXI. 67–70). There come three verses that provide chronological information:

*śataikādaśake śaṣṭāsaptatau vikramārkataḥ | vatsarāñṇam vyatikrānte śrī-municandrasūrayaḥ ||
ārādhana-vīdhi-śreṣṭhaṃ kṛtvā prāyopaveśanam | śama-pīyūṣa-kallola-putās te tridivam yayuḥ ||
vatsare tatra caikatra pūrṇe śrī-devasūribhiḥ | śrī-vīrasya pratiṣṭhām sa thāhaḍo'kārayan mudā ||*
“When eleven hundred seventy-eight years from Vikrama had elapsed, the illustrious Muncan-drasūri, having sit down and waited for death, which is the best ceremony of propitiation, went to heaven, bathed in waves of nectar-like serenity. When the year was completed, Thāhaḍa joyfully made the illustrious Devasūri perform at the same place the ceremony of installation of the illustrious Mahāvīra.”

The fact that the anecdote about Devabodha's coming to Aṇahillapura has been inserted between these events suggests that it happens within the same year. Oddly enough, Parikh says elsewhere that Muncan-drasūri died in the year 1171 of Vikrama era (equivalent to 1115 CE), without giving any reference (Parikh 1938: CCLI).

59 Though Devabodha was appreciated and helped by Hemacandra in Prabhācandra's account (cf. Parikh 1938: CCLX), he became his opponent in later chronicles. In the *Prabandhakośa* (1348), Rājaśekhara alludes very briefly to “how Devabodhi was defeated by Hemacandra”, pretending that “the story can be known from the *Prabandhacintāmaṇi*” (1305), though no such anecdote appears in the available text by Merutuṅga (*tair api yathā devabodhiḥ pratipakṣaḥ parākṛtaḥ ... | tat prabandhacintāmaṇito jñeyam | Prabandhakośa, Hemasūriprabandha, § 57, p. 47*). The story is developed in Somatilaka's *Kumārapālacarita* (1367), Jinamaṇḍana's *Kumārapālaprabandha* (1435) and an anonymous *Kumārapālaprabodhaprabandha* (cf. *Kumārapālacaritasamgraha*, p. 30–31, 89–90; Bühler 1936: 20, 62 n. 5, 92 n. 78). The ideological bias is even more visible in a later text by Gadādhara, a Vaiṣṇava writer. In the *Sampradāyapradīpa* (1554), he says that a debate took place between Hemacandra and a Hindu scholar called Devaprabodha Bhaṭṭācārya, who must be identical with Devabodha, and further pretends that Hemacandra was sentenced to death while Kumārapāla returned within the fold of Hinduism

safer to rely mainly on Prabhācandra for outlining the ascetic's peregrinations throughout India, even though the later chronicles may have otherwise preserved some valuable information on Devabodha.

2.2 A wandering ascetic

2.2.1 Travels in northern India

As a *parivrājakācārya*, Devabodha was supposedly bound to an itinerant lifestyle, and he actually travelled quite much according to the *Prabhāvākacārīta*. The first time Jayasīṃha Siddharāja called him at his court, Devabodha declined the invitation and sent back the messengers with a rather contemptuous answer, because he was acquainted with more powerful and prestigious kings:⁶⁰

I have seen the ruler of Kāśī and the lord of Kanyakubja. What do I care for the ruler of Gūrjara whose dominion is so small? If your ruler, however, wants to see me, let him come here and sit on the ground while I shall be sitting on a lion-seat.

Far from being annoyed by the ascetic's haughtiness, the king agreed to the conditions and came accompanied by his court poet Śrīpāla to pay his respects to him. As the anecdote probably took place in 1122 during the first visit of Devabodha to the capital of Gujarat,⁶¹ it means that the renouncer had already

(Majumdar 1956: 329). Jack Hawley, who has recently consulted and photographed a manuscript of this text, confirms Majumdar's information by saying that it was written in V.S. 1610 in Vrindavan (see the abstract of the paper entitled "The Four Sampradayas: Ordering the Religious Past in Early Mughal North India" he presented at the Oxford Early Modern South Asia Workshop, Oxford, June 2009, <http://www.orinst.ox.ac.uk/conferences>). Hence the author should not be identified with the famous philosopher Gadādhara who flourished in Bengal in the seventeenth century (cf. Gerschheimer 1996: 7–8).

60 *tathā kāśīśvaram kanyakubjādhiśam samikṣya ca | gaṇayāmaḥ kathaṃ svalpadeśam śrīgūrjareśvaram || param asmādidṛkṣāyai bhavatāṃ svāminas tadā | upaviṣṭaḥ kṣitau siṃhāsana-sthaṃ māṃ sa paśyatu ||* (PCa XXII. 192–193, cf. Parikh 1938: CCLVIII).

61 In the passage of Devasūri's biography mentioned above (n. 58), Devabodha fastened on the king's gate (*rājadvāre*) the leaf on which he had written his riddle. Unless we suppose that he left the country at once, he could not have remained unnoticed by the king during this first visit. Another possibility is that he came back to Aṇahillapura a little after staying in Nāgapura in 1122, before Devasūri invited him there in 1127.

spent a part of his life in the sacred area of the Ganges valley.⁶² Soon after 1122, Devabodha met up with Devasūri in the city of Nāgapura, North of Rajasthan,⁶³ and came back to the capital of Gujarat in 1127, as Devasūri had invited him there for the consecration of a temple. Then, according to Prabhācandra, he stayed there for three years,⁶⁴ and eventually went back to the Ganges valley where he passed his life in meditation.⁶⁵

That Devabodha spent his early years in Banaras is plausible for many reasons. Under the rule of Gāhaḍavāla kings, and especially during the long reign of Govindacandra, the city grew in importance as a political, religious and intellectual centre: though Kanauj nominally remained the capital city, it was superseded by Banaras as an effective seat of royal power because of its much less exposed location.⁶⁶ As testified by many engraved copper-plates, the Gāhaḍavāla kings endeavoured to attract to Banaras learned and pious men by means

62 Since the cities of Banaras and Kanauj by that time were under the rule of one and the same king, Govindacandra from the Gāhaḍavāla dynasty (r. c. 1112–1155), the authenticity of Devabodha's words may be questioned, but the apparent inconsistency may be explained in reference to a political system prevalent in medieval Northern India, where the designated heir to the throne (*yuvārāja*) shared the authority of the king and ruled over a part of the kingdom. It was effective for instance in the Cāhamāna kingdom of Nadol (Mita 2004: 95, 100) and undoubtedly in the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom as well: according to the colophon of a manuscript dating back to 1150, Govindacandra entrusted his son Vijayacandra with the task of ruling the province of Vaḍahara, near Banaras, on the south bank of the Ganges (cf. Choudhary 1963: 48; for further instances of shared power in the Gāhaḍavāla kingdom, see *Indian Antiquary*, vol. XV, pp. 6–7; vol. XVIII, pp. 15, 18). Before being integrated to the Gāhaḍavāla realm, Banaras was ruled by other dynasties in the course of the twelfth century: the city belonged to the Chandella kings until 1034, when the Kalacuri king Gaṅgeyadeva conquered it. The latter's grandson Yaśaḥkarṇa having lost Banaras as early as 1081, it is very unlikely that Devabodha came there under the Kalacuri rule (Majumdar 1957: 61–64).

63 Here the information provided by the *Prabhāvākārita* does not fit in with the Persian chronicles, since according to these sources the city of Nāgapura was wrested from the Cāhamāna rulers about 1120 by a general of the Ghaznavid Sultan. Moreover, Prabhācandra says that Jayasiṃha Siddharāja himself came and besieged Nāgapura at that very moment but eventually left when he knew that Devasūri stayed in the city (PCa XXI. 77–78). On these chronological problems, see Leclère 2013: 27, n. 57.

64 Parikh 1938: CCLX–CCLXI.

65 *tatra tatrāṅṅo bhūtvā devabodho mahāmatih | tena dravyeṇa gaṅgāyām gatvāsādhnot param bhavam* || (PCa XXII. 309).

66 Kanauj was sacked in 916 by the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Indra III, then in 1018 by Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni, and once again in 1034 by Ahmad Niyāltigin, who had been appointed to govern Punjab by Mahmud's successor Masud (cf. *Kalpataru, Tirthakāṇḍa*, introduction p. LXIX–LXX; Majumdar 1957: 61). The royal residence was probably situated at Rajghat, north of Banaras, since many grants were registered in the neighbourhood at an old sanctuary of Keśava (*Kalpataru, Tirthakāṇḍa*, introduction p. LXVI–LXVII).

of generous grants,⁶⁷ and Devabodha may have been (or hoped to be) one of them. By the twelfth century the city had also attained preeminence among Indian holy places, not only for Śaiva, but also for Vaiṣṇava devotees,⁶⁸ and as such was visited by many pilgrims. But supposing that Devabodha was about twenty-five years old by then, like his contemporaries Devasūri and Hemacandraśūri, he may have come there first and foremost for furthering his studies, especially on epics and law texts as suggested by his later achievements in these fields.⁶⁹ Lastly, the fact that a verse by Satyabodha was quoted for the first time by a Buddhist abbot from neighbouring Bengal suggests that this ascetic may have lived in Banaras or its surroundings in the first decades of the twelfth century, and even trained and initiated there Devabodha among other disciples.⁷⁰

Much more difficult to answer is the question of Devabodha's homeland. Did he actually come to the sacred places of the Ganges valley from Kashmir just as Bilhaṇa did some decades earlier?⁷¹ Apart from the north-western origin of the *Mahābhārata* text he commented on, no further evidence can be found to validate once and for all the hypothesis of a Kashmiri origin. On the contrary, several facts suggest that Devabodha either came from the South or at least went there in the course of his lifetime.⁷²

67 Cf. *Kalpataru*, *Tīrthakāṇḍa*, introduction p. XV.

68 Sectarian texts like the *Nāradapurāṇa* show attempts at presenting the city as a former abode of Viṣṇu (*Nāradapurāṇa*, *Uttarabhāga*, chapter 29; tr. Tagare 1982: 1693–1700).

69 In India, Bühler notes, “Paṇḍits usually go on their travels at the age of 20–26”, and Bilhaṇa probably did so, as “he left his country after completing his studies” (VDC, introduction p. 22). Similarly, as soon as he had been taught in different fields of knowledge, Devasūri travelled throughout northwestern Indian and defeated many dialecticians in debate before reaching the age of thirty-one and being made a pontiff (PCa XXI. 37–42, cf. Parikh 1938: CCIL).

70 Śilhaṇa, another Vaiṣṇava poet who roughly lived at the same period, is said to have come to Banaras for attending the teachings of a great ascetic (*Śāntiśataka* 2007: 15). On the preference of anthologists for recent poets, see above n. 47.

71 Bühler gave an appropriate account of Bilhaṇa's journey: “After leaving his native country he made for the banks of the Jamnā, along which the high-road from north-western into central India was situated then as now. The first town, in which he stopped for some time, was the sacred Tīrtha, Mathurā; thence he crossed over northwards to the Ganges and visited Kanoj. Following apparently the course of the latter river, he arrived at its confluence with the Jamnā at Prayāga (Allahābād), and finally at Banāras” (VDC, introduction, p. 18).

72 In 1942, S. Shrikhanta Shastri mentioned both Devabodha and Devabodhi in an article dealing with “Some Forgotten Poets from Karṇāṭaka”. S. K. De took notice of the statement in his introduction to Devabodha's commentary on *Udyogaparvan* (p. X, n. 3), but dismissed it as unjustified.

2.2.2 Links with southern India

For supporting this assumption two major clues can be drawn from the prologue of the *Satyavrataramkāṅgāda*, namely the name of Devabodha's patron, Tribhuvanamalla, and the specific appellation of Viranārayaṇa under which Viṣṇu is revered by the audience of the play.⁷³ To be more accurate, the word Tribhuvanamalla, which means "The Wrestler of the Triple World", is less a proper name than an encomiastic title, and as such, does not constitute sufficient evidence to identify who sponsored the first performance of Devabodha's play. Indeed it was borne by many a prince, the first being the Hoysaḷa king Vinayāditya (r. 1047–1098) according to an inscription dating back to the first year of his reign.⁷⁴ Then it was assumed by the famous Cāḷukya emperor Vikramāditya VI (r. 1076–1127), who fulfilled its meaning by his military successes, and whose example – be it emulation, submission or contention – was imitated not only by some of his successors, such as his son Someśvara III (r. 1127–1139) or his grandsons Jagadekamalla II (r. 1139–ca.1156) and Taila III (r. 1149–1162),⁷⁵ but also by most of his vassals: thus many Hoysaḷa kings style themselves Tribhuvanamalla, as well as Pāṇḍya princes from Ucchangi, Kadamba kings from Goa, and there is even one Tribhuvanamalla in the Kakatīya dynasty.⁷⁶ Despite the confusion induced by the popularity of this title, it is noteworthy that it did not spread beyond the limits of the Cāḷukya empire. Indeed, kings from Northern India similarly boasted about being the best wrestler of the world, but they bore titles slightly different from Tribhuvanamalla, such as Bhuvanaikamalla and Trailokyamalla, in use among princes of the Kacchapaghāta dynasty,⁷⁷ or Tribhuvanagaṇḍa, which was one of the titles assumed by the Caulukya king Jayasiṃha Siddharāja.⁷⁸ Therefore Devabodha's play was most likely staged at first in the South, even though the precise identity of the king remains difficult to ascertain. For instance, there are several arguments for considering that he was no one else than the Cāḷukya emperor Vikramāditya VI, the "genuine" Tribhuvanamalla, notably the fact that, in contrast with most of other kings, nor his proper name neither his other titles are necessarily associated with this

73 For a translation of the passage, cf. above n. 39.

74 Derrett 1957: 22. In a later inscription, dating back to 1090, Vinayāditya is called Tribhuvanamalla Poysaladeva (Nilakanta Sastri 1960: 359).

75 Nilakanta Sastri 1960: 356, 372–375; Dhaky 1996: 126.

76 Derrett 1957: 22; Nilakanta Sastri 1960: 360; Choudhary 1963: 261; Gopal 1981: 268; Dhaky 1996: 219, 292; *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XII, p. 189.

77 *Indian Antiquary*, vol. XV, p. 42.

78 Parikh 1938: CLXVII.

one in a large amount of inscriptions.⁷⁹ However, if Devabodha had lived at the court of Vikramāditya, then his play would have been composed and staged before his patron's death in 1127. This assumption does not match well the chronological and geographical data collected in medieval anthologies and chronicles, since Devabodha was probably touring Northern India in the second and third decades of the twelfth century. Moreover, the ascetic would not have missed the occasion to tell Jayasiṃha Siddharāja he was acquainted with the powerful Cālukya emperor beside the rulers of Kanauj and Banaras. Another solution would be to place Devabodha under one of Vikramāditya's successors,⁸⁰ but the mention of Viṣṇu as Viranārāyaṇa in the prologue of the *Satyavratarukmāṅgada* draws attention to the Hoysaḷa kings.

Actually, many a Vaiṣṇava temple built in the Hoysaḷa realm was given a name associating Nārāyaṇa with another word referring to a deity or an abstraction.⁸¹ The fashion seems to have been initiated by the famous king Viṣṇuvaradhana (r. 1108–1142), who was the first in his lineage who attempted to achieve imperial status and commemorated his victorious campaigns by dedicating sanctuaries to his tutelary deity Viṣṇu.⁸² He is thus said to have founded five temples about 1117, one being the Vijayanārāyaṇa or “Victory-Nārāyaṇa” temple of Belur, the capital

⁷⁹ Cf. *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. V, pp. 179 (text), 76 (abstract); *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. III, pp. 304–311, vol. V, pp. 229, 231, vol. XV, pp. 26, 103, 357. Similarly, in the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita*, his poetic biography written by his court poet Bilhaṇa, Vikramāditya is simply called “king Tribhuvanamalla” at the conclusion of each canto (see for instance how the first one ends: *iti vikramāṅkadevacarite mahākāve tribhuvanamalladeva-vidyāpati-kāśmīra-bhaṭṭa-bilhaṇa-viracite prathamah sargaḥ*).

⁸⁰ As Vikramāditya VI they could be simply styled Tribhuvanamalla, as instanced by an inscription of Viṣṇuvaradhana dating from 1139, where the title is borne both by the Hoysaḷa vassal and the Cālukya suzerain (Someśvara III or Jagadekamalla, his son and successor). Cf. *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. V, Hassan Taluk No. 114, tr. p. 32–33).

⁸¹ For a list of South-Indian temples bearing such names, see the index in Dhaky 1996: 591–597. In marked contrast, the temples left to posterity by Cālukya emperors are Śaiva ones for the most part, whereas Viṣṇu appears to have been generally associated to other deities in triple temples (Dhaky 1996: 130). Nonetheless Vikramāditya VI and his successors, whose seal bore a figure of the Boar incarnation of Viṣṇu, did make an extensive use of Vaiṣṇava imagery in their political discourse. Vikramāditya VI for instance is likened to Nārāyaṇa in an inscription from the ninth year of his reign (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XV, p. 103), and his court poet Bilhaṇa has inserted into the seventeenth canto of the *Vikramāṅkadevacarita* a lengthy description of a great temple of Viṣṇu built at his instigation. Besides, his own son Someśvara III, in another poetical account of his life, the *Vikramāṅkābhyaḍaya*, has written that, at the request of the gods frightened by the evil Rāṣṭrakūṭa kings, Viṣṇu came personally on earth under the appearance of their forefather Taila II (r. 973–997), and that Vikramāditya VI was similarly an incarnation of Viṣṇu as Trivikrama (*Vikramāṅkābhyaḍaya*, p. 18–19, p. 51, l. 17–19; cf. Pathak 1966: 87).

⁸² There exists a well-established tradition according to which Viṣṇuvaradhana was converted from Jainism to the cult of Viṣṇu by the famous Vaiṣṇava saint Rāmānuja (cf. Derrett 1957: 222).

city, another one the Kirtinārāyaṇa or “Glory-Nārāyaṇa” of Talkad on the south-eastern border of the kingdom.⁸³ He also ordered the construction of a Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa temple at Toṇḍanūr, midway between Mysore and Shravana Belgola, and during his reign another one was also erected in the sacred complex of Belur at the instigation of his chief-queen Śāntalādevī.⁸⁴ His successors kept on dedicating temples to various forms of Nārāyaṇa, and even their officials did so, such as Jaya Bhaṭṭayya Nāyaka, great master of the robes under Viṣṇuvardhana’s grandson Ballāḷa II (r. 1173–1220), who set up the god Jaitanārāyaṇa according to an inscription from 1218.⁸⁵ Given the prevalence of this tradition in Karnataka, the Vīranārāyaṇa image alluded to in the prologue of the *Satyavratanukmāṅgada* could have been similarly installed on behalf of a Hoysaḷa king in order to celebrate his courage at war: it is suggested by the very appellation of “Hero-Nārāyaṇa” given to the god, as well as the poet’s insistence on Tribhuvanamalla’s arm brandished in the mêlée like a banner in a festival.⁸⁶

A few Vīranārāyaṇa temples dating back to Hoysaḷa times still exist in Karnataka, but it is difficult to identify with certainty any of them with the place where the *Satyavratanukmāṅgada* was performed. In the North of the state, for instance, there is in the city called Gadag a quite famous temple known as Vīranārāyaṇa,⁸⁷ which is said to have been founded by Viṣṇuvardhana himself, but it is conspicuously not included by Dhaky in his survey of temples built in upper Dravidian area between 973 and 1326, and actually the style of the extant building clearly belongs to the following period of Vijayanagar empire.⁸⁸ As for the small Vīranārāyaṇa temple located within the sacred complex of Belur west from the main building, it is dated around the end of the twelfth century on account of its architectural features as well as its appellation, since Ballāḷa II, who had begun his personal reign in 1193, was renowned as Viraballāḷa, “the Heroic Ballāḷa.”⁸⁹ Accordingly, Devabodha could not

Whatever value it has, it is noteworthy that many inscriptions of Viṣṇuvardhana are interspersed with homages to Nārāyaṇa and do attest his patronage of Śrīvaiṣṇava faith.

83 The Vijayanārāyaṇa temple of Belur is now better known under the appellation of Cenna-keśava (cf. Derrett 1957: XVIII; Dhaky 1996: 311, 313).

84 Dhaky 1996: 317–319, 321.

85 *Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. V, Hassan Taluq No. 61, tr. p. 17–18. The donor was a great devotee of Viṣṇu, since he worshipped the lotus-feet of the god and observed both Ekadaśī.

86 Cf. above n. 39.

87 Pollock 2006: 363.

88 Dhaky 1996: 593.

89 Dhaky 1996: 319; Evans 1997: 10, 19, 257. Even though the title Tribhuvanamalla is more often associated to the name of his grandfather Viṣṇuvardhana, Ballāḷa II also bears it very frequently in his inscriptions since the very day of his coronation on the 21st of July 1173 (*Epigraphia Carnatica*, vol. V, Hassan Taluk No. 71, tr. p. 22–23, cf. also inscriptions from the same district No. 67 dated 1174, 55 dated 1178, 162 dated 1180 etc.).

have witnessed its erection, unless he had lived a very long life. The third extant Vīranārāyaṇa temple is located at Belavāḍi, a few miles from Haledid, the site of the ancient capital city Dōrasamudra, and consists in a cluster of three sanctuaries dedicated each to a form of Viṣṇu and linked by an assembly hall. Though the precise date of its foundation is unknown, an inscription recording a donation made there to Nārāyaṇa in 1206 proves that the main temple had been built by then, while the two other ones judging from their stylistic characteristics were added shortly afterwards.⁹⁰ It can be further surmised that the Vīranārāyaṇa temple of Belavāḍi was for the first time consecrated some decades earlier since sanctuaries were usually not extended immediately after the first stage of construction.⁹¹ Therefore it could date back to the second half of the twelfth century and might have been chosen by the king as the place for staging the *Satyavratarukmāṅgada* when the court was staying at Dōrasamudra.

The southern background of Devabodha's career may also be inferred from the religious title of Paramahaṃsa which he shares with his master Satyabodha. Indeed, apart from technical treatises on renouncement which list the different categories of ascetics,⁹² the word Paramahaṃsa appears mainly in sources from South India. For instance, the king Kulaśekharavarman, who ruled Kerala during three decades overlapping the end of the ninth century,⁹³ praises his own devotion to Paramahaṃsa ascetics in the prologue of his heroic drama called *Tapatisaṃvaraṇa*:⁹⁴

⁹⁰ Dhaky 1996: 361–363.

⁹¹ For instance, the Kuvāravihāra of Jalor, a Jain temple founded in Southern Rajasthan by the Caulukya king Kumārāpāla between his conversion to Jainism in 1160 and his death in 1173, underwent three stages of reconstruction and extension in 1185, 1199 and 1211 (*Epigraphia Indica*, vol. XI, pp. 54–55).

⁹² Olivelle 1977: 34; Barazer-Billoret 2001: 39. These groups of renouncers appear also in a commentary on the *Manusmṛiti* written in Banaras about the thirteenth century by Kullūka Bhaṭṭa, son of Divākara Bhaṭṭa, who belonged to a Vārendra Brāhmaṇa family of Bengal (Barazer-Billoret 2001: 39; Kane 1930: 359–363).

⁹³ Based on the identification of the playwright with the Kerala king Rāmavarman (r. 885–913), this dating has been proposed by K. Kunjunni Raja and supported with further evidence by A. K. Warder. Contrary to this, N. P. Unni was inclined to shift it to the eleventh-twelfth centuries (Kunjunni Raja 1958: 8–16; *Tapatisaṃvaraṇa*, introduction, p. 8–12; Warder 1988: § 3386–3390).

⁹⁴ *naṭi – ayya suddaa-kāḷidāsa-harisa-daṅḍi-ppamuhāṇaṃ mahākaiṇaṃ aṇṇadamasya kassa kaviṇo idaṃ ṇibandhaṇaṃ jeṇa ayyamissāṇaṃ ettiaṃ koduaṃ vaḍḍāvehi | sūtradharaḥ – aṛye mā maivaṇ | yasya paramahaṃsa-pāda-paṅkeruha-pāṃsu-paṭala-pavitrikṛta-mukūṭa-taṭasya vasudhā-vibudhanāyāndhakāra-mihirāyamāṇa-kara-kamalasya mukha-kamalād agalad āścaryamañjarī-kathā-madhu-dravaḥ | (Tapatisaṃvaraṇa, p. 4–5). Śivarāma, who commented on the play in the fourteenth century, equates *paramahaṃsa* with *yatindra* “king of ascetics” and *parama-yati* “most excellent ascetic” (*paramahaṃsetyādinā mahat-sevayā citta-saṃskāraḥ pratipādyate | yatindrāṇaṃ pāda-paṅkeruha-pāṃsu-paṭalena namaskāra-saṃkrāntena pavitrikṛtaṃ mukūṭa-taṭaṃ yasya | atra**

The actress – My dear, for arousing such a curiosity among the venerable doctors, this must be the work of one of the great poets. Which one? Śūdraka? Kālidāsa? Harṣa? Daṇḍin? Or another one?

The stage-manager – Do not say so, my dear! The author has the slope of his tiara purified by the heap of dust coming from the lotus-feet of the Paramahaṃsa ascetics, his lotus-hand looks like a sun in the darkness of covetousness of the wise men on the earth, and from the lotus of his mouth has trickled the sweet juice that is the *Āścaryamañjarikathā*.

The Paramahaṃsa ascetics are also mentioned in an inscription from Baḷagāmi dating back to 1162,⁹⁵ which describes a monastery called Kōḍiyamaṭha as:⁹⁶

A place where food is always given to the poor, the helpless, the lame, the blind and the deaf, to the professional story-tellers, singers, musicians, bards, players, and minstrels whose duty is to awaken their masters with music and songs, and to the naked and the crippled, and to (Jain and Buddhist) mendicants, to (Brāhmaṇa) mendicants who carry a single staff and those who carry a triple staff, to Haṃsa and Paramahaṃsa ascetics, and to all other beggars from many countries.

Admittedly the insertion of the Haṃsa and Paramahaṃsa ascetics in this long enumeration of dependants may appear as a mere rhetorical device informed by the technical treatises mentioned above, but individuals from Southern India are otherwise known to have borne the latter title. Thus the famous Vaiṣṇava philosopher Madhva, who was born and lived through most part of his life in Karnataka around the thirteenth century,⁹⁷ is presented like Devabodha as a *paramahaṃsaparivrājakācārya* in the colophon of the *Samnyāsa-prakaraṇa*, a treatise on renunciation composed by an author who belonged to his spiritual lineage.⁹⁸ The title also appears in full in the colophon of a

rāja-lāñchanasyāpi mukuṭasya parama-yati-pāda-pāṃsu-sambadhenaiva śuddhir iti tad-buddhi-kalpanāc citta-śuddher apy upalakṣaṇam etat | ibidem, p. 6). In Jinamaṇḍana's Kumārapā-laprabandha, 'Devabodhi' is once significantly styled yatiśvaro (KPr 110. 4).

⁹⁵ Also called Ballipura, Balligāve or Baligāve, that city was located in the Banavāse province, north-west of modern Karnataka (Derrett 1957: 39–40, 101, map 4). By that time, the Cāḷukya kingdom was ruled by a usurper, the Kalacuri prince Bijjala (r. 1145, 1152–1167), who also bore the title of Tribhuvanamalla (Nilakanta Sastri 1960: 375–376, 457).

⁹⁶ *dinānātha-pariṅv-andha-badhira-kathaka-gāyaka-vādaka-vāṃśika-nartaka-vaitāḷika-nagna-bhagna-kṣapaṇakaikadaṇḍi-tridaṇḍi-haṃsa-paramahaṃsādi-nānā-deśa-bhikṣuka-janānivārya[ā]ṃ-nadāna-sthāna* (tr. J. F. Fleet, *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. V, p. 222). The whole inscription has been translated by Rice with slight variations (e. g. *nartaka* “dancers” instead of “players”) in the *Mysore Inscriptions* (No. 43, p. 92–96).

⁹⁷ Siauue 1968: 1–11.

⁹⁸ *iti śrīmat-paramahaṃsa-parivrājakācārya-śrīmad-ānandatīrtha-sāmprādayika-prakaraṇa-videracita-saṃnyāsa-prakaraṇam samāptam |* (Olivelle 2011: 263–264). Ānandatīrtha is one of the two names Madhva was given by his master Acyutaprekṣa at the moment of his initiation, the other being Pūrṇaprajña (Siauue 1968: 1). Interestingly enough, Madhva himself wrote a

manuscript of Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa's commentary on the *Mahābhārata*,⁹⁹ and under the abridged form *paramahaṃsaparivrājaka* at the end of the *Bālagopālastuti* or “Hymn to the Young Cowherd” attributed to the poet Bilvamaṅgala.¹⁰⁰ The life of these writers remains mysterious, but there are arguments for locating both of them in South India as well.¹⁰¹

Lastly, though the late biographies of king Kumārapāla give on the whole a rather dubious account of Devabodha's coming to Gujarat, three of them have preserved details which, be they true or not, do suggest a southern provenance of the renouncer. In Somatilaka's *Kumārapālacarita* (1367), the narrative begins in a rather fantastic atmosphere:¹⁰²

One day a yogin named Devabodha, adept of Kapila's system, heard that the king had become a Jain; the mind infatuated by his own talents, he came to the king's assembly surrounded by yogin mounted on partridges (*cakora*), geese (*haṃsa*) and peacocks (*sāraṅga*),¹⁰³ himself being mounted on banana-leaves (*kadalī-patra*).

commentary on the Great Epic that he called *Mahābhārata* or “Determination of the Meaning of the *Mahābhārata*” (Siauve 1968: 2; Minkowski 2005: 235), in a way very similar to one of the *Jñānadīpikā*'s alternative titles (cf. above n. 7).

99 Sukthankar 1944: 265.

100 *iti parama-parivrājaka-śrī-pāda-bilvamaṅgala-viracite [sic] śrī-bāla-gopāla-stutiḥ* (Kunjunni Raja 1958: 33).

101 There is in Jalhaṇa's *Sūktimuktāvalī* a section called *Haristutipaddhati* or “Collection of Hymns to Hari”, where two verses attributed to a poet called Sarvajña Nārāyaṇabhaṭṭa are cited along with one verse by “Devabodhi” (which comes from the second act of the *Satyavratarukmāṅgada*), another one by Dīpaka, and the five remaining ones by Kulaśekhara (*Sūkti*, p. 457–458). The preponderance of quotations from the king of Kerala suggests that the anthologist, who achieved his work in 1258 at the court of Yādava kings of Devagiri (modern Daulatabad in Maharashtra), favoured in this section recent poets from South India. It can be further noted that Dīpaka appears in a late Jain chronicle as the name of the Brahmin who taught Devabodha a magic formula (see below n. 105). As for Bilvamaṅgala, it has been debated whether he should be identified with an author called Līlāśuka who lived in South India during the fourteenth century, because many verses from the *Bālagopālastuti* also appear in the *Kṛṣṇakaṇṭhāmṛta* or “Ambrosia to the Ears of Kṛṣṇa”, a famous devotional anthology which is traditionally associated with Līlāśuka's name. In any case, Bilvamaṅgala probably came from South India as well, since Dravidian features have been traced in the linguistic and poetical aspects of his own work (Wujastyk 2003: 91–92).

102 *ekadā devabodhākhya yogī kapila-darśanī | jāinībhūtaṃ nṛpaṇā śrutvā svakalādurmadāśayaḥ || 644 || cakora-haṃsa-sāraṅgādhirūḍhair yogibhīr vṛtaḥ | āgataḥ kadalī-patrādhirūḍho nṛpa-parśadi || 645 ||*
(*Kumārapālacaritasamgraha*, p. 30).

103 According to Monier-Williams' dictionary, the latter word can refer to many other species of birds, such as the Indian cuckoo and the royal goose.

One may wonder how valuable information can be derived from a text wherein ascetics, probably by means of their magic powers, are able to use as conveyance any bird or even any object such as a banana leaf. Yet Somatilaka might have simply misunderstood the sources he had relied on. The words he took for bird names meant in all likelihood the ranks to which the ascetics could be promoted in their hierarchy,¹⁰⁴ and as for the banana leaves, an anonymous *Kumārapālaprabodhprabandha* indicates that they were actually used for making a comfortable palankeen (*sukhāsana*):¹⁰⁵

Then, on the bank of the Ganges, the Brahmin Devabodhi obtained from a Brahmin called Dipaka the spell of Tripurā, and he put it in practice on the bank of the Narmadā. Pleased, the goddess Tripurā appeared to him and said: “Tell me your wish with a single word!” And he, clever as he was, asked for *bhuktimuktisarasvatī*, that is “wisdom of possession and liberation”. Mastering henceforth the great art of magic and other sciences, and knowing the past and so on by means of treatises such as the *Crest-Jewel*, he takes place on a palankeen made out of banana sticks and leaves and bound with strings of raw fibre. [...] Having learnt that the king [Kumārapāla] was fond of the Holy Jain Doctrine, he came to the illustrious city of Pattana. He was welcomed respectfully by Brahmins and by people as well, as they were eager to see wonders. Even the king approached him, thinking that he was a spiritual master for kings. Sitting on his palankeen of banana leaves, and having little boys perform the task of bearers, [Devabodhi] came in front of the city-wall,¹⁰⁶ surrounded by the king and other followers. Urged on by all his followers filled with curiosity, he entered it.

In the *Kumārapālaprabandha* (1435), Jinamañḍana gives the same account with greater details, saying for instance that ‘Devabodhi’ “was mounted on a palankeen [made out] of banana leaves fixed on lotus stalks and bound with strings of

104 Out of the three words, two at least appear in technical literature on renunciation: *haṃsa* forms with *kuñcaka*, *bahūdaka* and *paramahaṃsa* a set of four categories supposed to encompass the whole commu of renunciators (cf. Olivelle 1977: 34, n. 22; Olivelle 2011: 249–250), and *sāraṅga* is one of the many sorts of ascetics in Vaiṣṇava texts (Colas 1996: 27).

105 *atha gaṅgā-taṭe dīpakākhyādvijāt traipuram mantram prāpya narmadā-taṭe devabodhi-dvijo'-sādhatay | tuṣṭā tripurā tasya eka-vākyena yācasva varam ity uvāca pratyakṣā | so'pi buddhimān bhukti-mukti-sarasvatir iti yayāce | tataḥ prabhṛti mahendrajālādi-vidyāvān cūḍamaṇy-ādi-śāstrair atītādi-jñātā kadali-daṅḍa-patra-mayam āma-sūtra-tantu-baddham sukhāsanam adhirohati | ... śrī-jina-dharmānuraktaṃ nṛpaṃ jñātvā sa śrī-pattane samāyātaḥ | sarva-dvijaiḥ satkāritaḥ camatkāra-darśanāl lokaiś ca | rāja-gurur iti matvā rājāpi saṃmukham āgataḥ | kadali-patra-sukhāsana-sthaḥ śiśu-kārīta-vāhaka-karmā rājādi-parivāra-parivṛtaḥ śālāgre samāyātaḥ | kautukākulita-sakala-parivāra-perito madhye praviṣṭaḥ |* (*Kumāra*, 89. 28–90. 5).

106 The strong fortifications of the capital city of Gujarat were famous in medieval times and often referred to by poets with the words *prakāra*, *vapra*, *koṭṭa* or *śāla* (cf. Parikh 1938: CCXXXVII). This is why *śāla* is here understood as designating a wall and not as a kind of tree.

raw fibre”,¹⁰⁷ and he even inserts into the narrative a second description of the ascetic’s conveyance consisting in two verses:¹⁰⁸

Devabodhi mounted a seat made out of banana leaves which was provided with lotus stalks serving as actual sticks, bound with raw fibre so fine that tears could have torn it, and put on the shoulders of eight-year-old boys, and [thus conveyed] he arrived at the king’s court.

This particular type of vehicle is reminiscent of another religious master, the Jain Digambara monk Kumudacandra, “a Southerner” (*dākṣiṇātya*), as Prabhācandra presents him from the outset, “teacher of the lord of Karṇāṭa, the illustrious king Jayakeśin”:¹⁰⁹ indeed, when Kumudacandra had to go to the court of Jayasiṃha Siddharāja for debating with Devasūri, he “took place on a palankeen”, the *Prabhāvaka-carita* says.¹¹⁰ The fact that late biographers have insisted so much on the material aspects of Devabodha’s palankeen suggest that these features were typical of southern craftwork and, as such, could have much impressed the authors of the lost eyewitness accounts they probably relied on. Besides, Jinamaṇḍana, who starts his narrative on ‘Devabodhi’ with a series of questions (“Who was that Devabodhi? How did he come there? What did he do?”)¹¹¹ has given an interesting answer about his country of origin:

107 *āma-tantu-sūtra-baddha-kamala-nāla-yukta-kadalī-patra-sukhāsanādhirohī* (KPr 108. 3–4).

108 *nalinī-nāla-sad-daṇḍaṃ rambhā-patra-mayāsanam | āma-tantubhir ābaddhaṃ bāṣpa-cchedyair ivāṇu || śīsūnām aṣṭa-varṣānāṃ skandha-nyastam | āruhya paśadaṃ rājño devabodhiḥ samāśadati ||* (KPr 108. 10–11). Welcoming the ascetic, Kumārapāla perceives with irony the contrast between his stout constitution and the flimsiness of his vehicle: “Having raised from his seat and displayed other marks of respect, the king saluted him with a smile, thinking how this big-bellied man little agreed with this seat of banana leaves and the rest, and made him sit down on a golden seat” (*rājāpy abhyutthānādi kṛtvā kvāyaṃ picaṇḍilāḥ kvedaṃ kadalī-patrāsanādi iti viśmitena namaskṛtaḥ suvaṃśāsane niveśitaś ca* | KPr 108. 12–13). A little further, it is once again said that “Devabodhi had a seat of banana [leaves] for supporting him” (*devabodher api rambhāsanam ādhāra āsit* | KPr 111. 8).

109 *dākṣiṇātyaḥ śrī-karṇāṭa-ṅpater guruḥ śrī-jayakeśi-devasya* (PCa XXI. 84).

110 *āruroha sukhāsanam* (PCa XXI. 147). Kumudacandra’s palankeen is depicted on a medieval book cover illustrating several scenes from the story of his debate with Devasūri (Shah 1976: 319, fig. 5; Goswamy 1999: 6–7). According to medieval sources, the use of palankeens was commonly perceived at that time as a royal privilege: thus the minister Vastupāla just had to display a covered palankeen to make his enemy, the merchant Saida, believe that prince Viradhavala had arrived in town for punishing the rebels (PPS 56. 21–24; see also MRP III. 19 + ; PPS 25. 27; 34. 27; 48. 22–23). This right could be extended not only to ministers (PPS 78. 12–13), but also to any people that kings and ministers wanted to honour (PPS. 46. 4; 65. 4–6). The fact that Devabodha and Kumudacandra are transported on a palankeen indicates that they share the same conception of religious leadership by assuming several royal prerogatives, another one being to sit on a lion throne (PCa XXII. 193, 197; *Mudritakumudacandra*, II. 15 + [19. 13]).

An inhabitant of Bhṛgukṣetra, Devabodhi the renouncer, went to the Ganges for taking a bath on an auspicious day. There he met with the master Dīpaka who, endowed with the spell of Sarasvatī for obtaining gold for a long time, was giving gold to people as he knew the end of his own life. Having pleased him thoroughly with his deference, Devabodhi obtained the spell of Sarasvatī. Then he came back and muttered six hundred thousand times the spell while staying up to the throat in the water of the Narmadā river, but the Goddess of Speech did not come.¹¹²

The city of Bhṛgukṣetra can be identified without hesitation with the famous port of Bhṛgukaccha, capital of the Lāṭa country (modern Broach or Bharuch in southern Gujarat), since it is located near the mouth of the Narmadā river mentioned here and in the anonymous *Kumārapālaprabodhaprabandha* as well.¹¹³ If Devabodha actually came from that place, his wanderings all over India would find an explanation since the Narmadā river constitutes with the Vindhya range the traditional frontier between the South and the North as well as an interface between the Arabian Sea and the Ganges valley.¹¹⁴ The contemporary Arabian geographer al-Idrīsī (1000–1166) even notes about Broach that:

It is a very large, magnificent and beautiful town, with fine buildings constructed of bricks and plaster. Its inhabitants have high ambitions, copious resources, solid wealth, and recognized trades. They are wont to stay in foreign countries, wandering about and traveling a great deal. It is a port for those who arrive from China, as well as those who come from Sind.¹¹⁵

With such a social background, no doubt that even renouncers from there could become great travellers.

2.3 Religious and philosophical affiliations

Another point of interest in later Jain chronicles is that they may help us figure out which religious and philosophical systems Devabodha adhered to. As a matter of fact, the information provided by the *Prabhāvakacarita* in this respect is rather limited. Prabhācandra mainly insisted on the intellectual abilities of Devabodha,

¹¹² *bhṛgukṣetra-nivāsī devabodhiḥ samnyāsī kvāpi parvaṇi gaṅgāyām snānārthaṃ gataḥ | tatra purāpi svarṇa-siddhi-sārasvata-mantra lokebhyaḥ svāyur-antaṃ jñātvā suvarṇaṃ dadāno dīpaka-cāryaḥ samā | taṃ vinayena samyak samtoṣya sārasvata-mantraṃ jagrāha | tataḥ paścād āgatya narmadā-jale ākaṅṭhaṃ sthitvā mantraṃ jajāpa ṣaḍ-lakṣa-mitaṃ tathāpi bhārati nāgāt |* (KPr 107. 6–8).

¹¹³ Cf. above n. 105.

¹¹⁴ In its lower section, the Narmadā river continued the road that linked Mathurā on the Yamunā river to Dhārā, the capital city of the Mālava kingdom (cf. Maqbul Ahmad 1960: map IV; Jain 1990: 111, 122).

¹¹⁵ Tr. Maqbul Ahmad 1960: 58.

presenting him as “a great poet”¹¹⁶ and “a great savant”¹¹⁷ endowed with “great intelligence”.¹¹⁸ As for the school of thought Devabodha belonged to, he merely indicated that he was an illustrious adept of the Bhāgavata system,¹¹⁹ and even wielded leadership amidst the Bhāgavata community.¹²⁰ If these statements confirm that Devabodha was a devotee of Viṣṇu,¹²¹ it is unfortunately impossible to make further assumptions about his creed on the sole basis of the word Bhāgavata: indeed, besides being synonymous with Vaiṣṇava in its most general sense, it can also designate, in medieval texts, the member of a sectarian movement within the fold of Vaiṣṇavism, such as the Śrīvaiṣṇava school.¹²²

To complete the portrait outlined by Prabhācandra, Somatilaka’s own presentation of Devabodha is of particular interest since, according to him, Devabodha was a yogin and an adept of Kapila’s system,¹²³ or, in other words, a specialist of the orthodox philosophical school called Sāṃkhya. That Devabodha mastered the subtleties of Yoga is confirmed by his own statements in the prologue of his play: besides saying that he was endowed with self-restraint,¹²⁴ he even pretended that “his knowledge of Yoga¹²⁵ extended as far as entering at will another’s body as if it were his own”, this being one of the most famous magical powers that the practice of Yoga is supposed to procure.¹²⁶ As regards his

116 Cf. above n. 20.

117 *mahāvīdvān* (PCa XXII. 182, 184, 300), *paro vidvān* (PCa XXII. 186), *devabodha-vidvan*^o (PCa XXII. 296).

118 *mahāmatīḥ* (PCa XXII. 309). In Jinamaṇḍana’s chronicle, a voice from the sky uses the same expression for addressing ‘Devabodhi’ (*mahāmate*, KPr 107. 10).

119 *śrībhāgavatadarśanin* (PCa XXI. 61; XXII. 182).

120 *bhāgavateśvara* (PCa XXI. 75).

121 Bühler (1936: 53) asserted that Devabodhi appears as a “Śaiva ascetic” in Jinamaṇḍana’s text, but there is hardly anything which attests this both in the main narrative where he opposes Hemacandra (KPr from 107. 5 onwards), and in the shorter anecdotes (for instance, he is just singled out of a group of Brahmins towards the end of the work: *brāhmaṇā devabodhy-ādayo*, KPr 193. 11).

122 The first occurrence of this meaning appears in a text by a Tamil author dating from the late eleventh century, Tirukkuruḥkaipirān’s *Ārāyirappaṭi*. Roughly at the same period, Yāmunācārya considered as true Bhāgavata those who adore Bhagavānt according to the Pañcarātra scriptures. How does the Kannaḍa school of Bhāgavatasamprādaya relate to the larger Bhāgavata community is also a problematic question (Colas 2011: 297–300; Siauve 1968: 11–13).

123 Cf. above n. 102.

124 Cf. above n. 32.

125 The word *yoga* means here *aṣṭāṅga-yoga*, according to a marginal note of the manuscript from the Oriental Institute of Baroda.

126 *yad-yogaḥ para-vigrahe nija iva svecchā-praveśādhir* (SVR folio 2a line 6). It is also evoked in another medieval play, Yaśaḥpāla’s *Moharājaparājaya* (MRP V. 44, cf. Leclère 2013: 520, n. 253 for further refe).

interest for Sāṃkhya, it is corroborated by several other facts. Firstly, Devabodha has quoted in his commentary of the *Ādiparvan* the third verse of the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, which is the fundamental text of the school,¹²⁷ and his successor Vimalabodha has similarly referred to Sāṃkhya works in his own explanation of the *Mahābhārata*.¹²⁸ Moreover, the Sāṃkhya system was actually popular in northwestern India by that time: in the first half of the eleventh century, the famous Persian scholar Al Bīrūnī undertook the translation of a work of that school as he thought it encompassed the fundamental religious beliefs of India.¹²⁹ Even closer in time and place to Devabodha, other adepts of Sāṃkhya are known to have debated with Jain monks while Jayasiṃha Siddharāja was ruling: a dialectician from the Sāṃkhya school named Vādisiṃha provoked the Śvetāmbara monk Virācārya in the capital Aṇahillapura by sending him a letter containing a verse difficult to understand,¹³⁰ and, according to Yaśaścandra's testimony, the Digambara master Kumudacandra prided himself on having defeated among other opponents some people adhering to Kapila's doctrine of Sāṃkhya.¹³¹ Another proof of the popularity of the doctrine in the Caulukya realm is the fact that a manuscript of the main commentary on the *Sāṃkhyakārikā*, the *Sāṃkhyasaptatiṭikā* or *Sāṃkhyasaptatibhāṣya* by Gauḍapādācārya, was copied down at Siddhapur – one of the most important cities of medieval Gujarat – in 1143, the very year of king Jayasiṃha Siddharāja's death:¹³²

127 JD ad ĀP, p. 12.

128 P. K. Gode pointed out three references to Sāṃkhya in a manuscript of Vimalabodha's commentary, one to "the adepts of Kapila" (*kāpilāḥ*, fol. 26), the mythical founder of the system, another one to the *Sāṃkhyāprakiyā* (fol. 67), and the third one to a statement "by Kapila" (*kapilena*, fol. 69) himself (Gode 1953: 320, No. 19, 41, 43).

129 *Les strophes de Sāṃkhya*, introduction, p. LVIII.

130 "From there [Gopagiri, mod. Gwalior], the master wandered slowly, with the right measure of self-control, and arrived at the village of Cārūpa, near Aṇahillapura. Then the glorious king Jayasiṃha rose and organized for the monk's entrance festivities never seen before even by gods. Then the Sāṃkhya teacher Vādisiṃha came there and produced such a leaf difficult to understand because of a verse written on it."

*vijahruḥ sūrayas tasmāc chanaiḥ saṃyama-mātrayā | aṇahillapurāsannaṃ cārūpa-grāmam āgaman ||
abhyudyayāv atha śrīmaj-jayasīṃha-nareśvaraḥ | praveśotsavam ādhattādṛṣṭapūrvaṃ surair api ||
athātra vādisiṃhākhyāḥ sām̐khyavādī samāgamat | patraṃ pradattavān idṛk likhita-śloka-durghaṭam ||*
(PCa XX. 35–37, cf. Parikh 1938: CCXLVI).

131 *Mudritakumudacandra*, II. 27 (cf. Parikh 1938: CCLI).

132 *saṃvat 1200 śrāvaṇa vadī 8 gurau adyeha śrī-siddhapure śrī-mūla-nārāyaṇadeviya-maṭhā-
vasthita-parama-bhāgavata-tapo-dhanika-śrī-ṛṣimūnindra-śiṣyasya navya-deśa-ratnākara-kau-
stubhasya paramārtha-vidaḥ śrī-salhaṇa-muner ālhaṇa-[vi]neyājñāyā paṃḍita-dhārādityena
sām̐khyasaptati-ṭikā bhavyā pustikā likhitā | (Jainapustakaprasastisamgraha, p. 105, No. 50).*

In the year 1200 [of the Vikrama Era], on Wednesday the eighth, in the dark fortnight of the month of Śravaṇa, the excellent booklet [entitled] *Commentary of the Seventy Verses on Sāṃkhya* has been copied down at Siddhapura by the pandit Dhārāditya at the command of Ālhaṇa, pupil of the illustrious ascetic Salhaṇa, who knows the Supreme Reality, Kaustubha jewel from the ocean of Navyadeśa,¹³³ himself the disciple of the illustrious Ṛṣimunindra,¹³⁴ rich in austerities, supreme devotee of Bhagavat (*bhāgavata*) who has his abode in the illustrious monastery of the Primeval God Nārāyaṇa.

This colophon is of particular interest as it explicitly connects Vaiṣṇava faith and Sāṃkhya system. Accordingly, Prabhācandra might have implied that Devabodha belonged to that school when he called him a Bhāgavata, and it could be the same for another Bhāgavata master called Śivabhūti who was defeated by Devasūri at Citrakūṭa slightly before 1118.¹³⁵ The cult of Viṣṇu as cosmic god Nārāyaṇa was apparently spreading by that time in Gujarat,¹³⁶ and these wandering Bhāgavata ascetics may have played a role in the process.

Conclusion

To conclude, Devabodha was a Vaiṣṇava ascetic, adept of the Sāṃkhya and Yoga systems, who lived in the twelfth century and in the course of his

133 The Navyadeśa mentioned here could be identical with a region of Bengal called Nāvya which is mentioned in a copper plate of the Sena king Viśvarūpasena (Majumdar 1929: 140–141, 177–180).

134 This compound word is here taken as the proper name of the ascetic for two reasons: firstly, it is immediately preceded by *śrī* as most of the proper names, and on the other hand *tapodhanika* must be understood as a kind of honorific title since *tapodhana* alternates with *gaṇin* (“having a group [of pupils]”, a particular rank in the Jain monastic hierarchy) in an anecdote from Jinamaṇḍana’s *Kumārāpālacarita* involving Hemacandra’s disciple Yaśāścandra (*yaśāścandra-tapodhanena* and *yaśāścandra-gaṇinā*, KPr 151. 3, 5).

135 *tathā nāgapure kṣuṇṇo guṇacandro digambaraḥ | citrakūṭe bhāgavataḥ śivabhūty-ākhyayā punaḥ ||*

“Thus at Nāgapura he crushed the Digambara Guṇacandra, and at Citrakūṭa the Bhāgavata known as Śivabhūti” (PCa XXI. 40). The *Purātanaprabandhasaṃgraha* states in a simpler style that “at Nāgapura, the Digambara Guṇacandra was defeated, at Citrakūṭa the Bhāgavata Śivabhūti was defeated”, and so on (PPS 26. 21–22). Cf. Parikh 1938: CCIL.

136 According to an inscription from Dadhipadra (modern Dohad) dated 1140 CE (which starts with the formula *om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*), a general of Jayasiṃha Siddharāja named Keśava financed the construction of a temple dedicated to Goga Nārāyaṇa in this city located on the south-eastern border of the Caulukya kingdom (*Indian Antiquary*, vol. X, p. 159–160). About one century later, an inscription engraved in 1260 under the reign of Visaladeva, a Caulukya king of the Vāghelā branch, records a grant made by the Rāṇaka Sāmantasīmhadeva in order to feed Brahmins, to keep drinking-fountains filled, “to provide daily food-offerings and the expenses of the service in the temples of Ballālanārāyaṇa and Rūpanārāyaṇa, and to repair dilapidated temples” (*India Antiquary*, vol. VI, p. 212).

peregrinations came to the sacred places of the Ganges valley and to the main cities of Rajasthan and Gujarat. Though the mystery of his origins is not yet totally elucidated, the clues provided by his own works as well as the parallels with Madhva or with his remote successor Nilakaṇṭha suggest that just like them he was an intellectual from southern India who completed his studies and probably prepared his commentaries in the great centre of traditional learning that Banaras already was by that time.¹³⁷ Having spent several decades of his life travelling in the North, he moved back to the South and composed a devotional play on a Vaiṣṇava hero at the demand of his patron the king Tribhuvanamalla, who probably belonged to the Hoysaḷa dynasty.

Regarding the fact that he commented on a north-western version of the *Mahābhārata*, it is not necessary to suppose that Devabodha himself came from Kashmir or went there on that purpose: since it was not an uncommon practice among the savants of the medieval period to secure copies of books preserved in distant libraries,¹³⁸ he may have either found a copy of the north-western version in the libraries of Banaras or asked himself for it in order to compare it with the other versions he had at his disposal.

Now that the life and personality of Devabodha are better known, it is possible to consider afresh what motivations may have induced him to comment on the whole text of the *Mahābhārata*. According to Christopher Minkowski, early commentaries on the Great Epic were largely written as annotations of the thorny parts of the text collected in compendia called *vyāsaghaṭṭa* and, while focussing on these details, tended to ignore the meaning of the overarching literary structure wherein they take place.¹³⁹ Admittedly the philological approach does prevail in the *Jñānadīpikā*, which often explains a difficult word by its synonyms or its etymologies,¹⁴⁰ but Devabodha at the same time could nonetheless have pursued a higher goal. For a devotee of Viṣṇu and an adept of Sāṃkhya-Yoga, understanding the Great Epic correctly might have signified approaching the truth of God, and it is not irrelevant in this respect that the commentary enlarges

137 For Nilakaṇṭha's career, see the introduction above. Madhva is said to have travelled twice to the holy hermitage of Badarikā located in the Himālaya range near one of the sources of the Ganges (cf. Padmanabha Char 1909, part I, chapters 11 and 14, and the introduction to Madhva's life in Siauve 1968).

138 For instance, Hemacandra is said to have obtained from the temple of Sarasvatī in Kāśmīr the original manuscripts of eight Sanskrit grammars that he needed for preparing his own comprehensive survey on the subject, the famous *Siddhahema* grammar (cf. Bühler 1936: 15–16).

139 Minkowski 2005: 236–237.

140 See for instance how he explained by a fanciful etymology the name of the charioteer Lomahaṛṣaṇa: *paśyatām munīnām ativismayāt romāñcam utpāditavān iti lomahaṛṣaṇa-nāmā-bhūt* (cf. Sukthankar 1944: 271).

and deepens each time it tackles philosophical passages like the *Sanatsujātīya*.¹⁴¹ As a matter of fact, the soteriological aspect of the enterprise is underlined by Devabodha himself at the end of such explanations:¹⁴²

May they remove the sins, the deep¹⁴³ sayings of Sanatsujāta, these rivers with a continuous flow [of explanations] wherein baths can be taken thanks to the staircase of Devabodha's work.

The gloss is thus clearly intended to facilitate the access to a meaning which can help people purify and eventually save themselves. As Devabodha makes it clear elsewhere, the readers can have thanks to these explanations an insight of the Inner and Supreme Self:¹⁴⁴

141 Just like the *Bhagavadgītā*, this passage from the *Udyogaparvan* has inspired many theologians and philosophers to write independent commentaries (Minkowski 2005: 235). That it was important to Devabodha is proved not only by the concluding verse, but also by the careful introduction to the whole passage: “The purpose of [the passage] beginning with ‘then the wise king Dhṛtarāṣṭra’ and ending with ‘they know that he is placed in a lotus’ [that is from the 42th *adhya* up to the end of the 45th one of the critical edition] is the fourth category [of liberation] with the means [for reaching it]. Seeing that war will cause the death of his sons at the hands of the Pāṇḍava, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, out of affliction, asks the venerable Sanatsujāta about the highest state free from death” (*tato rājā dhṛtarāṣṭro manīṣī ityādeḥ puṣkare nihitaṃ viduḥ ityantasya sopāyaś caturtho vargas tātparyārthaḥ || dhṛtarāṣṭraḥ pāṇḍavebhyaḥ putrāṇaṃ yuddhān maraṇaṃ paśyann ārtaḥ param amṛtaṃ padaṃ bhagavantaṃ sanatsujātaṃ pṛcchati |* JD ad UP, p. 25). As regards the *Bhagavadgītā*, the passage in the *Jñānadīpikā* which dealt with it has unfortunately been lost in the only manuscript available of the *Bhīṣmaparvan* section. Explanations on certain stanzas have been preserved in another manuscript, but their attribution to Devabodha is doubtful (JD ad BP, introduction p. 1).

142 *sanatsujātīya-giro gabhīrāḥ*

praty[āyanā]-saṃtati-saivalīnyaḥ |

harantu pāpāni ha devabodha-

prabandha-sopāna-sukhāvagāhāḥ ||

(JD ad UP, p. 40)

S. K. De indicates by a question mark that the beginning of the second *pāda* as given in the manuscript, *pratyamuśaṃtati*, does not make any sense, and proposes in a footnote *pratyantamutsaṃtati* as emendation, without being convinced himself. The solution, though metrically correct (the *pāda* thus obtained is an *indravajrā* which forms an *upajāti* with the three remaining *upendravajrā pāda*) is not easier to understand. I suggest to replace it by *pratyāyanā*, which respects the metrical scheme as well.

143 Nīlakaṇṭha similarly employs the adjective *gambhīra* for qualifying some verses from the *Mahābhārata* which are difficult or at least profound as the depths of the ocean (Minkowski 2005: 239).

144 *caitanya-prabhayā sākṣāt-kartum āntara-pūruṣam |*

dhriyate devabodhena sabhāyāṃ jñānadīpikā ||

(JD ad SP, p. 1)

In order to put before the eyes the internal man through the light of consciousness, the *Lamp of Knowledge* is placed in the *Assembly* by Devabodha.

Even the title of the work betrays a philosophical standpoint, since *jñāna* can encompass in Vaiṣṇava milieux inquiries into the mysteries of religion.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, the commentary on the *Yājñavalkyasmṛti* that Devabodha is said to have written may have been motivated by an attempt to unveil, by means of knowledge, a hidden supreme truth. As for the *Satya-vrata-rukmaṅgada*, it is very likely that it was meant as a less intellectual and more emotional way to convey the experience of God to a broader audience. At the denouement of the play, Viṣṇu probably appeared in all his glory, welcoming to his paradise the good devotees who had been faithful to him in spite of all the trials and temptations, just as Śiva does in the *Harakeli* or “Hara’s Pastimes”, a contemporary drama by the Cāhamāna king Vigharāja IV (r. 1153–1164). Indeed, the sixth and last act of this play ends with a visit of Śiva and Gaurī to the poet in order to tell him their contentment.¹⁴⁶

Thus Devabodha was both an intellectual and an aesthete in the manner of other great scholars as Abhinavagupta or Madhva.¹⁴⁷ Though varied, his production seems nonetheless to be coherent and motivated by one and the same project of propagating among every kind of audience the truth of Vaiṣṇava faith. Whether Vimalabodha and Sarvajña Nārāyaṇa wrote their own commentaries on epic and juridical texts with a similar intention and took part in a broader movement of religious exegesis is another question that could be answered but by editing and studying thoroughly these works.

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¹⁴⁵ Sutton 2000: 39–40; Colas 1996: 55, 102, 155.

¹⁴⁶ Leclère 2013: 148–149.

¹⁴⁷ For a portrait of Abhinavagupta, see Bansat-Boudon 1992: 42–43. As regards Madhva, he left no less than thirty-seven works, from commentaries of epic texts to minor technical treatises or collections of devotional verses, which were collected by Madhva’s own disciple Hṛṣikeśa-tīrtha in the *Sarvamūlagrantha* (Sheridan 2012: 282–286).

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